

## LRA RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

**Note:** The below are rough notes and not a completed work at all. Provided to the two primary contributors on 26 November, 2005.

### Primary Contributors:

Captain Ray Apire. LRA Doctor.

Major Jackson Achama. LRA Technician, then administrator (BDE Admin officer, Black BDE/51 BDE), 1994 acting peace coordinator between LRA and UG gov, then admin officer for a casualty unit when lost his leg.

**Also Contributed:** Brigadier Kenneth Banya. LRA diplomatic envoy

**Compiled and edited by:** Lieutenant Colonel R. W. Skow, Defense and Army Attaché, U.S. Embassy, Kampala, Uganda.

### Structure

Brief history. Alice Auma “Lakwena,” then Joseph Kony in 1987. Alice stated the word Lakwena means messenger from God, and became known as Alice Lakwena. Kony consolidated power in 1989, and inherited all the spirits and many of the rules used by the LRA from Alice Lakwena.

Alice initially identified with healing Spirits and treated wounded rebels fighting the NRA. The UPDF raided her camp and killed many of the wounded she and her group were tending, after which she stated the Spirits wanted war. Made two predictions before she left Uganda:

1. That a boy would continue the war.
2. That he will start from Sudan.

The name the Lord’s Resistance Army came out around 1994.

The Oracle House was the most critical organ of the religious structure of the LRA, and was composed of the chief Catechist, Chief Technician and the Chief Controllers. The Chief Catachist worked with the Chief Technician and the Chief Controller.

Controllers and Technicians. All technicians and controllers were taught by Kony personally, and were very respected among the LRA. They were recruited from people who at least had a minimal education of Senior 1 and above. The average age of personnel was not important. In the beginning around 1987 there were about 120 technicians and controllers. (Contributor Major Jackson was one of them.) In the camps before Operation Iron Fist the original technicians numbered less than 20, and no more have since then been recruited. As of 17 November 2005 there remained in the bush two known technicians: Onem Acirokop “UNITA” (probably with Otti) and “Ogila Nyarondo” whose real name is Vincent Otto. Otto is rumored to want to surrender as he has a disability. He was hit in the head by a fragment from a UPDF gunship attack.

Controllers used water and shea oil only and went forward to support battles.

Technicians could perform controller duties, but also worked with the charcoal stove and all other yard duties.

The Yard is an extremely important religious location in the LRA religious construction. It is a sacred place referred to as “the tent of the Lord’s presence,” and God takes immediate action there. It is a place where God emphasizes his power. It is demarcated usually by ash on the ground or by rocks, and sometimes more permanent yards are made by cutting branches from trees, planting them and then the branches grow into trees forming a boundary. A map of Uganda is always drawn on the ground of the yard, and can vary in size. Some specific places and features like the Nile River, lakes, and barracks of strategic importance are depicted in the map. Kony directed that a half moon always be drawn on the map but he did not specify why it was to be done. A big cross made of wood is planted in the middle of the map to symbolize the suffering of Uganda.

Before entering the yard everyone bathes. No blood was allowed whatsoever is allowed in the Yard, to include menstruating women and wounded fighters. No sex was allowed for personnel on duty in yard, and they cannot quarrel with anyone in order to keep their hearts clean. Only controllers and technicians on duty were allowed in the yard in addition to personnel attending some rite. If a controller violated any of the rules he would die in battle that very day in a manner reflecting the type of violation committed. If you ate out of turn you would be shot in the mouth or abdomen. If you had sex on duty you would be shot in the penis, and the woman involved would be hit in the vagina.

Yard Functions in the past (between 1987 – 1996) include:

