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Gineso

1. Introduction
   The Gineso live on an island on an alternate version of Earth; the island is roughly 800 miles from north to south and 1,000 miles from east to west. The sea surrounding the island is the most turbulent from the west, though some storms do move in from the south. When the Gineso first arrived on the island, they came in from the south by boat and settled in the southernmost region, which is a tropical forest. They took their boats and tied them up into trees, creating shelters high off the ground to protect them from any potential inhabitants or invaders. As they became more settled, they sent out parties to explore the full island and found many diverse regions across the island (including mountain ranges, marshlands, and grassy plains) but no other human presence. They also discovered that the forest floor had many poisonous plants and insects, so they continued living high in the trees, building a community of treehouses; the central buildings of their settlement are surrounded by their dwellings, and a system of road-like bridges connects the entire community.
   The Gineso are humans who experienced violence, ostracism, and pain in their former homeland; they narrowly escaped their persecutors to find the island, their new home. There is an implicit agreement among the Gineso old enough to remember their homeland to not speak of their past directly; instead, their former lives are only preserved in folklore tales, many of which exaggerate positive aspects of their own community while minimizing aspects of their persecution and ostracism. When they arrive on the island, they are unified as a single group and select a small oligarchy to make major decisions. The original oligarchs are the five leaders of the exploration teams, all of which are males. As they build their community, their members become divided up into groups responsible for different aspects of survival: builders responsible for making the treehouses and bridges; expedition teams responsible for hunting and gathering food (beyond the edible leaves and fruits that grow on the trees near their treehouses); caretakers responsible for helping the sick and injured; caretakers responsible for helping the children; and crafters responsible for making weapons and household necessities.
   They celebrate their Mother Goddess and an assortment of minor gods and goddesses, all of whom also worship the Mother Goddess. Their major festival is an annual Festival of Lights, celebrates how the Mother Goddess led them via the stars to their new home. They interact with their deities through nature and spiritual quests, so they have the utmost respect for their natural surroundings and solitude. For the first 100 years on the island, they enjoy a largely peaceful existence.

2. Sounds
   My overall goal for selecting the sounds of Gineso is to make it sound natural while not resembling any given natlang or natlang family. Gineso has 18 consonants, which are presented in the following table:

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop	p b		t d			k g k'	
Nasal	m		n			ŋ	
Fricative		f	s	ʃ			h
Affricate				ʧ			
Approximant	(w)				j		
Lateral approximant			l				

Table 1. Gineso consonants

In Table 1, the [w] is in parentheses to indicate that it is not fully bilabial (since it is a labio-velar consonant). In order for Gineso to sound natural yet unfamiliar, I began with the most commonly occurring consonants in languages; to make its system more unique, I deleted three commonly occurring sounds ([r], [ɲ], and [ʔ]) and inserted the voiceless velar ejective [k']. With only 18 consonants, Gineso has a moderately small consonant inventory; roughly 22% of languages included in Maddieson's (2013a) report are moderately small. As can be seen in Table 1, Gineso has voicing contrasts in the stops but not in the fricatives; roughly 33% of natural languages share that feature (Maddieson 2013d).

Gineso only has five vowels, which are presented in the following table, and does not have any diphthongs.

	Front	Back
Close	i	u
Close-mid	e	o
Open		ɑ

Table 2. Gineso vowels

I selected these five vowels because they are the most frequently occurring vowels in natlangs, which again reflects my goal of creating a natural-sounding language without having it resemble any one language in particular. The five-vowel system puts Gineso in the average vowel inventory size, fitting in with roughly half of the natural languages included in Maddieson (2013b).

Gineso's consonant-to-vowel ratio is 3.6; according to Maddieson (2013c), that puts Gineso into the average category along with roughly 41% of natural languages. Even though the ratio is average, Gineso's moderately small consonant inventory and average vowel inventory put it into a category with only 13% of natural languages (Maddieson 2013c).

