CONFOEDERATIO,
RESEARCH DIVISION (CRD).

DEMOGRAPHIC AND SETTLEMENT HISTORY OF CHECHNYA AND INGUSHETIA.

A Regional Literature Review of Population and Settlement (10000BC - 1900AD).

7 November 2026 - Aust Kätzchen | austkaeztchen@confoederatio.org

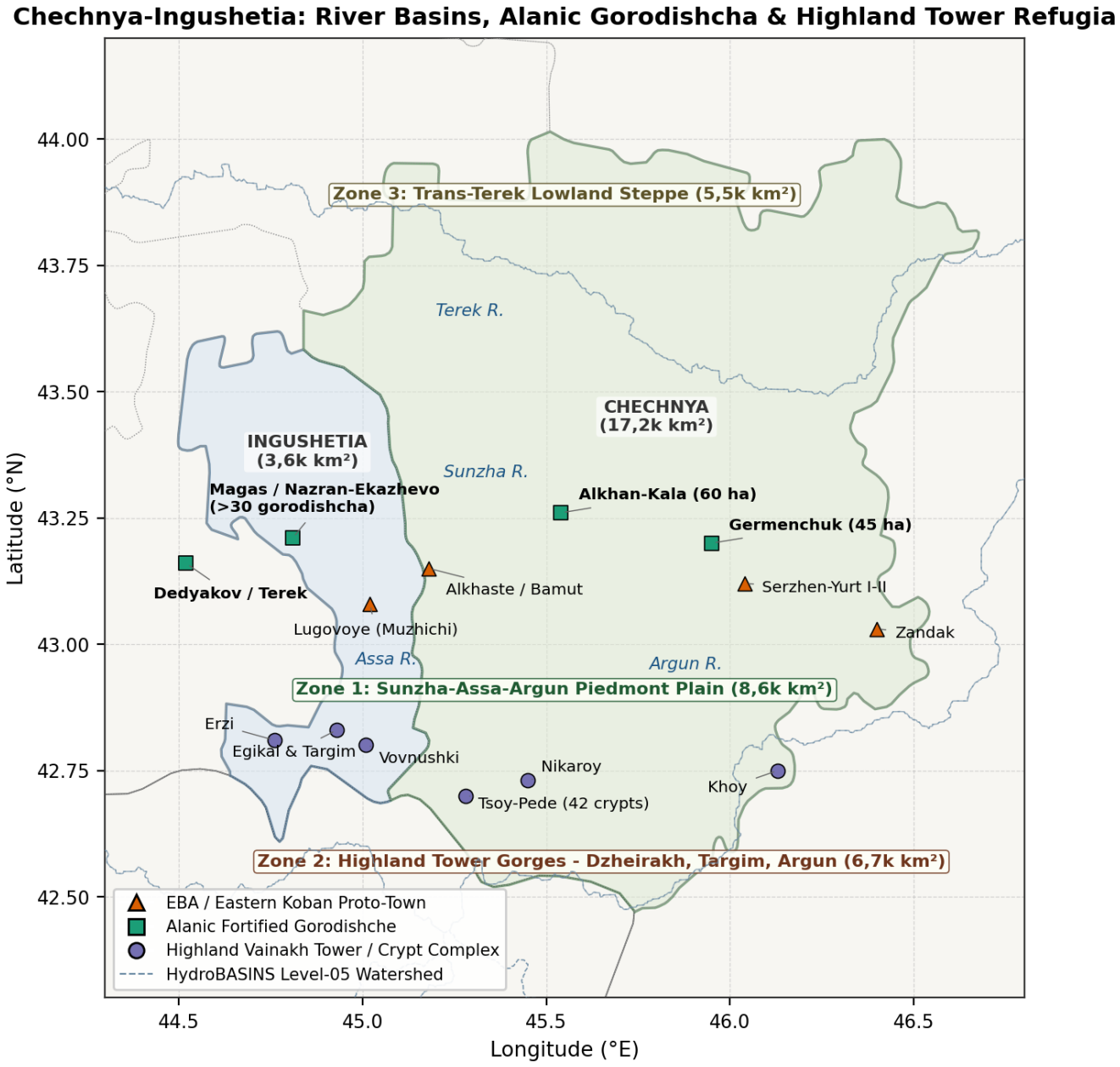


Figure 1. Elevation zones, river basins, and principal archaeological and historical settlements of Chechnya and Ingushetia (10000BC - 1900AD).

Abstract

This paper reviews the archaeological, bioarchaeological, architectural, and archival literature to reconstruct the population and settlement history of Chechnya and Ingushetia (20,8k km^2 combined: 17,2k km^2 Chechen Republic and 3,6k km^2 Republic of Ingushetia) from 10000BC to 1900AD. Rather than extrapolating from raw site counts, our synthesis examines long-term settlement change across three main elevation zones: (1) Early Holocene canyon foragers and Early Bronze Age Kura-Araxes-Maykop contact settlements (Lugovoye / Muzhichi, Bamut, Serzhen-Yurt I), reaching ~18,0k by 3000BC [1][2][3]; (2) the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age Eastern Variant of the Koban Culture (1200-400BC, represented by Serzhen-Yurt, Zandak, and Nesterovskiy), when fortified hillforts and bronze metallurgy supported 56,0k (1000BC) to 78,0k (500BC) inhabitants [4][5][6][7]; (3) the Early and High Medieval Alanic urban period (400-1238AD), when fortified town (*gorodishche*) networks along the Sunzha, Assa, Argun, and Terek (Alkhan-Kala [60 ha], the Nazran-Ekazhevo / Magas cluster of >30 fortified settlements, and Germenchuk) raised regional population to 172,0k (145,0k-200,0k) around 1200AD, with 75% living on the fertile piedmont plains [8][9][10][11][12]; and (4) the upland displacement (1238-1400AD) caused by the 1239-1240 Mongol siege of Magas and Timur's 1395 destruction of *Simsir*, which halved regional population to 88,0k (75,0k-105,0k) and concentrated 77% of survivors in the fortified stone tower and collective crypt villages of the Armkhi, Assa, and Argun gorges (Egikal, Erzi, Targim, Vovnushki, Tsoy-Pede, Khoy) [13][14][15][16], before the 16th-18th-century Vainakh return to the Sunzha-Argun plains lifted population to 128,0k by 1700AD and 220,0k by 1800AD [17][18][19][20]. Following severe wartime mortality during the Caucasian War (1818-1859; 195,0k in 1850AD) and the 1865 *muhajir* deportation of ~22,0k Chechens and Orstkhoy (Karabulaks) to the Ottoman Empire, natural growth, Cossack settlement, the 1893 Grozny oil boom, and the 1897 First All-Russian Imperial Census document a rise to 350,0k (330,0k-370,0k) by 1900AD [20][21][22][23].