1. Technicians would anoint people using shea butter oil. (Shea butter oil comes from the seeds of a tree common in Northern Uganda and Southern Sudan. The word shea is pronounced something like “sheer.”)
2. Charcoal Stoves were lit in the yard during battle. A technician would pour shea oil and herbs on the stoves. During combat he would pray and sprinkle water mixed with shea butter on the stove. Models of different weapon systems made of wire were put on the stove with caps on the muzzles of the guns made of iron. Each technician would divine from looking into the fire when LRA personnel were being hurt and by which type of gun. He would know which weapon system was the cause because the cap on the model gun would explode.
3. In the Yard technicians would pray for the assault forces and that all the enemy will be confused (for example to stop a flanking maneuver on LRA elements, etc.) and would pour water onto the stove. Sometimes the enemy became confused and started shooting each other or stopped attacking the LRA.
4. Newly abducted people were taken to the yard. The controllers would pray for them, sprinkle water on them mixed with shea butter oil, and also “camouflaged” them with signs of the cross all

over the body using a white powder crushed from “rotten rocks” and mixed with shea oil. They new recruits could not wash for three days, after which the spirit of the Lord descended upon them. This would protect them in battle. IF a person was HIV positive the crosses would fall off of his or her body in a day or less. HIV infected persons had to go to the river and wash themselves in a stream or river three times. Kony personally prayed for the person and sometimes poured water over them. When the person left the water they were instructed not to look back and they left the area cured of HIV.

5. Sick people were taken to the yard and were prayed for by technicians and controllers. Water mixed with shea butter oil was sprinkled on them, and they had crosses painted on them. If the person was seriously ill, he or she was given “camouflage” and drank shea butter oil as a medicine. Then they were cured.
6. Controllers made medicine from a variety of local herbs and also used modern medicines in the yard.
7. When people were possessed by the Devil they were taken to the yard to be exorcised.
8. Sterile women were treated in the yard, prayed upon, given medicine, crosses are painted on the small of the back, and then they became fertile.
9. Sexually impotent men were also treated in the yard, and given medicine normally made from the roots of momocotyadoms (a type of grass) after which they could reproduce.
10. Male children were normally baptized in the yard three days after birth, and girls after four days. Sometimes, however, groups of newborns were baptized at the same time.
11. “Air Stiblis” made from inner bark of two trees. The bark was made into a robe and pounded to make soft. When dry it was set on fire in the yard, and the smell expelled all the devils from the area. An Air Stiblis could also act as a controller or technician itself – when burnt no enemies would come to the area. They would often burn day and night depending on the size of the stiblis. Controllers sometimes burnt them while their group was moving. These Stiblis would normally be finger width and its length would control the burn time. When holding the Air Stiblis you cannot fart, as it would pollute the air and the Stiblis would extinguish immediately.
12. Controllers sing every night praising God in the yard.

Controllers moved with fighters to battle and had model guns made of wire representing LRA weapons, which were put into a stream. The controllers watched the model guns and if air came from the muzzle of the gun then the controller knew it was firing.

#### Joseph Kony's Spirits

The spirits stopped possessing Kony in 1999 at Jebel Lem (Two Rocks) in Sudan.

Kony started having possession episodes in 1987. In the beginning he was possessed sometimes two or three times a day. Over time frequency of possession declined. Prophesized by Juma Oris in Kony in 1995 that there will come a time that the spirit would no longer visit. Kony would always be alerted by “Who Are You” that a spirit would come at a certain time to speak for a certain time (for example at 1400 hours for three or four minutes). Kony’s secretary (Chief to Lakwena) would make the preparations, and Kony would dress in a white robe. A glass of water, a bible, and a rosary were placed on a table. To start the possession Kony would dip his fingers into a clear glass of water. Multiple spirits would pass through Kony in a single session. On average at least three spirits would talk in a session. Junior spirits always talked first. After the session the LRA Army Commander would address the crowd. No one corrected what the spirits said, nor did people dare question the spirits.

When Kony dipped his finger in glass of water he slumped forward for a few seconds, then sat up. Each spirit had a separate personality. His voice changed to a woman’s tone of voice when possessed by Malia. Some spirits spoke faster than others. Who Are You was rude – quarreling - and he complained a lot. Chairman Juma Oris talked slow and calm with a flat tone like an “important person.” Malia gave morale and hope after operations, and would say that those injured would recover with help from Dr. Salan.

#### The Spirits in order of relative importance

1. Juma Oris “Oriska Debohr”. Chairman of the Spirits. Ugandan. Controlled all spiritual movement. Stated “Uganda must be ruled by the ten commandments.” God has sent these spirits to come and rescue the Acholi people or finish them if they do not accept or believe in the spirits and God. Stated the LRA must treat or use a living thing like a living thing (treat it fairly). Ordered the LRA not to torture anyone including prisoners of war, but killing them is perfectly fine. If you tortured anyone you would be punished for it before the Lord.

