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Mechanics of Ascension Through Genshin Impact

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Art 108 Sec 01

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Part I. Introduction and Interview

Introduction

Genshin Impact, or Genshin for short, is a free roleplaying, open-world, adventure video game released for Playstation 4, Microsoft Windows, iOS, and Android on September 28th, 2020. Since its initial release, the game has gained considerable recognition for its storytelling ability, in-depth lore, and amazing character and world-building design. They were awarded Apple's "Game of the Year" in 2020 and have grossed over \$100 million from in-app iOS purchases alone.

The story begins with a fight sequence showcasing two siblings fighting an enemy. The player is then prompted to choose one of the two characters to be their main avatar in which the sibling they do not choose is then locked away. The player is awakened in the world of Teyvat, a land comprising 7 smaller nations, each ruled by an archon wielding an elemental power. From there, the player, also known as traveler, is met with several different playable characters and NPCs on the quest to find their lost sibling. The lore and storyline are explained in much more depth in the actual game and to this day, the game is still not complete. As far as main quests go, Mihoyo, the publisher, plans to finish the game in about 5 years. While this may seem strange and unfavorable to many people, Genshin Impact offers many in-game events and has many features as far as player activities to keep them entertained even without any active quests.

Genshin offers many alluring factors such as the cross-platform co-op feature and the player's ability to play as 4 characters at a time. Each character wields one of seven different elemental skills ranging from anemo (air), pyro, cryo, electro, dendro (plants - this ability is yet to be released in the game), hydro, and geo. Different character elemental skills can have certain reactions within each other to create elemental reactions. For example, a hydro and cryo reaction

could result in a “freeze” reaction in which either the character or enemy would freeze on the spot. Characters can be obtained by progressing through the storyline, participating in limited-time events, or “wishing” on banners. Banners in the game are “gacha” style meaning they are randomly drawn. During a specified time period, certain characters have a higher probability of getting pulled than others. Typically, there is one five-star character and three four-star characters that have an increased rate. “Wishes” can be obtained through several means such as exploring the map and completing achievements, but the most common method would be through in-game purchases. Personally, I have invested countless hours embarking through the quests and around \$200 trying to get the character that I want. One of the main reasons that keep players invested in the game is their attachments to the characters and their drive to make them stronger in order to fight enemies and complete domains faster. Leveling up and “buffing”, or making the desired object or character stronger, can be achieved through several different methods in which players typically tend to combine all of them.

Interview

Genshin Impact has made a name for itself for people both in and outside of the gaming community. Whether it be due to its addictive nature or wide accessibility on different gaming platforms, Genshin has seen no shortage of players. While many online games fall short on keeping their players interested or enticing new people to play, Genshin Impact has consistently been on an increase of monthly players. According to ActivePlayer.io, a website that compiles different official statistics through several sources such as steamcharts, gamestat, and statista,

Genshin Impact averages about an 8.72% new monthly player increase.

Genshin Impact Live Monthly Player Detailed [TABLE]

Month	Average Monthly Players	Monthly Gain / Loss	Monthly Gain / Loss %	Max Players in a Day
Last 30 Days	56,022,479	2,421,337	4.52%	9,337,080
October 30, 2021	53,601,142	3,412,351	6.80%	8,933,524
September 30, 2021	50,188,791	2,333,775	4.88%	8,364,799
August 30, 2021	47,855,016	4,194,872	9.61%	7,975,836
July 30, 2021	43,660,144	2,758,698	6.74%	10,925,540
June 30, 2021	40,901,446	1,046,430	2.63%	7,511,470
May 30, 2021	39,855,016	6,853,541	20.77%	7,102,554
April 30, 2021	33,001,475	3,451,326	11.68%	6,922,014
March 30, 2021	29,550,149	888,045	3.10%	6,014,429
February 28, 2021	28,662,104	2,253,132	8.53%	6,200,147
January 30, 2021	26,408,972	2,628,429	11.05%	5,462,094
December 30, 2020	23,780,543	5,201,994	28.00%	4,756,109
November 30, 2020	18,578,549	-185,709	-0.99%	4,334,995
October 30, 2020	18,764,258	2,228,802	13.48%	4,065,589
September 30, 2020	16,535,456	16,535,455	0.00%	3,380,318
	1			

