THE WAY OF THE BEAR

Frank Crittin
Grégoire Largey
Sébastien Pauchon

2-4 players
30 minutes
13 years up

A long long time ago, before the age of Humans, there were four bear clans who helped the King reign over Northeast Asia. The time has now come for the old King to decide who will be heir to the throne. The clans send their princes to the world to acquire all the qualifications needed to be the next king. They travel from town to town to erect sacred bear steles and inherit knowledge of religion, education, military, and commerce in return. A new journey is about to begin. Who will next sit on the throne?

CONTENTS AND SET-UP

1 Place the **Game Board** in the middle of the table.
- With 4 players, use all parts.
- With 2 or 3 players, don't use part Ⓟ.

2 Each player gets one of the **4 player boards**.
- With 2 players, place it with the 👥 (bottom left corner) side up.

3 Shuffle the **40 knowledge tokens** and place one face up on each village.
- With 2 or 3 players, remove **8 tokens** (one of each type, with and without the Dragon Seal) from the game before set-up.

Remove these 8 tokens in a game with 2 or 3 players.

4 Take the **84 Bear Steles**:
- Place 1 Stele of the matching color on the first space of each of the 4 Temple tracks. Put all the other steles in the **Bag**, then:
- Draw 4 Steles at random and swap them with the 4 tokens showing a Bear. Then remove the tokens from the game.
- Each player draws 3 Steles randomly and places them near their player board.

5 Shuffle the **16 Seal cards** and place them face down near the Game Board.

6 The player who has the most regal appearance is the First Player. Or alternatively, choose a First Player in any manner you like. That player takes the **Golden Bear token**.

You are ready to start!
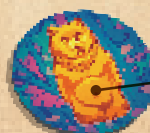
AIM OF THE GAME

The first player to **complete their board** wins by collecting 2 tokens of each type (3 tokens in a 2-player game) wins the game.

If several players reach this goal in the same round, the player among them with the most Dragon Seals wins the game.

GAME TURN

The game proceeds clockwise, starting from the first player. On your turn, you may perform one of these two actions:

GET NEW STELES or **ACQUIRE A KNOWLEDGE TOKEN**.

You may also play as many Seal cards as you wish.

GET NEW STELES

To get new Steles, you may:

- Take any 2 steles from the Temples tracks, **or**

- Draw 3 steles randomly from the bag.

Note: If you have more than 10 Steles in your reserve at the end of your turn, you have to keep 10 and return the rest into the bag.

or

ACQUIRE A KNOWLEDGE TOKEN

To gain a knowledge token from a village, you must erect a sacred bear Stele. Take one of the Steles from your reserve, place it on that village space, and take the token. Then, place the token on one of the matching spaces on your player board. There are a 2 rules to follow:

- You may **not** place a Stele **adjacent** to another one of the **same color**.

- The Stele you place must be adjacent (=connected by a trail) to **at least** one other stele.

Here, the orange Stele may only be placed on the space circled in orange.

*It can't be placed on the red cross at the top village as it would be adjacent to an orange Stele.*

It can't be placed on the red cross at the bottom village as there is no adjacent Stele.

PAY THE COST

After placing your Stele, you **must** make an offering. The price is determined by all the adjacent Steles in the neighboring villages. You must pay the same number and color of Steles from your supply to the corresponding Temple(s).

Note: There are 5 spots for each Temple track. The spot with the bag is the last (5th) space.
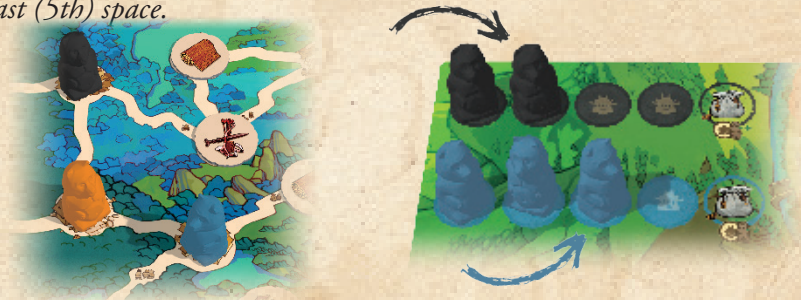
Here, after placing the orange Stele, you must pay 1 black and 1 blue Stele, taken from your reserve. Place them on the next available spaces of the corresponding Temple track(s).

SPECIAL CASE

If you place a Stele on the last space of a Temple track, it triggers a Ritual:

1) All the Steles of that Temple must be returned to the bag. The depicted bag serves as a reminder.

