

The Vasoyevi Reformation



Vasoyevi Folk Music

The End of the Road

As told by Ursula Vasović

Come, child, and sit around the fire. I know that we are in confusing times. The nations of humanity are in turmoil. The church's influence dwindles. Bandits, trolls, and petty rebellions roam the countryside. But the world has long been tumultuous and, through it all, we Vasoyevi have been there, weathering the storm. And we shall evermore.

However, our Patriarch has seen a message for us, a duty and charge we must not put down. The Exalted has set us upon a new path, and it will lead us to success and glory. Fear not the unknown, child, for that is where our strength has always been tested. Have we been found wanting yet? Of course not.

It all began with my husband, the last Patriarch of our caravan, Dragomir Niculae Vasović. He was a charismatic Patriarch, always willing to lend a hand to any other Vasoyevi. His charm and charity led many of the other caravans to merge with ours, until our caravan proved the largest among all the Vasoyevi. Even the Pavle, Petrović and Samardzic caravans integrated beneath the Patriarch. Truly it was a golden age for our people until tragedy, as assuredly as the tides do rise, struck our people. The Inferi assaulted Arcas, and its lands were decimated. Dragomir held us together in this time, and assisted us in the move to Almaris, but at a heavy cost. As we fled Arcas, during a heavy period of rain and sleet, several wagons were caught in the mud. Dragomir, being the kind heart he was, stayed with the carts, in the torrential rain, cold and mud, freeing it so that it could make its fair to the docks and give way to our escape. The effort caused Dragomir a great sum of duress, and he contracted an illness that only worsened

during his time on the ships. He never truly recovered and, only a few years into our time on Almaris, the Patriarch of our caravan joined his ancestors in the Seven Skies.

But there was another who was to fill his shoes, and his coming was heralded in the stars. The Prophesied One. Dragomir's nephew was born in 1792. He was christened Andrik Casimir Vasović and, per our custom, his future was told upon his naming day. I performed it myself, as was my right as both Sigismundarošie and Matriarch, and I have never read a future more auspicious. Andrik was marked by the Exalted Sigismund himself, born to be a leader and to guide our people into a grand future. Upon the passing of my beloved Dragomir, Andrik, though still a child, stepped in to fill his uncle's shoes.



[An Artistic Rendition of the Passing of Dragomir Vasović]

He directed us to interact more with the world at large, making the Vasoyevi well known amongst the realms for the first time since their re-conversion to Canonism. He spoke to Kings and Cardinals, broke bread with Dukes and Princes, and he sought out the destiny given to him by GOD and the Exalted. He spent time in prayer, isolated save for me, asking GOD and Sigismund to reveal their plan for him. When he emerged from his isolation, body ragged with his fast, he knew what had to be done. He gathered the heads of the families of the caravan and told him that the time of the Vasoyevi to travel was over. He had seen a vision of a land in the east, a territory near to the Dwarves, that was destined for us. So he broke bread with the Grand King of the Dwarves, a treaty was signed, and for the first time in centuries, we once more had a home. He forced no Vasoyevi to settle with him, for long was freedom our prerogative, but he called for all Vasoyevi to join him in embracing a new way of life, liberated from the dangerous and persecutions of the road.

And so it was that we prepared to plant the Vasiyevan banner upon the ground. Our people were to forever change, and embrace a new future. With that great endeavor, that great purpose, the Grand Duchy of Vasiyeva was born.



[The Vasoyevi People as they travel to their new home in the city of Sava]

The Establishment of Vasiyeva

The settled Vasoyevi had to adapt to the ways of the land-bound, and for the first time, form a government. But, for years, the caravans had leaders. The temporal head of the caravan was the Patriarch, and the spiritual guide was the Matriarch. A group, made up of the heads of the subservient families, was their advisors. So it was then and, though adapted slightly by land-bound tradition, so it would be now.

The Granj Vojvoda and Vojvinja

Vasiyeva would be ruled by a throne of two. The head of state would be the Grand Duke of Vasiyeva (“Granj Vojvoda”), acting as the Patriarch once did. His wife, the Grand Duchess (“Granj Vojvinja”) would continue to serve as the Matriarch did, leading the spiritual side of the Duchy, as well as administrating the court. They would be advised by a council of envoys (“Izaslanik”), chosen by the Grand Duke. Although each Isazlanik would be chosen for their particular expertise, to the outside world, they were merely the Duke and Duchess’ councilors, no one Isazlanik above the other in stature besides the Head Isazlanik, who supervises the council and their affairs.

Succession

The crown of the Granj Vojvoda would be passed to the eldest male son of the current Granj Vojvoda upon his passing. However, Vasiyeva bears an exception to strict primogeniture. As with the first Grand

Duke, all future holders of the crown must be marked for rulership when born, as read by the Grand Duchess and the Sigismundaroşie.



Bread, Salt, and Vows

In a culture once without walls, guest right and hospitium were and are paramount for the Vasoyevi. As travelers once themselves, often relying on the hospitality of others for their survival, the Vasoyevi uphold these values greatly within their homes. Through the sharing of bread and salt, guest right is declared between host and guest, creating an expectation of protection and mutuality regardless of the social or economic status of either party. This tradition permeates all aspects of Vasoyevi life, from political dealings to the requests of a suppliant. Guests and foreign envoys to Vasiyeva are often given bread and salt upon arrival, a declaration invoking guest right mutually. The host is furthermore expected to provide a guest with some form of gift upon departure, oftentimes acting as an end to the sacred guest right. For the Vasoyevi, all travelers and strangers are regarded as under the protection of GOD himself by the virtue of the law of wanderers and suppliants, and are thus treated with a great sum of hospitality and respect. Guests too are expected to uphold these values, taking what is provided to them humbly and with great gratitude. Guest right, for long as it remains enacted, forbids the act of violence or ill-word between host and guest, lest one appear impious to GOD himself.