Background

Occupying the north-central and northeastern slopes of the Greater Caucasus between the upper Terek-Assa watershed and the Andi ridge, the historical Vainakh territory (20,8k km^2) is divided into three parallel east-west belts (Figure 1 and Table 1):

1. The Sunzha-Assa-Argun Piedmont Plain and Foothill Valleys (Zone 1, 8,6k km^2, 100-500 m): Watered by the Sunzha (Сунжа) and its right-bank tributaries (Assa, Fortanga, Gehi, Martan, Argun, Dzhalka, Gums, Aksay), this fertile piedmont belt served as the main agricultural zone of the central-eastern Caucasus during the Early Bronze Age (Lugovoye, Serzhen-Yurt I), the Eastern Koban era (Serzhen-Yurt, Alkhaste, Bamut), the Alanic kingdom (Alkhan-Kala, Nazran-Ekazhevo / Magas), and the 16th-19th-century Vainakh resettlement of the plains (Chechen-Aul, Aldy, Shali, Germenchuk, Gekhi, Urus-Martan, Nazran, Grozny) [1][5][9][15].
2. The Highland Limestone and Slate Tower Gorges (Zone 2, 6,7k km^2, 500-4 493 m): Rising to Mount Tebulosmta (4 493 m) and Mount Shan (4 451 m), the deep canyons of the Armkhi (Dzheirakh), upper Assa (Targim basin), Fortanga (Orstkhoy / Akki), upper Argun (Malkhista, Maysta, Terloy, Chanti, Shubuty, Mulkoi), Sharo-Argun (Sharoy, Cheberloy), and wooded Ichkeria (Nokhch-Mokhk) formed natural mountain refuges [13][24][25]. Following the 13th-14th-century Mongol and Timurid campaigns across the Sunzha plain, these gorges saw extensive construction of mortar-bound residential stone towers (*gala*), pyramidal combat towers (*vov*), and above-ground collective vaulted crypts (*maigash* / *kash*) [10][13][26].
3. The Trans-Terek Lowland Steppe (Zone 3, 5,5k km^2, -10 to 150 m): North of the Terek river (Naurskaya, Shelkovskaya, Kargalinskaya steppes), mobile pastoralists (Scythians, Sarmatians,

Savirs/Khazars, Kipchaks, Golden Horde Tatars, and Nogais) alternated with fortified river settlements along the Terek bluff and, from the 16th to 19th centuries, the Greben and Terek Cossack *stanitsas* [8][17][20].

Methodology

Regional Subdivisions

To track population movements between the fertile Sunzha-Assa-Argun piedmont and the mountain tower gorges, we divide Chechnya and Ingushetia (20,8k km^2) into three elevation zones (Table 1):

Sub-Regional Zone	Elevation	Area (km2)	River Basins	Key Archaeological and Historical Centres
1. Sunzha-Assa-Argun Piedmont Plain	100 to 500 m	8,6k	Sunzha, lower Assa, Fortanga, Martan, lower Argun, Aksay and Terek valley	Lugovoye, Serzhen-Yurt, Alkhan-Kala, Magas (Nazran-Ekazhevo), Shali, Grozny
2. Highland Tower Gorges and Wooded Ichkeria	500 to 4 493 m	6,7k	Dzheirakh (Armkhi), Targim (upper Assa), Argun, Sharo-Argun and Hulhulau	Egikal, Erzi, Targim, Vovnushki, Tsoy-Pede, Khoy, Nikaroy, Sharoy, Vedeno
3. Trans-Terek Lowland Steppe	-10 to 150 m	5,5k	Left-bank Terek valley and Shelkovskaya-Naurskaya semi-arid steppe	Trans-Terek kurgans, Golden Horde river crossings, Greben/Terek Cossack stanitsas
Total Chechnya and Ingushetia	-10 to 4 493 m	20,8k	Terek-Sunzha-Argun drainage basin	Major prehistoric, Alanic, and Vainakh tower complexes

Table 1. Elevation zones, river basins, and principal archaeological and historical complexes of Chechnya and Ingushetia.

Estimation Methods

Regional population estimates $P(t)$ are derived from five independent archaeological and documentary methods:

1. Eastern Koban Hillfort and Cemetery Estimates (1200-400BC): Excavations by V. I. Kozenkova at Serzhen-Yurt I-II (~8-10 ha craft settlement with cobbled streets, >60 timber-and-wattle dwellings, and bronze-foundry workshops) and its adjacent cemetery (>120 excavated flat graves) alongside Zandak, Bamut, Nesterovskiy, and Lugovoye establish a density of 40-65 persons/ha for Eastern Koban hillforts (400-650 residents per major settlement) [4][5][6][7].
2. Alanic Fortified Town (*Gorodishche*) Area Estimates (400-1238AD): For the Early and High Medieval Alanic fortification network mapped by V. B. Vinogradov, Kh. M. Mamaev, D. Yu. Chakhkiev, and V. Yu. Malashev [12][27], population is estimated from intramural citadel area (80-120 persons/ha) plus open agricultural *posad* settlements (25-40 persons/ha) across the Alkhan-Kala urban centre (60 ha fortified core + >150 ha suburbs; 8,0k-15,0k inhabitants) and the Nazran-Ekazhevo / Ali-Yurt (Magas) settlement cluster (>30 fortified towns spanning ~100 km^2; 15,0k-25,0k inhabitants) [9][10][11][28].