(“Genshin Impact Live...”, 2021)

In order to get a deeper insight into what draws players onto this game, I conducted a small interview with 5 different players currently invested in Genshin. I began by asking the players when they started playing Genshin. One of the responses I received was from about October 2020, just one month after their official launch whereas another response I received stated that they started playing in October 2021. I then asked the interviewees why they started playing. Many of the people that started playing the game around six months after its release stated that because many of their other friends played, they were feeling “left out” or wanted to know why everyone else was extremely invested in the game. For people that began playing during the game’s earlier time frame, their answers varied from being interested in gacha or RPG games or seeing the Genshin Impact being played through streamers and wanting to play for

themselves. It should be noted that people wanting to play due to their friends' influence is largely impacted on this questionnaire as I interviewed my friend group in which most of us have been playing the game for over 6 months. As far as to why the players enjoy Genshin and their favorite features the game has to offer, most of the answers revolved around the art - whether that be through the character designs, scenery, or world-building concepts. Interviewees also noted the interests of wanting to unlock new quests to the story or the thrill of building teams and getting introduced to new playable characters. I then had a series of questions in which I had the participants rank on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the highest) how satisfied or interested they were in certain aspects of the game. When I asked the players how invested they are in the storyline, this answer averaged to around an 8 and when I had them elaborate, the ones that ranked it at a lower scale (lowest being 7), stated that there was too much dialogue at times whereas the players that ranked it higher (highest being 10), were investing time into reading deeper upon the lore and wanting theory videos through YouTube. When I asked respondents how invested they are in the characters, this result yielded slightly higher results with the average being 9. Many of them stated how, especially with characters on their team, they are more interested in getting to know their backstory and seeing them in the storyline and gameplay. Players also noted, however, how some playable characters are more "neglected" in terms of screen time and animations. The last ranking question I asked was how invested the players are in making their characters stronger in which the average was 9.3. This result proves to be higher and a larger priority for most players as it would make gameplay and fighting enemies whether it be bosses or through domains much easier.

I then had the participants state on average how many hours they play per week with the responses ranging from 15 hours - 28 hours. Within those hours, I also asked how long they

spend working on improving their characters with the answers ranging from about 4 hours - 15 hours. Lastly, I asked the players on average, how much money they estimated to have spent on this game although it is free-to-play. For one interviewee that has been playing Genshin Impact for around 4 months, she stated that she has spent an estimate of about \$600 total. For another participant that has been playing for about a year and a month, she has estimated to spend around \$240 total. Both players confirm spending money for the weekly battle pass as well as to buy primogems in order to wish on different characters and weapons.

Conducting this interview gave me great insight into what draws players into this game and how much time they spend on it. Most players can agree how important character interactions and builds are to their enjoyment of Genshin Impact. In order to understand why players invest their time into the character builds and how much it really can affect a character, we need to understand the mechanics behind it.

Part II. Mechanics

Ascension

Genshin Impact offers the option to “ascend” characters in order to increase their overall statistics. Ascensions are the most basic ways players can improve their character builds without having to delve much into looking at specific statistics. In order to ascend a character, players must collect a certain amount of items for each ascension. Players can also only ascend their characters to certain levels based on their adventure rankings in order to avoid having lower-level players with high-level characters early in the game as the enemy levels scale with the players’ adventure ranks. Adventure ranks increase by progressing through the storyline, finding chests, fighting bosses in domains, etc. Below is a chart explaining level caps based on

adventure ranks for players provided by the game enthusiast, Brandon Adams, from Attackofthefanboy.

- Adventure Rank 15 – Character Ascension to tier 1.
 - Level cap is raised to 40.
- Adventure Rank 25 – Character Ascension to tier 2.
 - Level cap is raised to 50.
- Adventure Rank 30 – Character Ascension to tier 3.
 - Level cap is raised to 60.
- Adventure Rank 35 – Character Ascension to tier 4.
 - Level cap is raised to 70.
- Adventure Rank 40 – Character Ascension to tier 5.
 - Level cap is raised to 80.
- Adventure Rank 45 – Character Ascension to tier 6.
 - Level cap is raised to 90.

