A History of Panemune

Historical Outline of Sovereignty Over Panemune

1400s- Panemune in territory of Grand Duchy of Lithuania. (Lithuania).

1569- Panemune in territory of Kingdom of Poland. (Wojewodztwo Vilna?, powiat ?) (Lithuania/Poland Commonwealth).

1765- Panemune in territory of Kingdom of Poland, Powiat (district/county) Kaunas (Lithuania/Poland Commonwealth).

1795- Panemune in territory of New East Prussia, Bialystok Department, Powiat (county) of Mariampol. (Prussia).

1807- Panemune in territory of Duchy of Warsaw, District of Mariampol. (France).

1815- Panemune part of Uznemune (area along the left bank of the Nemunas) in territory of Congress Poland, Voivodship (province) of Augustow. (Polish administration under Russian sovereignty).

1837- Panemune in territory of Congress Poland, Augustow Gubernia. (Polish administration under Russian sovereignty).

1866/67- Panemune in territory of Privislansky Kraj (Land of the Vistula), Suwalki Gubernia, powiat (district) Mariampol, Gmina (township) of Ponemon-Pogaiskoy. (Russia).

1874- Panemune in territory of Suwalki Gubernia, Suwalki Uyezd (district). (Russia).

1908- Panemune in territory of Suwalki Gubernia, Uyezd Mariampole. (Russia).

1915- Panemune in Suwalki Gubernia (Germany).

1918- Panemune in territory of New East Prussia. (Germany).

1919- Panemune in territory of Lithuania. (Lithuania).

1931- Panemune incorporated as a suburb of Kaunas. (Lithuania).

1940- Panemune in territory of Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. (Russia).

1941- Panemune in territory of Generalbezirk Litauen, Administrative Province of Reichs Kommissariat Ostland. (Germany).

1944- Panemune in territory of Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. (Russia).

1990- Panemune in territory of Republic of Lithuania. (Lithuania).

<u>Introduction</u>

Panemune (today, known as Aukstoji Panemune: Upper Panemune) is pronounced, in Yiddish, as, "<u>paw</u>/neh/mon." In Lithuanian and Polish it is pronounced, "pa/nya/<u>moo</u>/nya" and in Russian, as, "po/nee/mon."[1] It is rendered in English in over a dozen and one-half different ways.[2]

Panemune means, in Lithuanian: "On the Niemon River." It is located on the left (west) bank of the Niemon, Southeast and across from Kaunas, between the mouth of the Jiesia and the Nemunas dam, in an area known as Uznemune (left bank area of the Niemon.)   A loop of the Neimon surrounds it on three sides.[3]

<u>Early History</u>

In the 14th Century, Panemune was part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and was the site of a castle. According to one theory, Vietotus, Grand Duke of Lithuania, sought help from German knights to fight against Jaghello, king of Poland. He permitted the knights to build several castles on the bank of the Niemon river, one of which was built on what is now upper Panemune. Another theory suggests that in 1396, Vietotus destroyed a castle which had been built there.[4]

In the late 1400's, the high hill at the southwest end of Panemune, was owned by Zev, the son of Daniel of Troki, who lived in Kaunas. It was later known as "Jido Kelnis": "The Mountain of the Jews."[5]

The estate of Panemune was established in 1559.[6] Over the centuries it grew into a berg as merchants settled there and custom officials moved in, who imposed dues on cargo ships

navigating the Niemon.[7] In 1569, Panemune became part of the Polish-Lithuanian

Commonwealth, a merger between the Polish Kingdom and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.[8]

In the 18th Century, Panemune was the property of Simanui Siruciui, an elder of the

Kaunas Court, who built a stone church there in 1762/63.   In 1763, Panemune was granted city

rights. In 1794, Siruciui's grandson, Karolis Prozoras, donated all of his wealth to aid in the

Kościuszko Uprising against Russia and the Kingdom of Prussia, and sold Panemune to Petrui

Lebrechtui Frencesliui. It then became known as Frentcelio Panemune/Panemune Frentzele.[9]