2. Silly Salindi also known as “Malia Mackay.” Sudanese. Female. Chief Operational Commander. Key Statement: Mackay means military duty; the LRA’s duty is to carry out military duties. Salindi stated the spirits would work with foolish silly people, meaning people are too stupid and silly to know what the spirits mean, but the spirits will work with them anyway. Malia dictated many rules for the LRA to obey:

Do not smoke.

No sex except when allowed.

Don’t drink.

When crossing rivers make the sign of the cross with water on your head and pray “Water you are superior to me, have mercy on me.”

When on a rock make the sign of a cross (but you are not allowed to stand on a rock since 1986 because the rocks made a covenant with Lakwena in assisting in passing judgment on people). Rocks are sometimes used as bombs and can explode.

When fighting if there is a rock nearby make the sign of a cross and pray “Rock you are superior to me, have mercy upon me.”

When fighting and you come across a tree or an ant hill make the sign of the cross and pray “Please respect me.” People are superior to trees and ant hills and therefore don’t have to ask for mercy but merely respect.

When on standby for battle after being cleansed, you cannot sit or touch the ground, nor touch any person so as not to get their sins on you.

Don’t kill innocent people (unarmed persons on the battle field).

The LRA should not bring too many women among them as they will impair operations.

Don’t eat too much food. Don’t love food so much.

You are not soldiers but rather teachers to teach God’s message.

Although you are few your message will be known worldwide.

Don’t fear human beings, but fear the Lord.

Don’t be ambitious i.e. don’t want to be a commander.

Remember to pray three times a day.

When you go home you will find some people who have killed your relatives, but don’t take revenge.

Don’t mourn for those who die; we don’t know why God has called them.

3. “Who Are You” as in “Who are you to the Lord,” also known as Zinck Brickly. American. Male. Chief Intelligence Officer. Informed Kony of errors among the LRA. In charge of military courts martial. Reported to Kony if the enemy was coming. Could predict the future. Gave military situation reports (SITREPs). Predicted air attacks. Told the LRA that even if they had SA-7s or heavy machine guns they would never succeed in destroying an aircraft because it belonged to him and the aircraft punish sinners.

4. Willing Hing Sue. Chinese. Male. Determined the duration of activities; when to start and when to stop. Performed miracles in front of the enemy, such as making the UPDF see the LRA in the air and not on the ground, or make them see armored vehicles in the air.

5. King Bruce. American. Male. Controlled heavy weapons (12.7mm, British 82mm recoilless AT rifle, 106mm AT rifle) including the stone bombs. His main role was the stone bombs. During the time the LRA used stone bombs they would pray to King Bruce “Lord the power of the world rests upon you, King Bruce take post in the name of Jesus Christ.” Then they threw a stone which would explode. Before combat

Kony stated he could see a cross on certain soldiers' foreheads, usually five or less personnel, and they would be given stone bombs to throw in battle. Normally when a stone bomb exploded in battle both the LRA and UPDF would retreat from the battle.

6. Soli Yakobo. Supposed to be Italian. Male. Controlled finance, and was a catechist and great teacher. Stated the LRA must not hide money gained from operations since all the money had to go to the LRA treasurers. If someone kept money they would die, and in fact most of the LRA commanders are dead today because they kept money. If you send money home to relatives it will cause problems in your home and everyone will be killed. Stated "Love your God with your heart and your strength and your soul. If you love God as you love your wife, you will not have to stay in the bush for long."

7. Dr. Salan. Italian. Male. Controlled all medical services, Western as well as local. Told the LRA to mix different herbs for different wounds or sicknesses. Directed doses of medicine. Would use technical names for medicines. Could cure barren people.

8. Owora. Ugandan from West Nile. Male. Intelligence Staff Officer working for Who Are You. Gave information and SITREPs.

9. Hawa. Tanzanian. Male. Worked with Willing Hing Sue. Kept hours of duties and worked miracles like Hing Sue. Stated "If part of the food is ready eat it and don't wait for the rest as you may miss it." (Meaning you might be attacked or otherwise interrupted before the rest of the food is ready to eat.)