(Adams, 2020)

When using my cryo character, Chongyun, for example, the green circle indicates the current level he is at and the red circle indicates the materials he needs in order to ascend to the maximum level of 90. In his required materials, we can see that he needs 6 Shivade Jade gemstones (blue gems) which the player can achieve by fighting bosses, crafting gems, or buying materials, 20 Hoarfrost Cores which can only be obtained through fighting the Cryo Regisvine (boss), 60 Cor Lapis (yellow stone) which can be gathered through mining ores, and 24 ominous masks which can be obtained through fighting hilichurls (small enemies) or crafted. If Chongyun does get ascended, he will not automatically jump from 80 to 90, but rather he needs to gain character experience. This can be done through fighting bosses or more commonly, this can be

done through consuming books which the player can get through several different means. Looking at the overall rates in which the statistics increase, the player can see a significant change in all general base stats.



Weapons

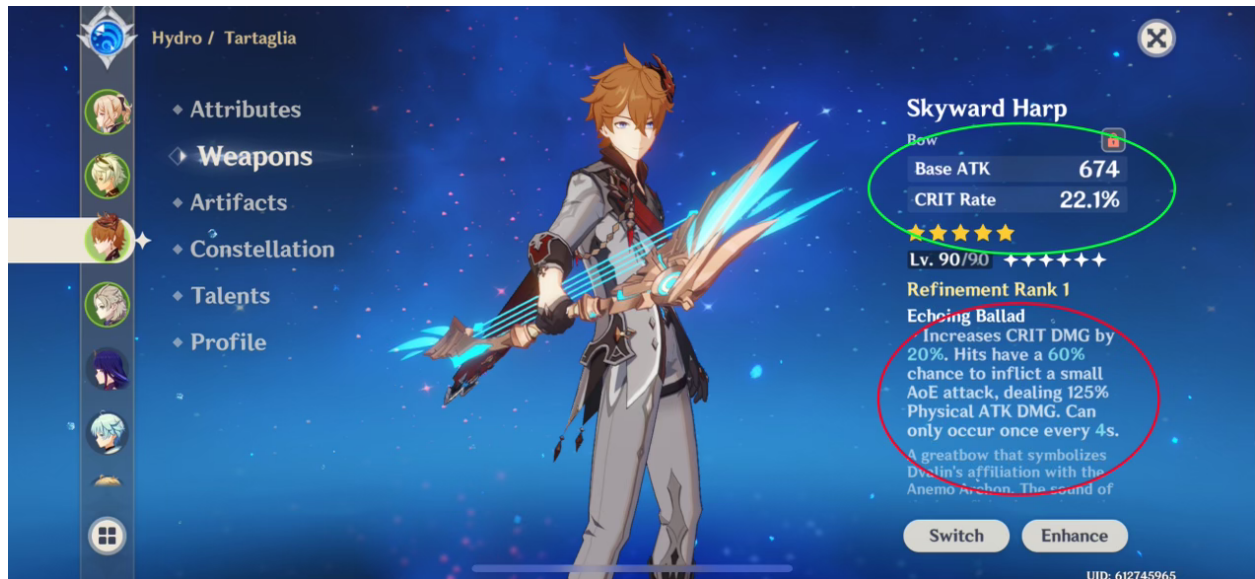
All playable characters in Genshin Impact utilize weapons regardless of their character build. Currently, there are polearms, swords, claymores, bows, and catalysts available. Every weapon provides a different statistic and benefit of using the weapon. Weapons can range from one star to five stars. Most commonly, players will use four to five-star weapons on their characters as they offer better advantages. Lower-level weapons can be found throughout Teyvat in different chests and bins whereas higher-level weapons can be crafted, earned through events, or wished upon.