3. Highland Stone Tower (*Gala*) and Collective Crypt (*Maigash* / *Kash*) Counts (1300-1700AD): In Zone 2, over 300 fortified stone tower villages (*aul-kreposti*) containing >2 000 residential towers (*gala*, 2-3 storeys, one nuclear or stem family of 5,5-6,5 persons per tower) and >250 pyramidal combat towers (*vov*, 4-6 storeys, 22-31 m high) are cross-checked against skeletal MNI counts inside multi-tiered collective stone crypts (Tsoy-Pede [42 crypts], Egikal, Erzi, Khoy, Vaserkel, where each lineage crypt accumulated 60-150 burials across 6-8 generations) [10][13][16][24][25].
4. 16th-18th-Century Russian *Posolskiye* and Fortress Registers (1550-1800AD): Diplomatic dispatches compiled by E. N. Kusheva [17], N. G. Volkova [18][29], and Ya. Z. and Sh. B. Akhmadov [30][31][32] record village counts (*kabaki* / *auly*), household totals (*dvory*), and military levies across *Okotskaya zemlya* (Aukh), *Michkizskaya zemlya* (Ichkeria), *Shubutskaya zemlya* (Shatoy / Argun), *Kalkanskaya* / *Erokanskaya zemlya* (Ingush gorges), and the resettled Sunzha-Argun plains [15][19][33].
5. Imperial Military Statistics, the 1886 Family Lists, and the 1897 Census (1860-1900AD): Late 19th-century estimates are anchored to A. P. Berger's (1859) village enumerations [34], the 1867-1890 statistical tables of Terek Oblast analysed by Z. Kh. Ibragimova [21] and V. M. Kabuzan [20], the 1886 family lists (*posemeynye spiski*), and Volume 68 (*Terskaya Oblast'*) of the 1897 First All-Russian Imperial Census across Grozny, Vedeno, Nazran/Sunzha, and left-bank Terek Cossack districts [22][23].

Historical Overview

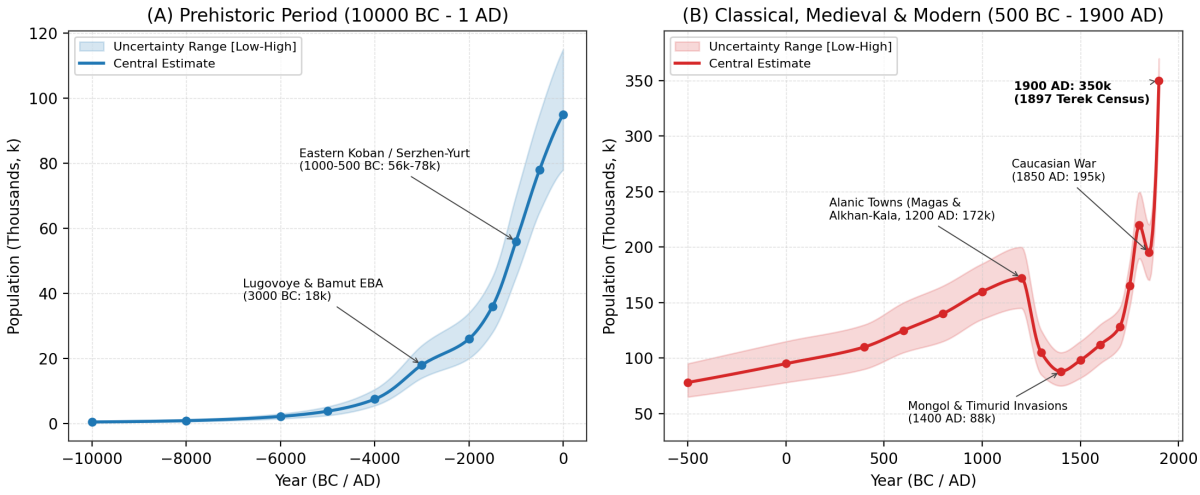


Figure 2. Estimated population of Chechnya and Ingushetia (10000BC - 1900AD) with [Low, High] uncertainty ranges: (A) Prehistoric growth from Mesolithic canyon camps to the Eastern Koban hillfort era; (B) The Alanic urban peak (1200AD: 172k), the 1239-1395 Mongol and Timurid invasions (1400AD: 88k), the Caucasian War contraction (1850AD: 195k), and recovery to the 1897 Terek Census (1900AD: 350k).

