

Western Bahr el Ghazal

Western Bahr el Ghazal is a state in South Sudan. It has an area of 93,900 km² (36,255 sq mi) and is the least populous state in South Sudan, according to the controversial Sudanese census conducted in 2008. It is part of the Bahr el Ghazal region. Its capital is Wau. The state shared international borders with Sudan to the north and the Central African Republic to the west. The portion now occupied by Raga County (pronounced 'Raja') is the southern part of the historical region known as "Dar Fertit".

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History

This state, and Raga County in particular, was the part of South Sudan that was most affected by the slave trade conducted by nearby Muslim sultanates from the 18th century on and by Mameluk Egypt in the second half of the 19th century, and Raga County is the only part of South Sudan with a significant number of Muslims and Arabs. In addition to the Baggara Arabs, another local Muslim ethnic group is the Feroghe (Feroqe, etc.). Traditionally, the northern part of Raga County falls within the "Baggara belt", the 1400 kilometer wide section of the central Sahel in which cattle herding Arabic speaking tribes conduct seasonal nomadic migrations. When the slave trade soared in the 1860s and 1870s, the region's population shrank dramatically, plunging by 75 percent to about 400,000.^[2] Depopulation was due to several factors all related to wars that were provoked by the upsurge in slaving promoted by Egypt, factors including: actual capture of inhabitants, emigration of refugees, and epidemics. The population according to the 2008 census was lower still. This may have been partly due to the second Sudanese civil war, 1983-1999, which devastated most of South Sudan, exacting a toll of two million dead civilians and hundreds of thousands of refugees.^[3]

Western Bahr el Ghazal

State



Flag



Location in South Sudan.

 Coordinates: 07°53′N 25°52′E﻿ / ﻿07.883°N 25.867°E﻿ / 7.883; 25.867

Country	 South Sudan
Region	Bahr el Ghazal
Capital	Wau
Government	
 • Governor	Sarah Cleto Hassan
Area	
 • Total	91,079.95 km ² (35,166.17 sq mi)
Population (2008)	
 • Total	333,431
 • Density	3.7/km ² (9.5/sq mi)
Time zone	UTC+2 (CAT)
HDI (2019)	0.466 ^[1] <div> low · 4th of 10</div>

In October 2015, Western Bahr el Ghazal was split into two new states, Lol State and Wau State, following an act by President Salva Kiir to establish 32 new states of South Sudan.

Following a peace agreement at the conclusion of the South Sudanese Civil War in 2020, Western Bahr el Ghazal was reestablished along with the rest of the original ten states of South Sudan. Kiir appointed Sarah Cleto Hassan as governor, and the only woman to be appointed of eight governors.

Geography

Western Bahr el Ghazal is situated in South Sudan's Bahr el Ghazal region, bordering Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Warrap to the west and Western Equatoria to the south. To the north it shares a border with the states of South Darfur and East Darfur in Sudan. To the west it shares a border with Haute-Kotto and Haut-Mbomou in the Central African Republic. It claims Kafia Kingi, though this is disputed by the government of Sudan, which asserts the area is a part of South Darfur. The Lol River crosses through the state.

Demographics

Local ethnic groups included the Luo (The Original natives of Wau), and Balanda Boor, Balanda Bviri, Balanda Deim Zubeir (Balanda Viri, Balanda Bagari)(Balanda are one people settling in different locations hence Dem Zubier, Bagari, Bazia and Tambura are geographical names not tribal. they were found in both western Equatoria and Western Bahar El Ghazal states), Luo, Ndogo, Kresh, Bai, Baggara Arabs, and many others. Despite the common element "Balanda" in their names, the first two ethnicities are not related. Despite frequent mentions of the existence of a "Fertit people" in Western Bahr el Ghazal, there is no such people.^[4]

Administration

The Governor of Western Bahr el Ghazal serves as the state's chief executive. As of October 2020, Sarah Cleto Hassan is the incumbent governor.

Counties

Western Bahr el Ghazal is divided into three counties.



Train in Western Bahr el Ghazal

County	Area (km ²)	Population Census 2008
<u>Jur River</u>	10,032.22	127,771
<u>Raga</u>	61,792.46	54,340
<u>Wau</u>	19,251.27	151,320

The counties are further divided into *Payams*, then *Bomas*. South Sudan claims Kafia Kingi as part of Western Bahr el Ghazal, though Sudan disputes it as a part of South Darfur.

Main cities and towns

- Wau is the capital city of the state.
- Raga is located in the western part of the state.

- Acongeong is located northeast of Wau.
- Deim Zubeir is located in the central part of the state.
- Jur River is located in the central Wau
- Mapel is located in the eastern Wau
- Udici is located in the north-west of Wau

See also

- Wol Akec Akol

Notes

1. "Sub-national HDI - Area Database - Global Data Lab" (<https://hdi.globaldatalab.org/areadata/shdi/>). *hdi.globaldatalab.org*. Retrieved 2020-04-18.
2. Cordell 1983.
3. One of them, Naomi Baki, has released an autobiography in French in 2013, in which she describes her 10 years journey as a refugee from Raga to France. Naomi Baki, *Je suis encore vivante*, Le Cerf, 2013
4. Lewis 2010, p. 160.

References

- Cordell, Dennis (1983). "The savanna belt". In Birmingham, David; Martin, Phyllis M. (eds.). *History of Central Africa*. Vol. 1. Longman.
- Thomas, Edward. 2010. *The Kafia Kingi enclave*. London and Nairobi: Rift Valley Institute.

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