The basic syllable structure of Gineso is (C)V(C), where the coda is restricted to either a nasal or fricative consonant. Therefore, Gineso has a moderately complex syllable structure like roughly 56% of natural languages, according to Maddieson (2013e). The stress is right-edged weight-sensitive with heavy syllables being closed syllables; secondary stress is assigned to every other syllable, moving leftwards from the syllable with primary stress. Gineso's right-edged weight-sensitive system puts it into a category with roughly 13% of natural languages (Goedemans and van der Hulst 2013a); however, only about 4% of languages are similar to Gineso in having a closed syllable defined as a heavy syllable (Goedemans and van der Hulst 2013b).

Below are potential words in Gineso with primary and secondary stress marked:

(1) gi.(ˈne.so)
(2) (ˈnaf.to)
(3) (me.ˌso.)(ʃen.ˈgas)

As a right-edged system, Gineso stress assignment follows the typical pattern of assigning stress to the rightmost heavy syllable; if there is no heavy syllable in the foot, the first syllable is stressed. In (1), both syllables in the stress window are light syllables; thus, the first syllable, [ne], receives the primary stress. However, in (2), the foot has a heavy syllable followed by a light syllable; the heavy syllable ([naf]) is, therefore, stressed. Finally, in (3), the rightmost foot, (ʃen.gas), receives the primary stress; both syllables are heavy, so the rightmost syllable ([gas]) is stressed. From there, secondary stress is assigned to every other syllable radiating leftwards from the primary stress, making [so] the syllable that receives secondary stress.

Because Gineso restricts the sounds that can occur as codas and does not have consonant clusters, the following words are impossible in the language:

(4) *(gle.ma)
(5) *(meg.do)

Example (4) has a consonant cluster in the onset, which is not a possible combination in Gineso; example (5) has a stop in the coda, which is also not possible in Gineso. To turn these words into possible words in Gineso, vowels would need to be inserted to separate the consonant cluster and to turn the [g] from a coda into an onset:

(4′) gi.(ˈle.ma)
(5′) me.(ˈga.do)

The revised words in (4′) and (5′) also incorporate primary stress markings.

3. Grammar

Gineso has an SOV word order, which is the most common word order in natural languages (Dryer 2013a). As an OV language, it follows many of the expected typological word order correlations, including the use of postpositions and aspect suffixes on verbs. However, tense occurs as a prefix (based on inspiration from Swahili, which also inspired some of the nominal inflections), and numerals appear before nouns, thus being treated like demonstratives (which, as expected, are placed before nouns). Morphologically, Gineso is primarily agglutinating and has a slight preference for prefixing; the preference for prefixing puts Gineso in a category with roughly 10% of natural languages (Dryer 2013b).

3.1 Nouns and pronouns

Gineso nouns are split into seven categories (i.e., genders):

- Category 1: human/formal (used for elders, shows of respect)
- Category 2: human/informal (used for friends, children, terms of endearment)
- Category 3: animate (non-human)/large in stature, status, or ability
- Category 4: animate (non-human)/small in stature, status, or ability
- Category 5: animate/non-specific
- Category 6: inanimate/natural
- Category 7: inanimate/man-made

While some nouns semantically and logically fit into their categories (e.g., a canoe belongs to category 7), some nouns are not as predictable and reflect cultural beliefs. Nouns fitting into the animate categories include animals, plants, trees, fruits, vegetables, seeds, bodies of water, body parts, and emotions. Nouns fitting into the inanimate categories include rocks, hills, mountains, houses, canoes, and, oddly enough, weeds. The category of the noun affects the forms of its inflectional markings, numerals up to 5 (plus the word for 'many'), and pronouns. Gineso's high number of gender categories and non-sex-based categorization system are not as frequent across natural languages; both occur in roughly 10% of natural languages (Corbett 2013a, 2013b).