Mesolithic to Early and Middle Bronze Ages: Kezenoy-Am, Lugovoye, and Bamut (10000 - 1200BC)

During the Early Holocene (10000-5000BC), Mesolithic and Neolithic hunter-gatherers occupied high-mountain lake basins (Kezenoy-Am, 1 870 m) and limestone cave overhangs in the Argun, Sharoy, and Assa gorges, increasing gradually from 0,5k (10000BC) to 3,8k (5000BC) [2][3]. During the 4th and 3rd millennia BC (Eneolithic and Early Bronze Age, 4000-2000BC), the Sunzha-Assa-Argun piedmont became

an active contact zone where the Northeastern Caucasian Kura-Araxes culture met the Maykop-Novosvobodnaya kurgan tradition [1][2]:

- Lugovoye (Muzhichi, Assa Valley) and Serzhen-Yurt I: Excavated by R. M. Munchaev (1952-1957), the Lugovoye settlement and cemetery in the Assa gorge of Ingushetia (157 excavated burials) and the lower layer of Serzhen-Yurt I (Shali district, Chechnya) revealed wattle-and-daub houses with sunken circular hearths, horn-lugged Kura-Araxes burnished pottery, stone shaft-hole axes, and arsenical bronze daggers and spiral temple rings [1][2].
- The Bamut Kurgan Field (Бамутские курганы): On the Fortanga-Assa piedmont exit, Munchaev excavated over 50 Early and Middle Bronze Age kurgans combining Maykop-Novosvobodnaya metalwork with Kura-Araxes domestic pottery [2]. By 3000BC, piedmont farming villages and transhumant herders numbered 18,0k (14,0k-24,0k), rising during the Middle Bronze Age North Caucasian (Ginchi and Pre-Koban) cultures (Galaity, Achkhoy-Martan, Harachoy) to 26,0k (2000BC) and 36,0k (1500BC) [3].

Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages: The Eastern Koban Hillforts (1200 - 400BC)

Between the 12th and 5th centuries BC, Chechnya and Ingushetia formed the core territory of the Eastern Variant of the Koban Culture (Восточный вариант кобанской культуры), studied in detail by V. I. Kozenkova and M. Kh. Bagaev [3][4][5][6][7][35]:

- Serzhen-Yurt I-II Settlement: Situated on two naturally defended river terraces above the Bass river (Shali district), Serzhen-Yurt functioned from the 11th to the 6th century BC as a large craft and farming centre (~8-10 ha). Excavations uncovered cobble-paved main streets (4 m wide), rows of timber-framed clay dwellings (20-45 m^2), bronze-smelting furnaces with clay tuyères and stone casting moulds for Koban shaft-hole axes, zoomorphic terracotta figurines, and grain storage pits [5][6][36].
- Piedmont and Gorge Cemeteries (Nesterovskiy, Alkhaste, Lugovoye, Zandak, Sharoy): Over 80 Eastern Koban settlements and cemeteries line the Sunzha-Assa-Argun foothills and mountain gorges (the Zandak stone-cist cemetery in Nozhay-Yurt containing >60 graves; Nesterovskiy and Alkhaste in Ingushetia yielding bimetallic iron-and-bronze daggers and early Scythian *akinakes* weapons from the 7th-5th centuries BC) [3][4]. Supported by mixed millet-barley cultivation and mountain sheep-cattle husbandry (with 5,9% terraced land in mountainous Ingushetia [37]), total regional population rose from 56,0k (45,0k-70,0k) in 1000BC to 78,0k (65,0k-95,0k) in 500BC.

Sarmatian and Alanic Towns: *Magas* and *Alkhan-Kala* (400BC - 1238AD)

During the Sarmatian period (300BC - 300AD, 95,0k at 1AD) and the Early Alanic period (400-800AD, 110,0k in 400AD -> 140,0k in 800AD), a dense network of earthen-rampart and moated fortified towns (*gorodishcha*) developed along the Sunzha, Assa, Argun, and Terek rivers [8][11][12][27][38][39]:

- Alkhan-Kala (Алхан-Калинское городище, 18 km west of Grozny on the Sunzha): Protected by triple concentric horseshoe ramparts and deep moats backing onto a steep Sunzha river cliff, Alkhan-Kala enclosed a 60-hectare urban core surrounded by >150 ha of craft suburbs and a large catacomb cemetery (>2 500 kurgan and flat catacombs spanning the 2nd to 12th centuries AD) [8][12][38][39]. Serving as the main administrative and trading centre of the central Sunzha basin, Alkhan-Kala housed 8,0k-15,0k inhabitants prior to its destruction in 1238-1240.
- The Nazran-Ekazhevo-Yandare (Magas / Marac) Settlement Cluster: In the upper Sunzha-Assa-Kambileyevka interfluve of lowland Ingushetia, surveys by D. Yu. Chakhkiev, N. D.

Kodzoev, and U. B. Gadiev documented a cluster of over 30 fortified *gorodishcha* and >60 satellite villages spaced 0,5-2,0 km apart within a ~100 km^2 core (Hatrig-Yurt, Ekazhevo I-IV, Nazran, Ali-Yurt, Surkhakhi, Yandare, Gazi-Yurt) [9][10][40][41][42]. Identified by regional archaeologists with the Alanic capital Magas (*Ma'as*, described by al-Mas'udi in 943AD and besieged by the Mongol princes Möngke, Güyük, Kadan, and Büri from winter 1239 to early 1240 according to Juwayni and Rashid al-Din), this urban cluster housed 15,0k-25,0k inhabitants [9][10].

- Eastern Sunzha and Argun Fortified Towns (Germenchuk, Shali, Aldy, Goryacheistochnenskoye): Further east, fortified towns (15-45 ha each) controlled the Argun-Sunzha confluence and Terek crossings [12][43]. At its pre-Mongol high point around 1200AD, Chechnya and Ingushetia supported 172,0k (145,0k-200,0k) inhabitants (8,27 persons/km^2), with 75% (129,0k) living on the Sunzha-Assa-Argun piedmont plain (Zone 1).