10. Sinaska. American. Male. Chief Controller. Passed LRA controller messages from the front to God. Could control the weapons of enemy.

11. Major Byankey. Chief Technician. Passed technician messages to God.

12. Carlo Rwanga. Ugandan Martyr. Youngest of a group of Ugandans massacred by the Bagandan chief (Kibaka) Mwangi for believing in Christ. Burned alive.

Note: Initially the contributors to this work stated there were 13 spirits, but were unable to remember the 13<sup>th</sup> spirit, and revised the number to only 12.

### Dreams

Dreams were very important because they are revelations from God. Kony's dreams were the most important. Direct subordinates' dreams were also important. Ray dreamed Banya would be captured, and that Besigye would be arrested. God would sometimes tell Kony that someone was going to dream on occasion. Sometimes Kony would tell the LRA that whoever dreams that night must write it down and bring it to him. However, he did not want to hear about any dreams regarding himself from others, because he does not want to know of his own future. Ray dreamed Kony would die in the bush, and told Kony of it and he was not happy. Nyoko Livingstone dreamed in 1999 that Kony would lose all his belongings to include his car, which happened in 2001. Ray dreamed about the amnesty and the end of the LRA's stay in Sudan. Ray stated that anyone who stays in the bush now does

so at his own risk. Kony has left the work of God and has done many evil things and will be punished for it. Ray dreamed 100 helicopters were looking for Kony and all his soldiers left him saying, "Where Ray is there are no helicopters" and Kony replied "Go where Ray is and be safe". Kony remained alone.

### Prophecies

1. In 1995 Kony, at Palopaka in Sudan, predicted the LRA would become enemies of the Government of Sudan troops. After fighting them the LRA would then again receive support from Sudan. In 2002 during operation Iron Fist the LRA fought Sudanese troops, but at the end of 2003, Khartoum sent a Ugandan man with Sudanese citizenship called Marco Vuni, who opened the logistic support from Sudan to the LRA once again.
2. 1994 Kony predicted that all the Acholi people would depend upon foreign aid to survive.
3. 1997 Kony stated a religious war would be fought and 6 million lives will be lost. He did not state where this would happen.
4. In 1996 or 1997 he predicted the Americans will have to fight Kony, but after they have failed to defeat him they will then support him.
5. In 1999 Kony predicted the war would come to an end in 2006. There will be a boy 12 years old who will be inspired that will finish the war.
6. In 1991 Kony began saying that, like Moses, he will not see the Promised Land. He will not return to Uganda with the LRA. This was regularly repeated.
7. The UPDF will be the force that will help the LRA to finish the war. Jackson believes the amnesty program may be part of that effort.
8. All the LRA should learn to speak English and Swahili because there will come a time when they will live with the enemy.
9. Those who have stained their hands with blood of innocent people will not be with the LRA when the spirit of peace comes (the end of the war). Only children will leave the bush at the end of the war because all the adults will be dead.
10. Sudan will get peace first, then Uganda.
11. Some people were criticizing America, and the spirits said America would help end the war.
12. When the war comes to an end, the Lord will put everyone who has committed sins in prison.
13. At the end of the war all Ugandans in exile will come back and be judged.
14. After the war Uganda will have peace for 200 years and Uganda will be the land of God.
15. Predicted Banya would be captured by the UPDF, which did occur.
16. How do you know that the Lord has punished the LRA? Spirits: You will know I am punishing you when all the senior commanders die. This is nearly the current situation.
17. Many LRA will join the UPDF and come and destroy the LRA.
18. There will come a time when all the older people will keep their abducted wives.
19. All the old people in the LRA will be born young again and produce ten children. Every woman in the LRA will produce then children.

20. Because Ray is merciful people will try to kill him. Ray is an ally of the UPDF.
21. When peace comes to Uganda, 500 people will die of happiness.
22. You will chase the NRA from power as they chased the UNLA away (in the previous government).
23. LRA will not overthrow the government, they will be called back.
24. Could predict UPDF would attack, from where, AND how many guns and how much ammunition the LRA would recover. Also predicted number of casualties. This occurred in the 1987 battles of Paicho and Cwero, and the predictions were accurate.
25. The LRA will fight a silent world war (SWW).
26. If the President of Uganda (Museveni) has come to God he can stay in power for some more years.
27. After the end of the war most of the LRA will die when they come out of the bush – they will go back to drinking, some will die of HIV or obesity. Further, they will fight amongst themselves.
28. Protect your body so that God will protect you.