Another interesting element of Vasoyevi culture is their lack of sacred vows. A Vasoyevi's word alone is all the vow that is needed, for a broken vow by the Vasoyevi is always corrected (with appropriate recompense) by other Vasoyevi. Vasoyevi do not swear, not by the Exalted, not by GOD, not by his family or his own head. All they need to say is a simple 'yes' or 'no.' This extends to the government as well. Vassals in Vasiyeva do not need to swear elaborate vows to the Grand Duke, merely state their allegiance, and any foreign power that does not trust the word of the Grand Duke does him a grave insult.

Culture of the Land-Bound Vasoyevi

While the people of Vasiyeva are no longer traveling, they are still Vasoyevi, and those centuries on the road will always be in their blood. Where once parties and festivals happened around the campfire, now

they happen in taverns and squares. But they are still the same people. Where Slava was once celebrated wherever it could be held, it has now become the cultural event of the season in Vasiyeva, greater even than Tuvmas. Where the Sigismundaroşie once performed Caloianul to towns that requested it, they now do the ritual in their own town, ensuring good weather and harvests. Overall, the culture has not changed, the Vasoyevi simply have a home to express it in.

Religious Practices in Vasiveya

When traveling in their caravans, the Vasoyevi would spend many nights along the roads or in the lands of non-Canonist people. In these times where standardized worship became impractical for months, even years, the women of the caravan, led by the Matriarch, would not just lead the Vasoyevi in spiritual matters, but would also perform many of the roles taken up by the priests and other clergy, performing ablution in extremis, counseling their fellow members of the caravan, and giving readings and sermons from the holy texts.

In Vasiveya, the need to perform these duties were expected to lessen once their land was granted a place within one of the diocese of the Canonist Church. However, traditions, as always among the Vasoyevi, die hard. Many of these duties continue to be practiced and there is even talk among some of the Sigismundaroşie to petition the church for their rituals to be recognized as official rites under Canonist doctrine. In recent years, women take up a role more akin to spiritual guides, with no claims to taking up positions in the clergy.



[A young Vasoyevi consulting an older woman on spiritual matters]

And, as always, the Sigismundaroşie, women blessed by the Exalted Sigismund's mysticism, continue to play a large role in the religion of the Vasoyevi. They wield a strong affinity with herbalism, soothsaying

& taming the temptations of man. Even land-bound, they continue to play the role of herbalist, brewer, and mystic within the Vasoyevi, often consulted before priests on matters of the heart and soul.

Weddings and Funerals

Vasoyevi weddings have several traditions that set them apart from the rest of Almaris. Many Vasoyevi families employ the use of matchmakers to find spouses for their children. While the matchmaker's job was originally to travel from caravan to caravan and keep a list of eligible bachelors and bachelorettes, this tradition still occurs even among the land-bound Vasoyevi.



[A matchmaker sitting with two brides that she helped find matches for]

While the Vasoyevi have many traditions during ceremonies, three shine out as the most prominent and different from other cultures. First, the bride's father places an apple at the top of a tall tree and the bride is not allowed to go to the wedding until the groom shoots the apple down with a bow or crossbow to prove that his aim is as true as his intention. Second, a *kājatac*, one of the famed monster hunters of the Vasoyevi, is often hired by the couple to watch over the preceding while armed. It is said that this keeps away the evil eye. Third, brides often wear a crown of flowers on their wedding to which prominent women of the caravan would tie ribbons to it, as a sign of their approval and to bless the bride with fertility and prosperity. Woe be it to a woman who gets married with no ribbons.

One Vasoyevi tradition following death is that, while the body is buried quickly, the funeral service for the person does not occur until a year after the death. It is believed that if someone truly cared for that person in life, their funeral would still be worth attending one year after the event. During this funeral, a massive feast is prepared for those attending. Each person must toss a bit of their food and drink to the floor, for the dead, and it cannot be cleaned up until the event is completed. Often, men who loved the deceased greatly will refuse to shave their facial hair until the funeral is held, to show their devotion to the deceased.

The Festivals of Vasiyeva

The Vasoyevi revere the Exalted Sigismund above all the other Exalted and all the saints, and consider him to be the family's protector and provider of welfare. His saint day in the liturgical calendar necessitates a time of great prayer and festivities in Vasiyeva, and is the social event of the season for the fledgling settlement. This celebration is called Slava. The celebration consists of the ritual offering of a blood sacrifice (usually a lamb or goat), along with a feast held for all subjects of the Granj Vojvoda. At a specified time during Slava, a specially designed candle is lit by the Granj Vojvinja, then wine is poured over a Slava cake, prepared and decorated by her, which is then cut crosswise by the Duke, rotated and broken into four parts and lifted up. During the ritual, thanks are given to the Exalted and prayers are said for prosperity.



[A young Vasoyevi girl watching the lambs being prepared for Slava]

A harvest Caloianul is done once a year in Vasiyeva during the late summer. Four clay dolls are made by a Sigismundaroşie in the form of the Four Exalted. A few drops of the Grand Duchess' blood is mixed into the dolls, which are then baked. The baked dolls are paraded through the town with the entirety of the settlement participating and chanting prayers to GOD. They are then buried in the earth outside of town. After three days, the dolls are dug back up and thrown into the well of the village. It is said that this ancient festival ensures that the harvest will be bountiful.