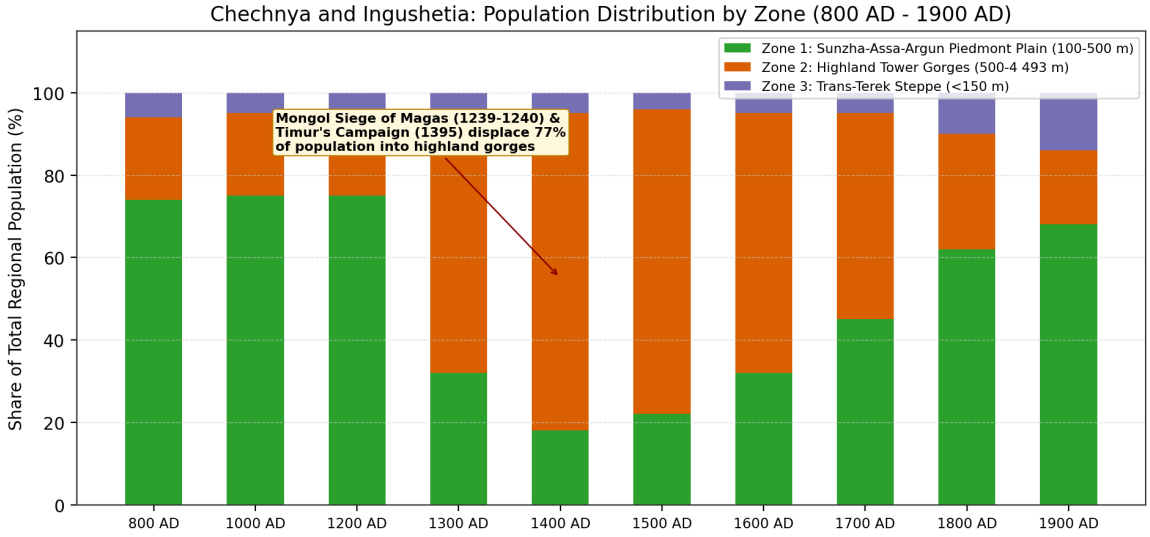


Figure 3. Population distribution by elevation zone in Chechnya and Ingushetia (800AD - 1900AD): share of regional population across Zone 1 (Piedmont Plains), Zone 2 (Highland Tower Gorges), and Zone 3 (Trans-Terek Steppe) before and after the 1239-1240 Mongol siege of Magas, Timur's 1395 campaign, and the 17th-19th-century return to the plains.

Mongol and Timurid Invasions and the Highland Stone Tower Villages (1238 - 1500AD)

Between 1238 and 1395AD, the lowland settlement network of Chechnya and Ingushetia was destroyed by two waves of invasion (Figure 2B and Figure 3):

1. The Mongol Conquest (1238-1240) and Golden Horde Rule: Following the storming and levelling of Magas (1239-1240), Alkhan-Kala, and Dedyakov (1277-1278 joint Mongol-Rus' siege recorded in the Russian chronicles), the fertile Sunzha and Terek plains were turned into winter pastures (*kochev'ya*) of the Golden Horde khans (Batu, Berke, Uzbek), where Ibn Battuta visited Uzbek Khan's camp at *Bish-Dag* in 1334 [10][15]. Total regional population fell by nearly 40% to 105,0k (85,0k-125,0k) by 1300AD.
2. Timur's Campaign against *Simsir* and the Mountain Gorges (1395-1396): After defeating Tokhtamysh on the Terek river in April 1395, Timur invaded the Vainakh principality of Simsir (Симсир) (ruled by Gayur Khan across Ichkeria and the Sunzha-Argun foothills) and marched into the highland gorges (*Aukhar*, *Buri-Burd*, *Kuli*, *Taus*). As recorded by Sharaf al-Din Yazdi and Nizam al-Din Shami,

Timur's troops demolished stone fortresses, burned terraced fields, and killed defenders across the mountains [14][15]. By 1400AD, regional population dropped to a late-medieval low of 88,0k (75,0k-105,0k), and its geographical distribution shifted sharply upward: 77% (67,8k) of all inhabitants were now concentrated in the mountain gorges of Zone 2, while the Sunzha plain (Zone 1) held only 18% (15,8k).

Refugee movement into the limestone canyons of the Armkhi (Dzheirakh), upper Assa (Targim basin), Fortanga, and upper Argun (Malkhista, Maysta, Terloy, Chanti, Cheberloy) spurred the construction of Vainakh stone tower complexes across the 14th to 17th centuries, documented by V. I. Markovin and D. Yu. Chakhkiev (Figure 4B) [10][13][24][25]:

- Ingush Gorge Complexes (Egikal, Erzi, Targim, Khamkhi, Vovnushki, Puy): In the Targim basin and Armkhi gorge, Egikal (Эгикал) alone contained over 50 mortar-bound residential stone towers (*gala*), 5 intact pyramidal combat towers (*vov*, up to 27 m high with machicolations and slate-slab roofs), 6 subterranean and 106 above-ground collective stone crypts (*kash*), and 3 sanctuary shrines (Tkhaba-Yerdy, Albi-Yerdy) [10][13][26].
- Chechen Argun and Cheberloy Complexes (Tsoy-Pede, Khoy, Nikaroy, Sharoy, Vaserkel, Pakoch): At the confluence of the Chanty-Argun and Meshi-Khi rivers in Malkhista, the cemetery of Tsoy-Pede (Цой-Педе) preserved 42 gabled stone collective crypts guarded by two defensive barrier walls and combat towers (>3 000 cumulative burials across the 14th-17th centuries) [13][16]. In Cheberloy (Kezenoy-Am basin), the cliff settlement of Khoy (Хой) and the 7-tower complex of Sharoy (Шарой) anchored dense terraced mountain communities [24][44].

Return to the Plains: Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Vainakh Societies (1500 - 1700AD)

Following the breakup of the Golden Horde and the founding of the Russian fortress of Terki (Терский город, 1567 / 1588) on the lower Terek, land scarcity on the mountain terraces of Zone 2 prompted a gradual Vainakh return to the forested foothills (*Chernye gory*) and the Sunzha-Argun-Aksay plains (1550-1700AD) [17][18][19][33][45].