### Sex

Every new male recruit/abductee of the LRA cannot have sex for two years, because it makes you dirty. This was dictated by the spirits. To survive you needed to be totally clean. Abducted girls cannot marry until they menstruate three times. Dr. Salan said sex was only for reproduction. The LRA cannot sleep with pregnant women. Ten days after menstruation women and men can have sex. When a woman is menstruating she must not cook, touch a man, and remain apart from the group. Sleep and eat and wash in separate area. After finishing menstruation she stays apart for an additional three days before rejoining the community.

When a man dies the woman stays alone for 90 days to grieve, after which she is washed, all her hair shaved and taken to the yard. A controller or technician then prays on her so that she will not lose another husband. (The spirit of the deceased husband lingers around and the prayers remove the spirit of the husband. Otherwise the deceased spirit will kill anyone sleeping with that woman. Violation of this rule has resulted in the majority of LRA deaths.) After this ceremony she can be given to another LRA soldier as a wife.

Mature abducted women could be made wives almost immediately. Kony would be informed of the abduction and would give direction for some to be brought to him and others distributed among the group that captured them. The most beautiful women went to Kony. He would screen the women for sometimes up to six months, and if he found a detestable trait in her he would refuse to have her as a wife. They would be given to the Operation Room which would determine who she would go to.

### Arrestation

In 2001 Kony ordered the arrest of Jackson, Ray, Hillary Lagen, Livingston Nyeko Lubul, Elia, Kalambit, and others for a total of 29 officers. They were put in a small house, tied hand and foot with attachments to their testicles. They went for three days with no food or water and were beaten. Ray was beaten with 300 strokes. Their



wives were given to other commanders. They were charged with treason for trying to cause a mass defection of the LRA, and complaining that the LRA was killing civilians. Banya pleaded for them and they were spared, but they were all demoted to the rank of private. Their wives returned to them, but they remained under house arrest until Operation Iron Fist, April 2002.

### Water

Water is respected by the LRA because Lakwena said God has given cleansing power to water and it will spread God's Kingdom. It is the first creation of the Lord and all living things use it. Water is life. There are two types of water: living water and dead water. Boiled water is dead and has lost its original qualities. Water from a stream or river is alive. Wounded persons are only given dead water since living water would kill them as it circulates very quickly in the person. Wounded personnel are administered three sips of water mixed with shea butter oil – one sip for each of the trinity – and then dead water thereafter. Water is used by controllers to open the way to battle, and they sprinkle water along paths in order to reach the enemy without interruption.

### Normal Routine

The LRA pray three times a day; morning, mid-day and evening. Before prayer they must wash at least their hands, feet and face. If enough water is available they take baths.

A LRA member prays when he or she has no other tasks. Prayer is like a pillar to God.

Fridays and Sundays are days of rest.

All Christian holidays are observed.

The LRA fast in a manner similar to Muslims during Ramadan.

The LRA will sometimes have personal special prayer sessions usually lasting from 1 to 3 hours.

1. Conducted on a mountain. God spoke to Moses and gave him the 10 commandments on a mountain. Jesus ascended from a mountain.

2. Conducted in a river. Water is holy and God exercises his power there.

3. Or just in the bush far from home. Done in order to have some peace from others especially children. Normally asking for forgiveness.

Very bad sins require a sin offering consisting of a special sacrifice. For these sacrifices they use white sheep. This is normally done once a year, but sometimes twice a year if a lot of sins have been committed. It is a sin cleansing ritual.

Moderate sins are dealt with at the yard. Offenders are sprinkled with water and shea butter oil from a controller or technician.

Large sins dealt with at the stream. The LRA bathe and pray in streams or rivers at the new moon.