The following position chart includes the three inflections possible on nouns:

-2 (POSSESSOR)	-1 (NUMBER*)	0 ROOT	+1 CASE
u-/w- '1sg' ʃ(u)- '2sg, informal' eʃt(u)- '2sg, formal' eʧ- '3sg, cat 1/2' at- '3sg, cat 3-5' ud- '3sg, cat 6/7' k'a- '1pl' uʃ- '2pl' aʧ- '3pl, cat 1/2' ti- '3pl, cat 3-5' ad- '3pl, cat 6/7'	om- 'cat 1, sg' im- 'cat 2, sg' an- 'cat 3, sg' in- 'cat 4, sg' ki- 'cat 5, sg' a- 'cat 6, sg' e- 'cat 7, pl' wo- 'cat 1, pl' wi- 'cat 2, pl' ja- 'cat 3, pl' ji- 'cat 4, pl' i- 'cat 5, pl' ja- 'cat 6, pl' je- 'cat 7, pl'	all noun roots begin with a consonant	-(j)a 'nom/agent' -do 'acc/patient' -tu 'gen' -le 'dat/goal' -bu 'abl/source' -je 'locative' Ø- *voc/addressee

Table 1. Gineso nominal position chart

While the number prefix occurs on most nouns, nouns used in the vocative sense and proper nouns do not usually take the prefix unless it is used to show respect; for instance, if someone were to address a respected elder in the community, the *om-* prefix marks a high level of respect: *omSamde*.

When a genitive is used (e.g., *Loma's hand*), not only is the genitive marked on the possessor noun, but possession is also marked on the possessed noun: *loma-tu **eʧ**-ki-fona*. The possession prefix *eʧ-* indicates 'hand' is possessed by a third-person singular noun belonging to categories 1 or 2.

If a numeral is used with the noun, the number prefix is not used:

(1) a. wi-miʧ-a   da-j-ifik
        C2,PL-boy-NOM   3PL-PRES-run
        'Boys are running'

    b. giwi   miʧ-a   da-j-ifik
        two,C2 boy-NOM   3PL-PRES-run
        'Two boys are running'

In (1a), the noun *miʧa* ('boys') carries the category 2 plural prefix *wi-*; however, in (1b), the numeral *giwi* ('two') appears before the noun, thus eliminating the *wi-* prefix.

The numbers up to five, as well as the word for 'many', are distinguished by category, as seen in Table 2 below:

	CAT 1	CAT 2	CAT 3	CAT 4	CAT 5	CAT 6	CAT 7
no, zero	ibom	ibim	iban	ibin	ibik	iba	ibe
one	ejo	eji	eja	eji	eji	eja	eje
two	giwo	giwi	giwa	giwi	giwi	giwa	gije
three	umwo	umwi	umwa	umwi	umwi	umwa	umje
four	ŋawo	ŋawi	ŋaja	ŋaji	ŋaji	ŋaja	ŋaje
five	fono	foni	fonja	foni	foni	fonja	fonje
many	k'alo	k'alwi	k'alja	k'ali	k'ali	k'ala	k'ale

Table 2. Numerals and 'many' in Gineso

The numeral *fono* ('five') is derived from the noun *fona* ('hand') and the numeral *ejo* ('one') is derived from the noun *weje* ('finger'). When a numeral is used, it is placed before the noun: *giwa lufeja* 'two trees.'

Pronouns are also marked for case, though some of the inflections are irregular, as seen in Table 3.

		BASE	NOM/VOC	ACC	GEN	DAT	ABL	LOC
singular								
first-person		ki(h)	ki	ko	kihu	kihe	kihu	kije
second-person	*informal*	ʃu(n)	ʃu	ʃo	ʃu	ʃune	ʃonu	ʃunje
	formal	oʃu(m)	oʃu	oʃmo	oʃu	oʃume	oʃumu	oʃumje
third-person	*cat 1,2: human*	ʧe(b)	ʧe	ʧebo	ʧebu	ʧebe	ʧebu	ʧebje
	cat 3-5: animate	ta(j)	ta	to	taju	taje	taju	taje
	cat 6,7: inanimate	adj(a)	adja	adjo	adju	adje	adju	adje
plural								
first-person		k'awi(h)	k'awi	k'awo	k'awu	k'awe	k'awihu	k'awe
second-person		wuʃn(e)	wuʃne	wuʃno	wuʃu	wuʃne	wuʃnu	wuʃne
third-person	*cat 1,2: human*	oʧe(b)	oʧe	oʧo	oʧebu	oʧebe	oʧebu	oʧebe
	cat 3-5: animate	tij(a)	tija	tijo	tiju	tije	tiju	tije
	cat 6,7: inanimate	jad(o)	jad	jado	jadu	jade	jadu	jadje