Drawing on Russian *Posolskiy Prikaz* ambassadorial journals (Semen Zvenigorodskiy 1589, Fedor Takmakov 1604, Khodotetskiy 1638, Terki Voivode Books 1614-1690) analysed by E. N. Kusheva [17], N. G. Volkova [18][29], and Ya. Z. Akhmadov [15][19][32][33], total population across Chechnya and Ingushetia grew from 98,0k (1500AD) to 112,0k (1600AD) and 128,0k (110,0k-145,0k) by 1700AD (Figure 4A and Table 2):

- Okotskaya Zemlya (Окоцкая земля / Aukh): Located along the Aksay, Yamansu, and Aktash foothills (Staryy Okokh, Shovkhal-Berd), ruled by the mirzas Shikh-Murza (killed 1596) and Batay-Murza, who fielded 500-1 000 horsemen and footmen in Russian service (~850 households; 5,5k inhabitants, plus the *Okotskaya Sloboda* at Terki) [17][19][45].
- Michkizskaya Zemlya (Мичкизская земля / Wooded Ichkeria - Nokhch-Mokhk): Comprising 36 large villages along the Michik, Gums, Hulhulau, and Aksay rivers (Benoy, Tsontaroy, Gordali, Alleroy, Zandak, Vedeno); *Posolskiy Prikaz* reports (1619-1647) credit the *Michkizy* with 3 000-5 000 fighting men (3,8k-4,6k households; 24,0k-30,0k inhabitants) [17][19].
- Upper and Middle Argun Societies (Shubuty / Shatoy, Chanti, Mulkoi, Terloy, Malkhista, Maysta, Peshkhoy): Controlling the Argun gorge route to Tusheti and Khevsureti (3,6k-4,4k households; 21,0k-26,0k inhabitants) [19][30][33].
- Cheberloy and Sharoy (Sharo-Argun and Kezenoy-Am): 2,0k-2,5k households (12,0k-15,0k

inhabitants) [19].

- Ingush Mountain Societies (Kalkanskaya / Galgai, Erokanskaya / Dzheirakh, Khamkhi, Fyappiy / Metskhal) and Early Plains Settlements (Angusht / Tarskaya valley): 2,2k-2,8k households (13,0k-17,0k inhabitants) [10][29].
- Karabulaki (Orstkhoy on the Fortanga-Assa) and Akki (Akkintsy / Galashki): 1,6k-2,1k households (9,5k-13,0k inhabitants) [19][29][45].
- New Flatland Chechen *Auls* on the Sunzha and Lower Argun (Chechen-Aul, Staraya Sunzha, Shali, Germenchuk, Aldy, Gekhi, Atterki): Expanding rapidly during the second half of the 17th century (3,8k-4,6k households; 22,0k-29,0k inhabitants), lifting the lowland piedmont share (Zone 1) back to 45% by 1700AD [15][33].

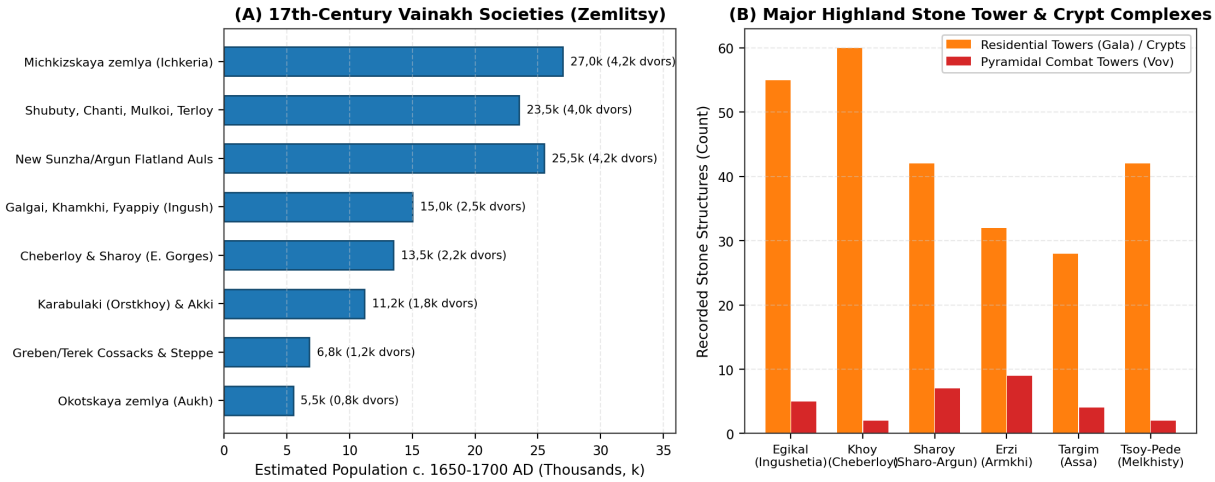


Figure 4. Early modern population and highland tower complexes in Chechnya and Ingushetia: (A) Estimated population and household (dvor) counts across 17th-century Vainakh territorial societies (zemlitsy) and Terek borderlands (c. 1650-1700AD); (B) Recorded residential stone towers (gala), collective crypts, and pyramidal combat towers (vov) at six major highland complexes.