#### Capital offenses. Justice by firing squad.

1. Sleeping with another's wife. In 1995 a soldier called Omgwe was shot for sleeping with Lt. Col. and Brigade Commander Ocan Bunia's wife. In 1996 Ojok was shot for abducting a lot of girls and raping them. (They were supposed to be handed over to superior officers for distribution in the LRA.)
2. Homosexuality. This happened in early 2000 when LT Abel slept with one of his soldiers in his company. He was executed by firing squad.
3. Defection from the LRA.
4. Witchcraft.
5. Killing innocent people. 20 personnel were executed in 1987 for this.

#### Special Animals

The LRA do not eat pigs. However, they will eat warthogs.

They do not eat sheep because it is a sacrificial animal.

They only eat fish that have scales. Mudfish (barbells or catfish) are not eaten because they are lazy and if you eat them you will become lazy as well.

They don't eat pigeons as they are also sacred. When the spirit first descended upon Kony the power of God was shown in the sky in the form of a large blue pigeon around ten meters across, and very high in the sky.

Gazelles are not eaten. In 1997 Kony was invited to Khartoum by the government of Sudan. They detained him in a house. Otti dreamt that a gazelle should be hunted. If the gazelle is killed before 8 a.m. then Kony would be rescued. He passed the dream on to Kony. A hunting team was dispatched and it killed a gazelle at 0758 hours by Olak Tulu, and Kony was released. Three months later the spirits dictated gazelles would not be eaten by the LRA.

#### Military Structure

Operation Room. Where the intelligence officer and operational commander work from. Used maps and HF radios, and satellite phones. Used sand "models".

"Standby" personnel were those selected to go and fight. Similar to a task force. All were briefed off the sand model.

#### Military Tactics

LRA governing factor was time – quick in and quick out. Assault force would attack an objective, and sometimes set up an ambush for other troops in the area that may come to assist the forces attacked. The LRA do not use envelopment as a tactic.

The LRA attack online with the HQ located behind the troops, usually around 3km and off the axis of advance used by the group. The HQ sometimes comes forward if and when the objective has been taken.

The LRA greatly fear UPDF helicopter gunships and will not remain on an objective long once the UPDF deploy them.

The LRA capture civilians to learn of the UPDF disposition in a given area. It is “easy” for them to move around UPDF deployments.

A current common tactic is to ambush soft targets.

A Key factor for operations is water both for units and settlements. If camped some kilometers from water, individuals will use their own separate paths to fetch water to avoid making an identifiable path that will lead to the encampment.

Training consisted of gun drill (assembly and disassembly of weapons), battle drill. Individuals are online and advance in a fast run straight at the enemy once contact is made. They shout, “Catch him alive!” as they attack. The shouting instills a lot of fear into the UPDF and often they flee the attack, leaving behind valuable weapons and ammunition. LRA are taught how to rescue a wounded person on the battlefield and administer first aid, how to attack enemy in trenches with grenades, and how to withdraw from contact. When withdrawing the LRA put their weapons on safe with muzzle down and run in a single file. All LRA must shout when they run both in attack and withdrawal.

LRA defenses are 360 degrees with the HQ in the middle. Observation Posts (OPs) are set up around one mile away from the defense, and normally number from two to three. A single OP is never used. Sometimes reconnaissance patrols were used in lieu of OPs.

### Logistics

Sudan provided most the weapons and mostly ammunition (small arms rounds, RPG-7V, 60mm mortar rounds, B-10 recoilless, SPG-9 rounds and 82mm recoilless shells) freely to the LRA until November, 2002, with the exception of two consignments that came later. Most logistical support from Sudan was provided from 1994 to 1999. Much of it was cached throughout southern Sudan and northern Uganda by a special squad. Today LRA weapons consist of small arms and some RPG-7s. Most of the commanders that buried ammunition are now dead or have defected to the UPDF.

Shea butter oil is moved in jerry cans and every person is required to have a small bottle of it in his or her pocket. The butter oil in the beginning of the rebellion was thought to make you bullet proof.

Everyone also had to carry living water with them as well, in a small bottle or around your neck or even as a small tube attached to your wrist. In heavy combat the water may tell LRA personnel what to do.

Random

Kony said the LRA should persevere and tolerate and obey the rules and regulations in order to find God.

Kony said the LRA are not special to God; all people are the same to God.