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# **WHY TERA IS DYING**

Final paper

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# Introduction

TERA (short for The Exiled Realm of Arborea) is a free-to-play online MMORPG game that is developed by Bluehole Studio. TERA was officially first released in Korea on 25 January 2011. It was later followed by releases in North America on 1 May 2012 and Europe on 3 May 2012. (Wikipedia, 2020)

The game is a typical MMORPG featuring pvp, crafting, questing and dungeons. TERA has 7 different races (Human, Amani, Popori, High Elf, Castanic, Baraka and Elins) and each race has their own unique skills that give them minor advantages. There are also 13 different classes that can be all put into 3 categories. Tanks - Warrior, Lancer. DPS - Gunner, Warrior, Slayer, Brawler, Ninja, Valkyrie, Archer, Sorcerer, Berserker & Reaper. Healers - Priest, Mystic. Each of them have their own abilities and difficult mechanics that must be learned in order to fully support your teammates in dungeons or battlegrounds. TERA has an excellent combat system that I hardly find in other games and what always makes me come back to this game. ‘‘Inside TERA - Combat System & BAMS’’ ( TERA Europe, 2012 ) is a great short video by the devs that will give an insight to what the combat system is like. What also makes me love the game is that in order to beat certain bosses you need to watch and learn it’s mechanics. Take a max level dungeon for example. It is highly suggested that you go through the bosses guides to see what mechanics it has in order to beat the dungeon and not fail your teammates. This makes the game much more interesting and harder. But that’s not what I’m here to talk about. I want to focus on why TERA is dying.



( Tera-Dungeon Guide : Saleron's Sky Garden lvl 53-56 - Ft. Meoni!, acegamestv 2012)

# 1. Dev's bad decisions

## 1.1 Grinding

Under grinding I mean every kind of grinding. Have it be materials, money or gear. The game is built in a way that you start at level 1 and the end-game happens at level 65-70. Every now and then in dungeons or through quests you earn new gear that will raise your item level. Once you have reached level 70 your main goal is to basically do top dungeons but you cannot do that without a good enough gear and item level. For example, at the moment the highest level dungeon is called Corrupted Skynest and the item level you need to have for that dungeon is around 480+. Having played this game for about 6 years already, I have not even once gotten close to the max item level you can have in this game. At the moment, my item level is 468 and most likely it will not go up by much either because of the grinding process. This brings me to my point, if you want to be a top player, you need to grind the shit out of the game and put all your time into it. As a casual player, who also wants to be a top player but who has a personal life, this upsets me and other players like me. ‘‘But god if i have to waste an entire evening just to equip a pair of gloves fk off.’’( Grangoop, 2018 ) At this point all that's left is pay to win. And that brings me to my next topic.

## 1.2 Pay-to-win

Not all of the players have the option to pay for every other thing in the game that you would usually grind hard for. Let's take the competitive aspect into consideration when it comes to pay-to-win. PVP is a big part of this game. For example, there is a server wide battle happening every Saturday where guilds fight other guilds. Players who have bought themselves better gear are obviously more likely to win the Civil Unrest over other players and that gives weaker guilds no chance to win whatsoever. TERA also offers a variety of cosmetics or mounts that you have to buy. The only chance of you getting the cosmetics you want is with gold through the trade broker but in order for you to buy them you must first cough up 1 million gold from somewhere. I do understand that basically every game is pay to win, but what they could change is the amount of money they ask for in game purchases. 10€ is a lot to pay for a simple 1000 EMP that will get you perhaps one outfit. If they would reduce the amount of money I can imagine there would be a lot more buyers on the market as well.

## 2. Communication

### 2.1 Feedback

Most respected and well-known games have a feedback system where they gather feedback about their games, be that in forums, Facebook, Twitter, Reddit etc. Players will actively participate in discussions about what they wish to see in the future and what they think of current updates and the devs will actually take that into consideration. Apex is a very good example of that. ‘‘Heads up, Legends: We are aware of and investigating connectivity issues impacting Apex across all platforms. We will continue to update you here as we have more information.’’( @PlayApex, May 2020 ) This is not likely to ever happen with TERA though. The game does have Twitter and all that but the last time I saw them consider the community's wishes was back when Spacecats was still one of TERA’s community managers. When he left, everything changed. The devs will keep on doing what they want and ignore all the things that the players say, at least players outside Korea.

No, BHS straight up don't care for the community outside of Korea.