In 1795, as part of the third partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Russia

seized territory on the east side of the Niemon, which included Kaunas, and Prussia seized

territory on the west side, including Panemune. The area seized by Prussia was now known as

"Neu-Ost-Preussen" (New East Prussia).   Panemune served as the Township seat, situated in the

Powiat (district) of Mariampole, in an administrative area called, "The Bialystok Department".[10]

In 1799, Panemune had 844 inhabitants.[11]

In January, 1807, Napoleon seized New East Prussia (and in 1809 seized Austrian

territory to the south), and called this new conquered area, "The Grand Duchy of Warsaw." The

Niemon River remained its boundary on the east.[12] Panemune continued to be in the Bialystok

Department and probably continued to be part of the district of Mariampol.

In June of 1812, Napoleon began the war against Russia from the bank of the Niemon

River in Panemune. He directed the invasion against Kaunas from the top of a high hill in

Alexota, just to the West of Panemune. On the night of June 23d, 300 soldiers were ferried

across the Niemon to serve as a protective screen for the thirty army engineers who built three

pontoon bridges across the Niemon; two of which were between Panemune and the Jasia River

which emptied into the Neimon. The next morning, soldiers from the Polish 6th Uhlan (lancers)

Regiment who had occupied Panemune, were the first to cross, followed by the rest of the invading forces, some 200-250,000 men, over the course of two days.[13] Some of the remnants of the Grand Army also passed through Panemune again, on their retreat.[14] As a result of Napoleon's defeat in 1813, Russia occupied the Duchy of Warsaw, which included Panemune.

In 1815, following the Congress of Vienna, Russia incorporated the territory west of the Niemon, which included Panemune. The new area was called, Kongresowka: "The Congress Kingdom of Poland." It was a Russian dependency, internally governed by Poles. Panemune, together with Kaunas, became part of the Voivodeship (province) of Augustow.[15]

In 1825 the city rights were revoked.[16] In 1831, during the Polish rebellion, a group of uprisers, led by Colonel Dembickius briefly took over Panemune. (City rights were reinstated in 1837.) Following the 1831 rebellion, the Polish Voivodeships were replaced by Gubernias (provinces). Panemune was now located in Augustow Gubernia, while Kaunas, across the river, was the center of Kaunas Gubernia.[17]

In the mid-1800s, some of the land around Panemune was owned by Herr Leopold von Ashfort, a German nobleman.[18] In 1859, a second church (made of brick) was built there.[19]   By this time, Panemune was the Township seat (Gemin).[20] On December 19th, 1866, Panemune became part of the Suwalk Gubernia, Mariampole Powiat (county), Ponemon-Pogaiskoy Gemin.[21] In 1868, Panemune vital record documents switched from Polish to Russian.[22] In 1868-69 was a severe famine in Suwalk Gubernia, known as "the great hunger", as well as a cholera outbreak, which spurred emigration from Panemune.[23]   By 1884, the 4th Fort, part of a ring of eight forts that encircled Kaunas, was built in Panemune.[24]   In order to build the fort, the Russian government pressured Frentcesliui's descendents to sell Panemune.[25] Some of the land in the late 1880s was owned by the Tur family.[26] Panemune, in 1897, had 1,575 inhabitants.[27]

In the early 1900s, Panemune was a popular resort area. In 1912/1913, an airport was build in Panemune by the Czarist army for the defense of the western border of the Empire.[28] From 1915 to 1918, Germany seized Congress Poland. In 1916, the German army built a temporary bridge connecting Panemune with Kaunas.[29] In 1918, Panemune became part of independent Lithuania. In 1921, a military school was moved there and an officer's school was established.   In 1924, bus service was instituted between Kaunas and Panemune.[30]

By 1928, a more permanent bridge had been built, linking Panemune with Kaunas.[31] In 1931, Panemune became a western suburb of Kaunas. In 1932 it had 3,700 inhabitants.