Territorial Society (Zemlitsa) / Sub-Region	Elevation Zone	Households (Dvors)	Militia (Fighting Men)	Estimated Population
Michkizskaya zemlya (Ichkeria / Nokhch-Mokhk: 36 villages)	Zone 2 / Zone 1 margin	3,8k - 4,6k	3,5k - 5,0k	24,0k - 30,0k
New Sunzha and Lower Argun Flatland Auls (Chechen-Aul, Shali, Germenchuk, Aldy)	Zone 1 (Sunzha-Argun Plain)	3,8k - 4,6k	3,5k - 4,8k	22,0k - 29,0k
Upper and Middle Argun Societies (Shubuty/Shatoy, Chanti, Mulkoi, Terloy, Malkhista)	Zone 2 (Argun Gorges)	3,6k - 4,4k	3,2k - 4,2k	21,0k - 26,0k
Ingush Societies (Galgai/ Kalkany, Khamkhi, Fyappiy, Dzheirakh and Tarskaya Valley)	Zone 2 and Zone 1 (Assa-Armkhi-Terek)	2,2k - 2,8k	2,0k - 2,8k	13,0k - 17,0k

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Territorial Society (Zemlitsa) / Sub-Region	Elevation Zone	Households (Dvors)	Militia (Fighting Men)	Estimated Population
Cheberloy and Sharoy (Sharo-Argun and Kezenoy-Am Basin)	Zone 2 (Eastern Gorges)	2,0k - 2,5k	1,8k - 2,5k	12,0k - 15,0k
Karabulaki (Orstkhoy on Fortanga-Assa) and Highland Akki (Lam-Akki)	Zone 2 / Zone 1 (Fortanga-Assa)	1,6k - 2,1k	1,5k - 2,0k	9,5k - 13,0k
Greben and Terek Cossack Gorodki + Trans-Terek Nogai Winter Camps	Zone 3 (Terek Bluff and Steppe)	1,0k - 1,4k	1,0k - 1,5k	5,5k - 8,0k
Okotskaya zemlya (Aukh Foothills: Aktash, Yamansu, Yaryksu)	Zone 1 (Eastern Foothills)	0,75k - 0,95k	0,6k - 1,0k	4,5k - 6,5k
Total Chechnya and Ingushetia (20,8k km2)	All 3 Elevation Zones	18,75k - 23,35k	17,1k - 23,8k	128,0k (110,0k - 145,0k)

Table 2. Population and household estimates for Chechnya and Ingushetia c. 1650-1700AD across Vainakh territorial societies (zemlitsy) and Terek borderlands.

The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (1700 - 1900AD)

The 18th and 19th centuries brought the completion of Vainakh lowland settlement across the Sunzha-Grozny plains, the construction of the Russian Terek-Sunzha fortified line, severe population losses during the Caucasian War (1818-1859), and rapid post-1865 demographic recovery [10][20][21][46]:

1. Eighteenth-Century Lowland Expansion and the Terek Cossack Line (1700-1800AD): Throughout the 18th century, Chechen and Ingush settlers founded large agricultural villages (1,0k-3,5k inhabitants each) across Greater and Lesser Chechnya (*Bol'shaya i Malaya Chechnya*: Shali, Germenchuk, Urus-Martan, Goyty, Gekhi, Achkhoy, Gudermes, Avtury, Mayrtup) and the Nazran-Kambileyevka plain (Angusht, Sholkhi, Nazran, where Ingush elders took a formal oath of allegiance to Russia in 1770 and 1810) [10][31][46][47]. Simultaneously, the Russian Empire established the Terek-Mozdok Cordon Line along the left bank of the Terek (Kizlyar 1735, Mozdok 1763, Vladikavkaz 1784), resettling Greben, Terek-Semeynye, and Volga Cossacks across the Naurskaya and Shelkovskaya steppes (Zone 3) [20]. Combined Vainakh and Cossack population rose from 128,0k in 1700AD to 165,0k (145,0k-185,0k) in 1750AD and 220,0k (190,0k-250,0k) in 1800AD, with 62% (136,5k) residing on the Sunzha-Argun piedmont plains [20][46].
2. The Caucasian War (1818-1859) and the 1865 *Muhajir* Emigration: General A. P. Yermolov's construction of the Sunzha Fortified Line - anchored by the fortress of **Groznaya** (founded 1818) - and the forced eviction of Chechen villages between the Terek and Sunzha rivers sparked the 1818-1859 war, during which Chechnya formed the principal agricultural and military base of Imam Shamil's Caucasian Imamate (capital at Dargo 1840-1845 and Vedeno 1845-1859) [20][21]. Repeated military campaigns, forest-clearing (*proseki*), winter blockades of lowland pastures, and the replacement of Orstkhoy (Karabulak) and western Chechen foothill villages with the **Sunzha Cossack Line** (*stanitsas* of Слепцовская / Sleptsovskaya, Troitskaya, Karabulakskaya, Assinskaya,

Samashkinskaya, Mikhailovskaya in 1845-1860) caused severe demographic losses: Russian military-statistical estimates summarised by A. P. Berger (1859) [34], V. M. Kabuzan (1996) [20], and Z. Kh. Ibragimova (2006) [21] indicate that ethnic Chechen numbers dropped from ~250,0k-300,0k in the 1830s to ~130,0k-150,0k by 1859-1860 (yielding a regional midpoint of 195,0k [170,0k-220,0k] across Chechnya-Ingushetia including Cossack settlements in 1850AD). In the summer of **1865**, imperial authorities organised the *muhajir* emigration of **~22,0k-23,0k** Chechens and nearly the entire **Orstkhoy (Karabulak)** population (~5,0k families) into the Ottoman Empire [10][20][21].