Table 3. Gineso pronouns

The genitive pronoun is not used with a noun; if the possessed noun is specified, the possessive prefix is used rather than a separate pronoun:

(2) a. kihu
         1SG,GEN
         'mine'

    b. w-i-mokʧ-a
         1SG,POSS-C2,SG-sister-NOM
         'my sister'

    c. *kihu   w-i-mokʧ-a
         1SG,GEN   1SG,POSS-C2,SG-sister-NOM
         'mine my sister'

To be able to use the genitive pronoun, context must be provided to understand who or what is being referred to; for instance, without context, (2a) makes very little sense. If the speaker wants to explicitly mention the possessed noun along with a pronominal possessor (e.g., *my sister*), only the possessive prefix is used, as in (2b). It is ungrammatical to use both forms, as in (2c).

Noun phrases follow the following structure:

NP → (Gen.NP) (Dem) (Num) N (Adj) / Pro

Gineso does not have articles, but it does have demonstratives, which are placed before the noun. If both a demonstrative and number are used, the demonstrative appears first:

(3) ata   giwo   kiw-a
    DEM   two,C1 woman-NOM
    'those two women'

If an adjective is added, it is typically after the noun it describes:

(4) ata   giwo   kiw-a   piʃo-ti
    DEM   two,C1 woman-NOM   old-ATT
    'those two old women'

However, if the adjective describes an inherent quality of the noun being described, the adjective occurs between the number and noun:

(5) ata   giwi   piʃo-ti mokʧ-a
    DEM   two,C2 old-ATT sister-NOM
    'those two older sisters'

When including a genitive, the full genitive noun phrase appears before the possessed noun:

(6) ata   giwo   kiwa-tu   k'a-wi-mokʧ-a
    DEM   two,c1 woman-GEN   3PL,POSS-C2,PL-sister-NOM
    'those two women's sisters'

As in (6), the genitive NP *ata giwo kiwatu* occurs before the possessed noun *k'awimoʧka*.

3.2 Verbs

Gineso verbs are inflected for person (with bipersonal inflections), tense, and grammatical aspect; the average number of categories per words for verbs places Gineso with the majority of natural languages, as roughly two-thirds of natural languages have 4-8 categories per word (Bickel and Nichols 2013). Table 4 presents the inflections for verbs:

-4 (NEG)	-3 SUBJ	-2 (OBJ)	-1 TENSE	0 ROOT	+1 ASPECT	+2 MOOD
ibu-	ga- '1sg'	ko- '1sg'	ŋ- 'remote past'	all verb roots begin with a vowel	-Ø 'simple/aorist'	-Ø 'indicative'
	ʃa- '2sg'	to- '2sg'	m- 'past'		-pa 'imperfect'	-ti 'imperative'
	ta- '3sg'	no- '3sg'	j- 'present'		-je 'perfect'	-la 'interrogative'
	k'a- '1pl'	go- '1pl'	t- 'future'		-(o)n 'habitual'	
	na- '2pl'	wo- '2pl'	s- 'remote future'			
	da- '3pl'	jo- '3pl'				
	ke- 'ind'					

Table 4. Position chart for Gineso verbs

The bipersonal markings on the verb conflate formality and categories so that, for example, the third-person inflections are used for all categories. The object column is indicated as an option because some verbs do not require (or allow) direct objects, which would eliminate the need for that column for some verbs. For instance, the verb *ak'umi* ('to use') requires an object while *ifik* ('to run') does not:

(7) a. ʃa-no-t-ak'umi
        2SG-3SG-FUT-use
        'You will use it'

    b. *ʃa-t-ak'umi
        2SG-FUT-use
        'You will use'

c. *ʃa-no-t-ifik
   2SG-3SG-FUT-run
   'You will run it'

d. ʃa-t-ifik
   2SG-FUT-run
   'You will run'

The examples in (7) demonstrate the differences between transitive verbs like *ak'umi* that require object marking and intransitive verbs like *ifik* that cannot take object marking.

If the grammatical aspect is unmarked on a verb, the interpretation is, in general, a reading of a completed action or state; however, the reading can also be semantically ambiguous. For instance, *ga-no-m-anad* is most frequently translated as 'I found it' but, given the right context, could also mean 'I was finding it,' 'I had found it,' or 'I used to find it.' These ambiguous readings are often found in narratives, stories, or ongoing conversations, especially after context has been established.

Verb phrases follow the structure below:

VP → (O₁) (O₂) (PP) (Adv) (Pred.Adj) V (Aux)

Gineso does not have a distinct passive construction; instead, the subject can be marked on the verb with the indefinite subject prefix *ke-* and no subject specified in the full sentence.

3.3 Clause structure

The following sentence demonstrates the clause structure of Gineso.

(8) ʧe   ji-bok'a-do   ata   an-lufe-je   omwa-ti hedi ta-jo-m-anad
    3SG,HUM,NOM C4,PL-berry-ACC DEM   C3,SG-tree-LOC tall-ATT near 3SG-3PL-PAST-find
    'She/He found berries near that tall tree'

The example in (8) demonstrates the overall sentence structure: SOV. It also incorporates a postpositional phrase *ata anlufeje omwati hedi*, which word-for-word translates as 'that tree tall near.' Within that postpositional phrase, the noun phrase demonstrates the common order of constituents: demonstratives occur before nouns, and adjectives often appear after the nouns they are modifying.

Three cases are exemplified in (8): the nominative pronoun *ʧe* ('she/he'), accusative *jibok'ado* ('berries'), and locative *anlufeje* ('tree'). The postposition requires the locative for a reading of 'near' or 'close to;' if the same postposition (*hedi*) can take a dative object, but that changes its interpretation to 'with' (as accompaniment). Finally, the verb *tajomanadje* shows the ordering of affixes: the bipersonal inflections mark both the subject and object, and the tense/aspect inflections indicate that the berries were found in the past.

While the preferred word order is SOV, Gineso allows a more flexible word order, depending on what the speaker brings into focus; the same sentence in (8) could be expressed in multiple ways:

(9) ji-bok'a-do   ʧe   ata   an-lufe-je   omwa-ti hedi ta-jo-m-anad
    C4,PL-berry-ACC 3SG,HUM,NOM   DEM   C3,SG-tree-LOC tall-ATT near 3SG-3PL-PAST-find
    'It was berries that he/she found near that tall tree'

(10) ata   an-lufe-je   omwa-ti hedi ji-bok'a-do   ʧe   ta-jo-m-anad
     DEM   C3,SG-tree-LOC tall-ATT near C4,PL-berry-ACC 3SG,HUM,NOM   3SG-3PL-PAST-find
     'Near that tall tree, it was berries that she/he found'

While the word order is flexible, the verb, in general, remains at the end of the sentence.
Gineso does not have a *be*-copula; instead, the sentence is expressed as follows:

(11)a. Loma   imoka
      Loma, NOM girl, NOM
      'Loma is a girl'

   b. Loma   omwa
      Loma,NOM tall,PRED
      'Loma is tall'

Neither sentence in (11) requires a verb: the *be*-copula is assumed. Roughly half the languages in Stassen's (2013) study also had zero copula for constructions with a predicate noun phrase.

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