In 1940 Panemune was now in the territory of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic and was, once again, a Russian dependency. From 1941-1944, as a result of German occupation, Panemune was in the territory of Generalbezirk Litauen, Administrative Province of Reichs Kommissariat Ostland. In 1944 Panemune was, once again, in the territory of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic under Russian domination, which was to continue until 1990 when the area became part of the Republic of Lithuania.

ENDNOTES

[1] (See File 824, "Panemune", Lithuanian Communities Collection, YIVO, N.Y.)

[2] Variants, most of which are found in the Ellis Island Database, include: Panaman, Panamun, Panamin, Panemon, Panemun, Panemune, Panemune Frentzele, Panemuni, Panemunyje, Panomon, Panyemun, Peinemon, Penemin, Pojnemun, Ponemon, Ponemony, Poniaman, Poniemon, Poniemun, Ponjemon, and Ponomin.

[3] (See Encyclopedia Lithuanica, "Aukstoji Panemune"; Troy, Abraham, Surviving the Holocaust: The Kovno Ghetto Diary, Harvard University Press, 1990, pp. 20,89,maps). Panemune's coordinates are 54* 51' Latitude; 23* 58' Longitude.

[4] (See Encyclopedia Lituanica, Vol. IV, "Aukstoji Panemune".)

[5] (See <u>Yahadut Lita</u>, Vol. III, quoting the Lithuanian Metrica.) This high hill was later called Mt. Napolean.

[6] (See <u>Encyclopedia Lituanica</u>, <u>Op. Cit.)</u> The expansion was possibly due to the influence of King Sigmund I (1507-1548) who encouraged trade and craftsmanship. Under his protection, the population of Kaunas grew. It was during this time that Polish and German merchants were settling in Kaunas, as well. (See Freidheiman, Peisach, "Epilogue Instead Prologue", <u>Gyvenimas ir Atmintis: Kauno Zyd ai nuo 1944-uju</u>, Kaunas, 1994, p. 37). Exactly what the boundries of Panemune were, is currently unknown. Whether Panemune encompassed the area known in the 20th Century as, Patemulshelis, is not clear.

[7] "In this period, there was a significant growth in the export of flax, grain, live fowl, cattle, milk products, and wood, which were floated down the Neimon and its tributaries. Of particular importance was the water route from Kovno to Riga (via Keidan and Shavli) and the overland route from St. Petersburg to Warsaw, which also passed through Kovno." (Dov Levin, The Litvacks, op. cit., p. 25).

[8] "The Commonwealth was governed by a parliament of nobles, who elected both a Grand Duke for Lithuania and a King of Poland." (Landsmen, Vol. 12, nos. 1-2, July 2002, p. 27.)

[9] See <u>Encyclopedia Lituanica</u>, <u>Op. Cit.</u>; Supplement to HaMagid, Feb. 7th, 1872, lists the town of "Ponemon Frenzil"; "Exhibition city Kaunas: Plans and Maps" (1/31/2015 at WWWMaps4U.Lt/en/news.php?page_id=62) shows "Poniemon" appearing in a 1776 map made by Prussian topographers.

[10] What the relationship, communication and trade were like between Panemune and Kaunas during the next 15 years is unknown, though a 1795 map of the Nemunas River, now serving as the border between Russia and Prussia, shows some type of bridge stretching from the Panemune area (not identified) around border marker #177, to Kovno, as does a 1795-1800 New East Prussia military map and a 1800 Plan of city Kaunas. ("Exhibition city Kaunas: Plans and Maps", Op. Cit.).

[11] (See Wasicki, Jan, <u>Prussian Descriptions of Polish Towns From the End of the 18th Century: Bialystok Department</u>, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, 1964. This is based on Prussian archive data complied by August Carl von Holsche in 1799-1800; Landsmen, Vol. 12, Nos. 1-2, July, 2002, pp. 5 and 14).

[12] While Panemune's side of the Niemon was now under the Napoleonic Code, and thus used the new-style calendar, the Kaunas side of the Niemon continued to employ the Russian civil calendar. Thus, the bridge from Aleksota to Kaunas was jokingly called the longest in the world, since the trip across it resulted in a change of 12 days.   ("Kaunas Dates and Facts", Op. Cit.).