3. Post-War Recovery, the 1886 Family Lists, and the 1897 Terek Oblast Census: Between 1866 and 1900, peaceful agrarian recovery on the Sunzha-Argun maize-and-wheat plains, the **1886 family lists (*posemeynye spiski*)** (which recorded ~195,0k ethnic Chechens and ~38,0k Ingush), and the discovery of the **Grozny oilfield (1893)** combined with the Vladikavkaz Railway to produce rapid population growth [20][21]. In the **First General Census of the Russian Empire (28 January 1897)** for **Terek Oblast** (Vol. 68) [22][23], the total number of native Vainakh speakers in Terek Oblast reached **273 962** (**226 496** Chechens and **47 466** Ingush). Within the administrative districts corresponding to modern Chechnya and Ingushetia - specifically the **Grozny Okrug** (226 035 total inhabitants, including **Grozny city** with 15 564 residents), the **Sunzha (Nazran) Otdel** (~47,4k Ingush plus ~36,0k Sunzha Cossacks), the Chechen sector of the **Khasavyurt Okrug** (~18,1k Aukh Chechens), and the left-bank **Kizlyar / Mozdok Terek Cossack *stanitsas*** (Naurskaya, Shelkovskaya, Chervlennaya, Kalinovskaya; ~40,0k inhabitants) - total population reached **350,0k** (330,0k-370,0k, or 16,83 persons/km^2) by **1900AD**, with 68% (238,0k) concentrated on the Sunzha-Assa-Argun plains and Grozny urban district (Zone 1), 18% (63,0k) in the mountain gorges (Zone 2), and 14% (49,0k) across the Trans-Terek Cossack steppe (Zone 3) [20][21][22].

Limitations

1. Multi-Generational Use of Collective Stone Crypts (*Kash* / *Maigash*): Because highland lineage crypts at Tsoy-Pede, Egikal, and Erzi remained in continuous use from the 14th to the 18th century (until Islamisation replaced crypt burial with subterranean *keschnash* cemeteries), skeletal MNI totals must be divided by 6-8 generations (180-240 years) to estimate the living population of any single century [10][13][16].
2. Wartime Displacement and Administrative Re-Districting (1818-1900AD): During the Caucasian War and the subsequent reorganisation of Terek Oblast (merging and splitting the Grozny, Vedeno, Ichkeria, Argun, and Sunzha/Nazran districts between 1860 and 1905), military estimates of unpacified highland communities carried wider margins of error (~15-20%) prior to the 1886 family lists and the 1897 census [20][21].

Conclusion

The population history of Chechnya and Ingushetia (10000BC - 1900AD) reflects a recurring shift between the fertile Sunzha-Argun piedmont plains and the defensive stone gorges of the Greater Caucasus. After reaching two major early lowland peaks during the Eastern Koban hillfort era (56,0k-78,0k in 1000-500BC) and the Alanic urban period around Magas and Alkhan-Kala (172,0k in 1200AD), the region experienced a dramatic shift into the mountain gorges following the Mongol and Timurid invasions (77% highland concentration in 1400AD at 88,0k). Subsequent Vainakh resettlement of the plains lifted population to 128,0k by 1700AD and 220,0k by 1800AD, and despite the heavy toll of the Caucasian War and the 1865 *muhajir* deportations (195,0k in 1850AD), demographic recovery and the Grozny industrial expansion carried the regional population to 350,0k (16,83 persons/km^2) by 1900AD.

Appendix

Population Estimates

Benchmark	Zone 1: Piedmont Plain (8,6k km2)	Zone 2: Highland Gorges (6,7k km2)	Zone 3: Trans-Terek Steppe (5,5k km2)	Total Midpoint	Uncertainty Range [Low - High]	Density (p/km2)
10000BC	0,20k	0,25k	0,05k	0,5k	0,3k - 0,8k	0,02
8000BC	0,40k	0,40k	0,10k	0,9k	0,6k - 1,3k	0,04
6000BC	1,00k	1,00k	0,20k	2,2k	1,5k - 3,0k	0,11
5000BC	1,8k	1,6k	0,4k	3,8k	2,5k - 5,2k	0,18
4000BC	4,0k	2,8k	0,7k	7,5k	5,5k - 10,5k	0,36
3000BC	10,8k	5,4k	1,8k	18,0k	14,0k - 24,0k	0,87
2000BC	15,5k	8,0k	2,5k	26,0k	20,0k - 34,0k	1,25
1500BC	21,5k	11,5k	3,0k	36,0k	28,0k - 45,0k	1,73
1000BC	34,0k	17,5k	4,5k	56,0k	45,0k - 70,0k	2,69
500BC	48,0k	23,0k	7,0k	78,0k	65,0k - 95,0k	3,75
1AD	62,0k	24,0k	9,0k	95,0k	78,0k - 115,0k	4,57
400AD	77,0k	24,0k	9,0k	110,0k	90,0k - 130,0k	5,29
600AD	90,0k	26,0k	9,0k	125,0k	105,0k - 150,0k	6,01
800AD	103,5k	28,0k	8,5k	140,0k	115,0k - 165,0k	6,73
1000AD	120,0k	32,0k	8,0k	160,0k	135,0k - 185,0k	7,69
1200AD	129,0k	34,4k	8,6k	172,0k	145,0k - 200,0k	8,27
1300AD	33,6k	65,1k	6,3k	105,0k	85,0k - 125,0k	5,05
1400AD	15,8k	67,8k	4,4k	88,0k	75,0k - 105,0k	4,23
1500AD	21,6k	72,5k	3,9k	98,0k	82,0k - 115,0k	4,71
1600AD	35,8k	70,6k	5,6k	112,0k	95,0k - 130,0k	5,38
1700AD	57,6k	64,0k	6,4k	128,0k	110,0k - 145,0k	6,15
1750AD	92,0k	61,0k	12,0k	165,0k	145,0k - 185,0k	7,93
1800AD	136,5k	61,5k	22,0k	220,0k	190,0k - 250,0k	10,58
1850AD	105,0k	62,0k	28,0k	195,0k	170,0k - 220,0k	9,38
1900AD	238,0k	63,0k	49,0k	350,0k	330,0k - 370,0k	16,83

Table 3. Estimated population of Chechnya and Ingushetia across its three elevation zones (10000BC - 1900AD; total area 20,8k km2).

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