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A thousand years under the sun

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Here are the steppes; open, fertile. In a few places, people live, not in any numbers, not in any great edifices. Yet. There are landscape features; mountain, river, forest. There are undiscovered things above and below the earth.

Time will pass.

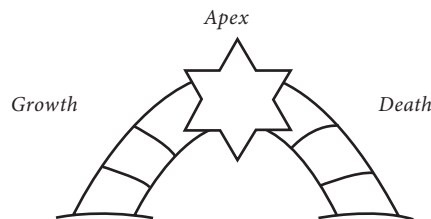
Start

A big, blank sheet of paper. Draw a little on it – stalks of grass, rocks, little stick figures. The steppes are almost empty in the beginning. Then the game starts.

Growth arcs

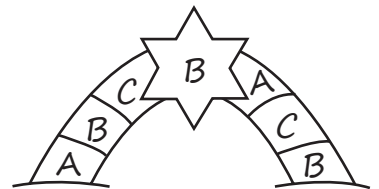
All things which can grow, reach their apex and die have a growth arc. Some are small, for things that will probably disappear after a century or two. Some are great, for things that may persist even after a thousand years.

This is what a medium growth arc looks like:



This growth arc has three squares before and after the star on the top. The first three squares indicate growth, the latter ones a fall. The star at the top indicates the time when this element has reached its highest point; a golden age, where all is greatest, best, most beautiful and powerful.

As you tell the story of the steppes, you will fill the squares of the growth arc with your initials. You should not have more than one initial on either side - in other words, once you've contributed to the growth of something, you'll have to wait until the others have done so, too, before you can continue on that arc.



Available arcs

At the beginning of the game, these arcs are available:

- ♦ One square on each side: 2
- ♦ Two squares on each side: 1
- ♦ Five squares on each side: 1

As soon as one of these arcs are filled in – the element has died – these additional arcs become available:

- ♦ Two squares on each side: 2
- ♦ Three squares on each side: 2
- ♦ Four squares on each side: 1
- ♦ Five squares on each side: 1

Your turn

During your turn you can:

- Sow the seed of something new
- Watch something grow
- Watch something which has reached its apex
- Watch something die

A hundred years pass as all the players take their turns. Each time you start a new turn, you can write a new century on the sheet – “0”, “100”, “200”.

The game is over when you have played out the year 1000, or when there is nothing left alive on the steppes.

Sow a seed

- Draw something on the map, something small. This is the seed of something big. Maybe a gold mine. Maybe a tribe. Maybe a village. Maybe unknown people from somewhere else. It is not much, and it is not big.
- Draw a growth arc next to it. Pick one of the available ones.
- Write your initial in the first square.

Example drawings:



Sowing a seed

Watch something grow

- Pick something on the map. Anything that still has empty spaces in the first squares of the arc, and *which you have not put your initials on*.
- Add a little to the drawing. Describe the growth. Take your time, explain what is going on.
- Tell us about one person who lives during this growth. Maybe they are experiencing it, causing it, or even trying to stop it.
- Write your initial in the next available square on the growth arc.



Watching it grow

Watch something reaching its apex

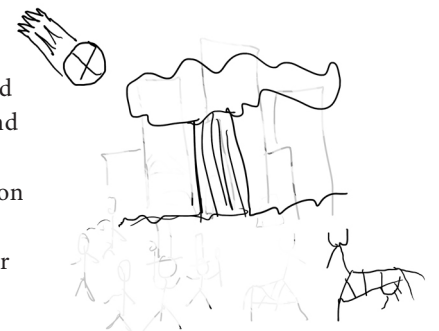
- Pick something on the map which has all its growth squares filled in, and has not started to die yet.
- Draw on it. Describe it as it reaches its highest point of growth.
- Write your initial in the star on the top.



Seeing its apex

Watch something die

- Pick anything on the sheet which you have not yet helped to die.
- You can even choose something that has not finished growing! Black out the remaining growth squares and the apex. Fill in enough squares on the right side as well, to make an equal number of available squares on each side of the arc.
- Change the drawing. Erase, strike out, draw decay or replacement. Explain, describe.
- Tell us about one person living during these events.
- Write your letter in the next square on the arc.



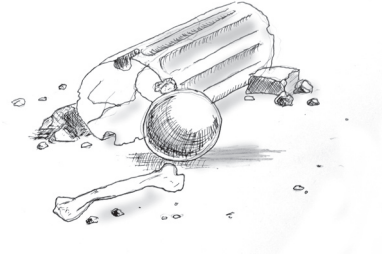
Watching it die

All things end

The game could go on forever, but it won't. Sooner or later, we will leave the people of the steppes to themselves, and not follow them any further.

When all the arcs are spent, you can no longer sow any seeds. Now there is only growth - and death.

The last round is the one starting in the year 1000.



Appendix

Playing with fewer players

If you are not that many people, use an extra rule: You can contribute to a growth arc even if you already did once before, if all the other players have already contributed.

Diasporas

Sometimes, a tribe will go in search of new lands, and start a new tribe. You can make a growth arc for the new tribe.

Pace

How much happens during a single round? This depends on the players, but different civilizations growing at different paces is fine. In one round, someone might discover fire, while others made themselves wings and colonized most of the map.