[13] "Finally we came to the Memel River, where the Russian border was. The town of Poniemon was located there. Everyone rejoiced to see the Russian boundary at last. We encamped at the foot of the hill this side of the river… The town of Poniemon was already stripped before we could enter…" (Jakob Walter, The Diary of a Napoleonic Foot Soldier, Marc Raeff, edit., Doubleday, 1991, p. 41, based on, "A German Conscript with Napoleon-Jakob Walter's Recollections of the Campaigns of 1806-1807, 1809, and 1812-1813", Otto Springer editor and translator, Bulletin of the University of Kansas-Humanistic Studies, vol. VI, nu. 3, 1938). "With the points…of his own army group held back and out of sight from the opposite river bank, Napoleon exchanged the gray overcoat he usually wore for a Polish hussar's cloak and rode along the Niemen to make a personal reconnaissance and to finalize the exact locations where the bridges were to be laid down." (Richard K. Riehn, 1812: Napoleon's Russian Campaign, McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., NY, 1990, p. 162). "His reconnaissance completed, he gave the order that the following nightfall three bridges should be thrown over the river near the village of Poniemen..." (Napoleon's Russian Campaign, translated and edited by Townsend, J. David, 1958, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, abridged version of La Campagne de Russie, Memoires d'un Aide de Camp de Napoleon, de Segur, Count Philippe-Paul, Nelson, Paris, 1824, pp. 5,7.) The cavalry first went over on June 24th, followed by the rest of the army on June 25th. (Jakob Walter, Op. Cit., p. 41, Riehn, Op. Cit., pp. 163-164). He spent part of the day in his tent and part in a nearby Polish mansion, lying without energy in the breathless, muggy heat...Perched on the highest hill, about three hundred feet from the river, we saw the Emperor's tent." (Napoleon's Russian Campaign, Op. Cit.). This was, in all probability, the high hill once owned by Zev, the son of Daniel of Troki. (See above). Several maps of the 20th Century label this spot as "Napoleon's Hill", as do the inhabitants of Panemune to this day. (See 1914-1919 Russian map of the Western Frontier, "Exhibition city Kaunas: Plans and Maps", Op. Cit., that shows Napoleon's Hill, in an area called Jessia, between Ponjemon and Freda on the Nemun River. Wolf Bregstein letter to Jeff Marx, 17th, April, 1990. See also photo, ca. 1905, bfc-00382, Boris Feldblyum collection, which shows a house on the right bank of the Niemen in which Napoleon allegedly stayed, and see photo of house, below) .

[14] Under the command of Murat, following the final destruction of the French army at Paneriai, the remnants of the French army retreated through Kaunas on Dec. 9/10, 1812. (See The Cambridge Modern History, Vol. IX, Macmillan Co., NY, 1906, pp. 490-505). "It was not without some difficulty that we climbed the almost perpendicular slope which one must surmount on leaving Kovno for Mariampol." (Decaulaincount, p. 275). "From Vilna onward, the Russian cavalry again sufficed to chase the French across the Niemen. Ney attempted to hold the bridge at Kovno…" (Riehn, Op. Cit., p. 394). Other of Napoleon's soldiers crossed near-by. "By the end of December, we reached the Polish border along the Memel River. When I heard that it would be very hard to get through near Kovno, I led my horse up the river and crossed..." (Jakob Walter, Op. Cit., p. 96).

15th-16th Century House Where Emperor Napoleon Was Said to Have Stayed on December 7, 1812
(Photo by P. Karpavičius, <u>Kauno architektūra</u>, Vilnius,1968.
Courtesy of Kaunas County Public Library)

[15] None-the less, a number of the French regulations remained in force in this area. (See Shea, Jonathan, "Kongresowka- The Kingdom of Poland", in <u>Landsmen</u>, Vol. 3, numbers 2-3, 1992-93, p.21; and Dov Levin, <u>The Litvaks</u>, <u>op. cit</u>. , p. 27).

[16] Another source states that the village was destroyed in 1825 and rebuilt in 1837.