Source 1: We've been whining for optimization since FOREVER to the point that topic is beyond a dead horse, yet game still runs like trash

Source 2: PC has been asking for Talents for 3 YEARS as the devs balanced around talents, despite saying they don't and not giving us to them cause 'too buggy'. ONLY NOW, 3 YEARS LATER have we finally heard ANYTHING about talents potentially coming

Source 3: Ktera was going to bring out Talismans but received massive backlash from their community which immediately cancelled the update. Koreans whine and their concerns are fixed WHILE WE'RE ASKING FOR BASIC STUFF, yeah, they don't care for us. Hell, I've seen the words "talisman" pop up now and again in Gameforge (EU publisher) so who knows if we're gonna get a [filtered] system

Face the facts, be realistic, Vets have been asking for bare basics and yet here we are, empty handed. Remember who you're asking when thinking of suggestions, if BHS can't even make one of their highest profit games (PUBG) run well, then i highly doubt they'll do anything else for their other titles

( Vinyltails, August 2018 )

I used to be a BETA tester for a game called Spellbreak. The game is still in the early days of closed BETA mode after years, but through their Discord servers they are actively updating their thousands of players on upcoming changes and patches. Besides that, the testers are actively giving the devs feedback on what's good and what they think should go. That's how a game's community in my opinion should be. This way they are making a game that the people actually wanna play. It feels like TERA is just leeching the last of the players money while not actively trying to better their game.

## **2.2 Spacecats**

Like I mentioned before, Spacecats was TERA's community manager who actually cared about it's players as well and players sincerely cared about him too. When he left, people felt genuinely sad. Spacecats popped on Twitch every Thursday evening to entertain players, pvp them, give out free costumes and rewards, tips on how to play, do dungeons with people, he created events and much more. Back in those days, it felt like the game still actually cared about the community, because he wasn't the only GM ( game master ) to roam around the game, there were more. But nowadays you don't see any GM's anywhere, they're gone. And it's not like they have tried to replace him with someone either, that period is now in the past and will not be dug up again. It's like I stated earlier, they are not actively trying to make the game better, they have given up.

## **3. Content**

### **3.1 Unused, deleted & repetitive content**

Over the years TERA has and still is producing so much new content. They recently changed the level gap from 65 to 70 and they released a new area with it. It came with mobs and a new dungeon, plus they also added a new class back in 2017. We all appreciate that, but TERA has a habit of abandoning or deleting it's old content. Let's take Velikas Event Arena called Super Quiz Bowl for instance. It was added to the game in early 2017 but now in 2020 it is just sitting in the outskirts of Velika and nobody can enter it. There are no events happening or anything, it's just a carcass of previously added content. "ch server used to have weekly events created by eme staff and guild leaders, like a fashion show for instance. it was not uncommon to see hundreds of players turn up for these things. rp used to be a thing and guilds had websites dedicated for that. these are just a few things that got removed from tera. where other games keep adding new content, tera has been constantly removing content and players and others wonder why people left tera in the hundreds."( allofspaceandtime, December 2017 ).

And what baffles me is that it's not like they are even planning to remove it either, it will just stay there forever, tempting the new and old players.

Another example - infamous skycastles. They were very popular years ago and were awarded to guilds who were on top. Now once again, they are just sitting there, empty, no way to get there. The case with the skycastles is that they may not be removed because of the visuals. They simply look amazing, but why not add the content back?



( Skycastles - Anemsalok, February 2015 )

Why continue with new things without making amends with the previously added content? Another great example of unfinished and forgotten content is the area in Crecentia that has been left untouched for years and is still being "worked" on when in reality they are probably not even planning to finish it. Instead of making the new area, why not finish the old area which the devs have been promising the players for years. "baldera was an area that was unfinished and velika wilds, that we used to get to. exploring areas was a thing to do and finding ways on top of buildings and other places before the invisible walls and ceiling height limit became a thing. we used to have 100s of players at any given time scattered around velika, lumbertown, kanstria, zulifan fortress, and cutthroat harbor. we used to have nexus where hundreds played at one time lagging the heck out of tera." ( allofspaceandtime, December 2017 ).

On the topic of repetitive content I have to say that instead of bringing in new and unique monsters for dungeons for example, they just add BAMs you can find roaming around the world. Having the same MOBs and BAMs makes the game boring and uninteresting. Of course there's some new monsters, but a lot of them you can find in the outskirts. Or take events for example. They used to have summer and winter events where during summer you could earn costumes and emotes and other minor things or during winter events you could play a snowball themed battleground game.