2) Then the player, still on their turn, may take a Stele from any **other** Temple track and add it to their reserve. The depicted Stele on the last space of each Temple track serves as a reminder.

Notes:

- More than one Ritual may happen in a single turn.

- Sometimes you might have to perform a Ritual before continuing placing steles on the same temple.

KNOWLEDGE TOKENS

Each time you erect a stele, you get a knowledge token.

- Place it on your individual board on a space showing the corresponding type.

- You may **never** takee more tokens of a type than your board allows for.

- When you complete a **column**, draw the first Seal card from the pile.

The depicted card serves as a reminder.

SEAL CARDS

Cards provide special abilities which will help you during your journey. They come in two types:

A) Cards that are played during a regular action. These allow you to change the rules a bit.

B) Cards that allow for an **additional** action. These cards are marked with a symbol ( ) to remind you that action is indeed additional.

- You may own up to 4 cards (by completing all your columns and not playing any of the cards).

- You may play and/or combine several cards during a same turn.

- You may **not** play a card on the same turn in which you got it.

- When you play a card, remove it from the game.

GAME END

When a player fills all of the spaces on their player board with the appropriate tokens (8 in a 3- or 4-player game, 12 in a 2-player game), this triggers the game end. Finish the current round so all players will have taken the same number of turns.

VICTORY

If only one player has completed their board, they are declared **winner** and upcoming King.

If several players complete their board on the last turn, they compare their number of Dragon Seals.

The players involved add up all the Dragon Seals:

- **on their tokens**

- **on the back of their unused Seal cards,**

- **on the Seal card(s) that provide(s) a player with 3 Dragon Seals.**

The player with the most Dragon Seals wins! In case of a tie, the players share the victory (and the throne).

In this example, the player totals 9 Dragon Seals.

FRANK CRITTIN
SÉBASTIEN PAUCHON   GRÉGOIRE LARGEY

Frank has a PhD in mathematics but is more instinctive than calculating. He was born the year of the publication of Conquest.

Sébastien is a game designer at night and during the day he either plays pool, takes naps or runs his company GameWorks.
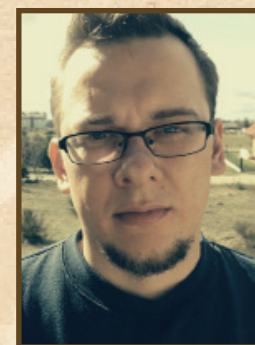
Greg is a more versatile engineer than a specialist working in an innovation center, he was born the year Connect Four was published.

Grégoire: THE WAY OF THE BEAR's starting point was probably the time Frank told me about the 4-color theorem (I am actually color-blind)…

Frank: For those who don't know it, it demonstrates that 4 colors are enough to color any map so that no two neighboring regions are of the same color.

Grégoire: Correct, and even though we started off with adjacent fields, we soon switched to a network of roads…

Frank: Hence the first food-truck theme. That first version had 4 fluctuating markets at its core, with their ebbs and flows.

Seb: Yeah, this I remember, a food game with convoluted prices! At least, that's how it was when you had me play the first time in Essen.

Grégoire: A couple of weeks later, a first evening at Seb's, then later a week-end at my house and we decided to finish the game together.

Frank: Finish, finish, that's a quick way to put it!
You should rather say that's when we decided to undo, redo, undo, redo, undo the game, and so forth.
Working with a Swiss is complicated enough, but three at once…

Seb: True enough, we did go through quite a number of iterations before trimming the game down to the final slender version that has become THE WAY OF THE BEAR.

Concerning the final theme, look and finish, a big thank you to Kevin, Jakub and Vincent who did a great job!

JAKUB REBELKA

Jakub was born in 1981 (Poland). Illustrator, comics creator, concept artist. Author of "Doktor Bryan" and "Ester Klemens"comics and Art Book with paintings and illustrations entitled "ELEMENT CHAOSU". Jakub has published short comics stories in many Polish magazines. He worked for CD Projekt RED and Flying Wild Hog creating stills for animated cutscenes for the games The Witcher 2: Assassin of Kings and Shadow Warrior. Most recently, he published fantasy comics "City of the dogs" published in France and Poland, "Namesake" and " Judas" published by BOOM!Studio in the USA.

Working on THE WAY OF THE BEAR was for me a travel in time to happy years of childhood, when I used to play board games with my brother and cousins. I had a great time working on all elements of the game, trying to build a small universe that can transport the players to fantastic realm!

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