[17] Again, the fact that Poniemon and Kovno were in two different Gubernias probably did not effect day to day life. 1837/38, 1850 and 1871 Plans of City Kaunas, show a bridge from the Panemune area to Kaunas. ("Exhibition city Kaunas: Plans and Maps", Op. Cit.).

[18] (See Horwich, <u>Op. Cit.</u>, p. 11-13.) A German cemetery was in existence, just outside of Panemune, up till the end of WWII.

[19] (See <u>Encyclopedia Lituanica</u>, <u>Op. Cit.)</u>

[20] (See <u>Encyclopedia Lituanica</u>, <u>Op. Cit.)</u>

[21] Suwalk Gubernia was formed from the old Augustow Gubernia. (See 1993 letter from Lithuanian State Archives to Philo Bregstein).

[22] Civil registration first began in 1808, using Polish. Following the unsuccessful Polish uprising in 1868, the Russian government decreed that vital records be kept in Russian. (See Jeffrey K. Cymbler, "Polish-Jewish Genealogical Research- A Primer", Avotaynu, Vol. IX, number 2, Summer 1993, p. 7.) (See 1829 death record for Hirsha Bregshtein written in Yiddish

and Polish, in Panemune death registry, 1826-1837; 1878 Judith Bregstein birth record in Kovno birth registry, 1842-1902, written in Yiddish and Russian.) Judel Bragsten's 1875 Swedish application to Vista i Riket, however, contains supporting documentation from the rabbi of Panemune written in Polish, suggesting that while Russian may have been required for civil documents, Polish was still the preferred choice at that time.

[23] (See Suwalki Yizkor Book; and Dov Levin, The Litvaks, op. cit., p. 82). An earlier famine had also occurred in 1843-1845. (See Dov Levin, The Litvaks, op. cit., p. 28). It may also be that the establishment of a railroad station in Kaunas, in 1863, made travel easier across Lithuania. ("Kaunas Dates and Facts", Op. Cit.).

[24]
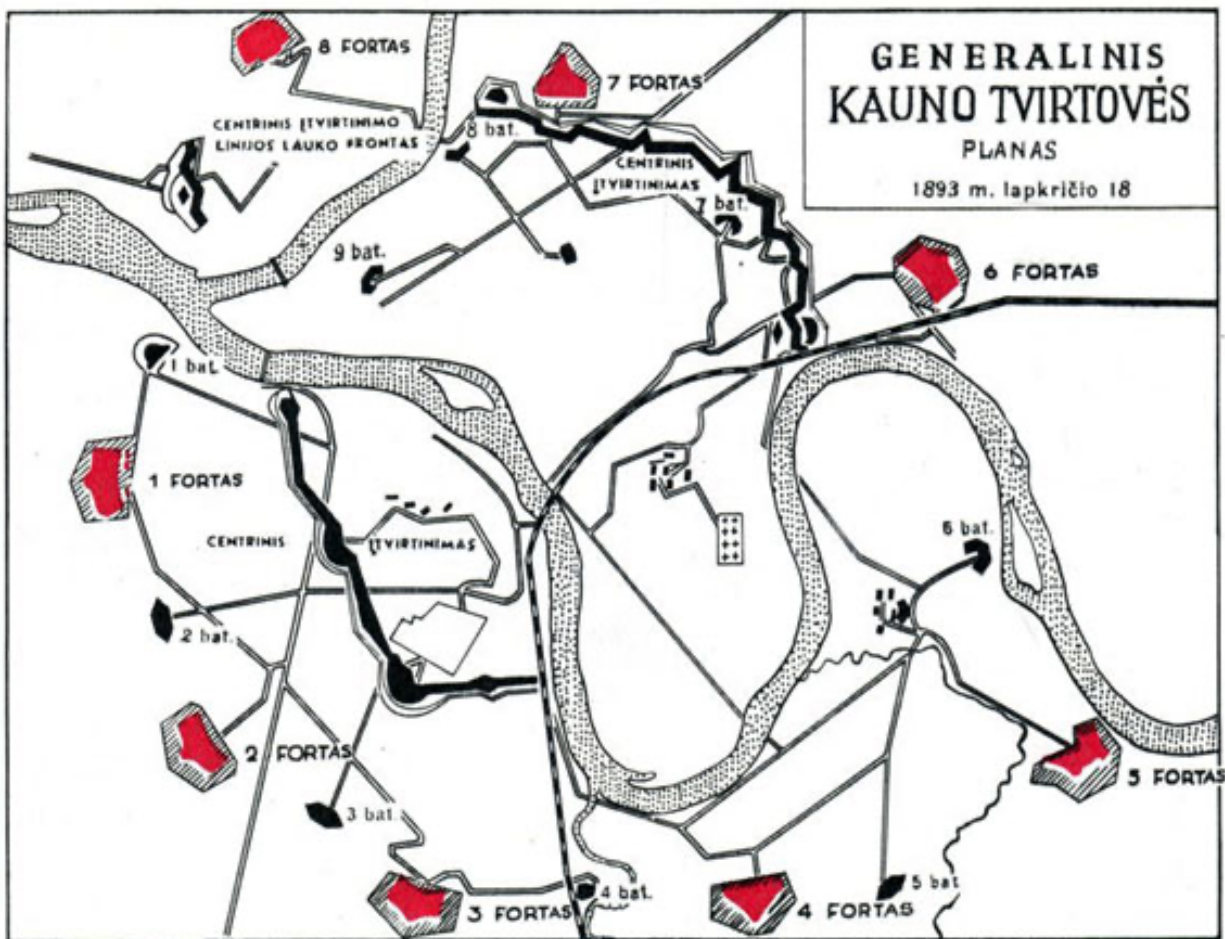
General Plan of the Fortress System
(Mokslas ir gyvenimas,1969, nr. 3, p. 8)
Courtesy of Kaunas County Public Library