They completely removed those and instead added weekly events where all you do is play the same dungeons or battlegrounds for 25 times to get some small cosmetics for your character. Having done 5 out of that 25, I'll be honest and say, it gets goddamn tiresome after some time. These repetitive events make the players quit, because they get tired of the same dungeon/battleground after 5 times. There used to be a variety of events like Kyra's potion shack or TERA's fanart contest or the same summer and winter events which haven't been seen for a long time and that's a shame.



( Nexus event - Redrumed, 2013 )

## 4. Gameplay

### 4.1 Quests

Some time ago I introduced TERA to my two friends. What I noticed is that neither of them were interested in the quests and felt rather annoyed that they involve more running back and forth than anything else. A lot of people miss out on the storyline because the quests are simply uninteresting, long and time consuming, instead they decide to skip to dungeons and level themselves up that way since it's much faster as well.

## 4.2 PVP

As I have stated before, player vs player(pvp) is one main key component of this game. There is a whole server dedicated to pvp, where you can pvp anyone in the world out of the safe zones. There is also a pve(player vs environment) server where basically no outside of battleground pvp happens. Back in 2018 there was a massive server merge, where multiple small servers got put together to make bigger servers. What happened was pvp was put together with pve and a lot of pvp players lost the open world pvp opportunity.

PVP goes from 1vs1 straight to battlegrounds like Civil Unrest or Corsairs Stronghold(CS). All of these battlegrounds used to be filled with players and the queueing taking only about 1 minute, now you can sit in the queue for 15 minutes and get no runs. It only takes 40 people to start a match of CS and if you can't get 40 people together from a server for a single match, that says something. The reason for this was the devs not making any new battlegrounds/pvp events. Yet players could create their own content by doing open world pvp. Now that that is gone for pve servers, there is just not enough pvp for people to enjoy.

## 4.3 Dungeons

There is so much wrong with the dungeon instance system. To start off with, TERA likes to change their dungeons around and I understand that, to keep things fresh and interesting for the players. But they also like taking too much away. With the last patch, they removed more than 60% of the dungeons from the instance list and did not add anything new. For a player that's purely pve based, that is saddening, because that means they can only maybe run 1-3 dungeons that are up to their item level. The rest they have to unlock by grinding. Secondly, running for instance matching can take up to 30 minutes or it can take 30 seconds. It all depends on your class and that's a shame, it should be balanced. Healers and tanks get quicker matches than DPS does and that's because they are wanted more due to the lack of players. After the server merge, TERA introduced an instance system that can fetch players into your party who are from other servers, which helped a little but not a lot. The sad truth right now is that the pvp server has less players than the pve server does and what the game desperately needs is another server merge, leaving only one main server to the game where everyone plays. Lastly, the game is filled with toxic players. I know that there is no real solution to that but I just felt that it was necessary to mention. "Healer in party got kicked from party because he said it's his first time in the dungeon \*\*\*\*ing elitists....

Tank in my party trolled. We started battle. Tank said: gl without tank. We all died while he stayed afk." ( Inferius, August 2019 )

“It's already a fact people quit when they run into people that ruin their experience often, and them playing bad isn't an excuse to rage at them, considering ragers will rage even when a player is performing better than them anyways.”( Yamazuki, January 2017 )

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 What I think

Having checked the numbers in Steam and compared the amount of players over time, I can say that the amount of players in TERA has decreased. When you compare 2015 to 2020 then the gap is actually massive. A lot of people blame the devs for these mistakes and have found quitting a better solution than putting up with their tantrums.

July 2015	7,652.6	-3,881.5	-33.65%	11,550
June 2015	11,534.1	+1,143.2	+11.00%	21,528
May 2015	10,391.0	+10,390.5	+2175510.00%	25,112
Last 30 Days	964.9	-31.4	-3.15%	1,608
April 2020	996.3	+284.4	+39.95%	1,627
March 2020	711.9	+133.5	+23.08%	1,415

( Screenshot of STEAMCHARTS TERA, 2020 )

After all that I've ranted about TERA, it is still one hell of a game and I will always come back to it. Having played this game for 6 years already, perhaps it's just the nostalgic side of me that wants the old TERA back. Is the game dying? Only the future will tell.

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