[25] (See Encyclopedia Lituanica, Op. Cit.; Independent Suwalk & Vicinity Benevolent Association and Relief Committee, Op. Cit.). There are several factors which may have led to this. In the aftermath of the Second Rebellion against Russian rule, (1863), a program of Russification was intensified. "... Russian officers and aristocrats inherited the estates of those Lithuanian noblemen who had participated in the rebellion." (Dov Levin, The Litvaks, p. 28). Could it be that Frentcesliui was more than "pressured"? Also, the second half of the Nineteenth Century saw an intensive program of military construction, such as the fortresses around Kovno. (Dov Levin, The Litvaks p. 28).

[26] They owned 539 acres. (See Sulimierski, Op. Cit., "Poniemun", #6.)

[27] (See Jewrejskaja Enciklopedia (Jewish Encylopedia}, 1897 and "Suwalk Gubernia", Evrejskaya Entsiklopediya, St. Petersburg, 1906-1913, Vol. IX, pp. 339-341.)

[28] "Kaunas Dates and Facts (Kaunas Public Library, http://datos.kvb.lt/en/index.php?option=com_laikotarpiai&task=view&id=19&Itemid=65).

[29] "Kaunas Dates and Facts" (Kaunas County Public Library, Http://datos.kvb.lt/en/index.php?option=com_laikotarpiai&task=view&id=21&Itemid=67&extend=190&highlight=bridge#i190). 1914-1919 Russian map of the Western Frontier shows a bridge, called Eisenhart, from Ponjemon to Kovno. 1917 Plan of city Kaunas, ("Plan von Kowno und Umgebung", publisher Kownoer Zeitung) also shows a bridge from Ponjemon to Kovno. (See "Exhibition city Kaunas: Plans and Maps", Op. Cit.).

[30] (Kaunas Dates and Facts, Op. Cit.).

Passenger Bus, 1930s
(Kauno autobusai, Kaunas, 2004, p. 9)

[31] ("Kaunas Dates and Facts", Op. Cit.). The bridge was partially destroyed by an ice drift in the spring of 1928 and was rebuilt by the end of Dec. of that year. In June of 1941, the withdrawing Soviet army destroyed the bridge. It was rebuilt on the old supports in 1957.