Wishes are what make Genshin a gacha style game as it offers players the chance to win at getting certain characters or weapons. In order to wish, players must collect intertwined fate or acquainted fate, depending on the banner they want to wish on. Obtaining the different fates are very challenging and are rarer to come by which is why players often opt to turn their primogems

into the fates. Primogems can be collected through exploring Teyvat by collecting chests, completing surveys, participating in events, getting achievements, or through in-app purchases. One intertwined or acquainted fate is equivalent to 160 primogems which estimates to be about \$2. If players decide to pull 10 wishes at one time, they are guaranteed at least one four-star item; this includes a character, a weapon, or both.

Enhancing a weapon is very similar to ascending characters in Genshin Impact. Players must collect a certain amount of items in order to make their weapons better. These items can be collected through certain weapon-material domains as well as gathered by fighting smaller enemies or by accumulating materials throughout Teyvat. Maximum weapon ranks also follow player adventure ranks similar to character ascension. As seen on my weapon below, the green circle indicates the statistics of my weapon. These statistics are then added on top of my player's statistics and in this instance, it would add onto my player's base attack as well as critical rate percentage. This specific weapon has the ability to increase critical damage by twenty percent as well as has a sixty percent chance of inflicting an area of effect (AoE) attack that can produce an additional 125% physical attack damage to the enemies. Weapons also have the chance of being refined to increase the beneficial statistics aside from the base attack. To refine a weapon, a player must destroy a duplicate of the same weapon. There is a maximum of five refinement

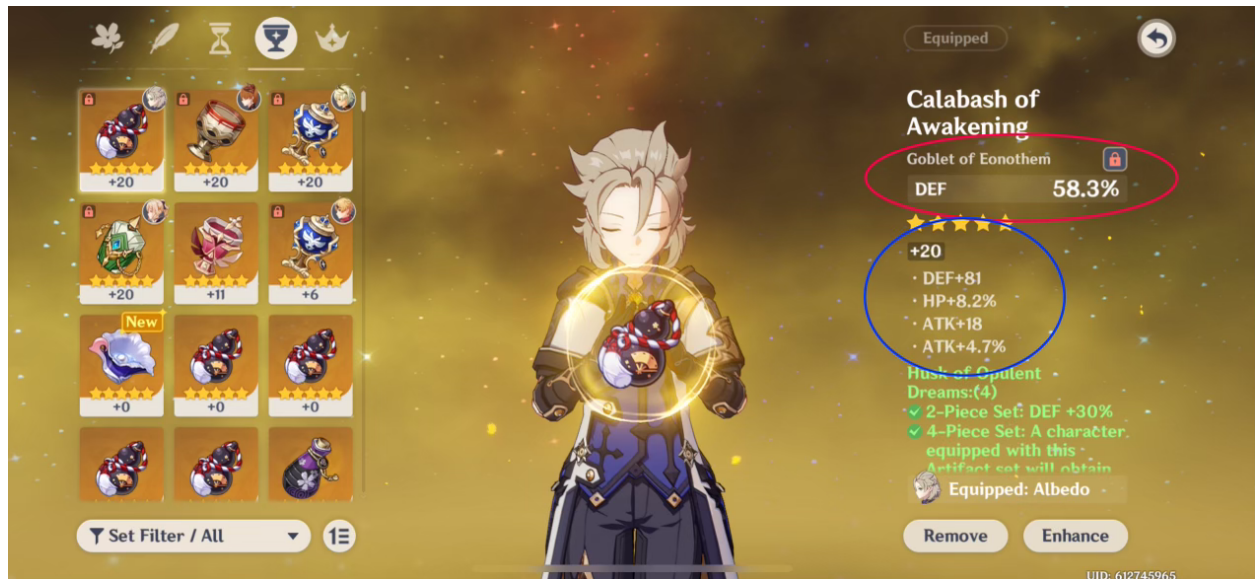
ranks.



Artifacts

Most Genshin Impact players would regard artifacts as the primary items that drastically change a character's build. To simply put it, artifacts are items that characters can equip to enhance their statistics. They can be obtained by completing domain challenges which are essentially temple-like buildings across the map that can be completed for several different rewards. There are five different artifacts that players can use per character at one time. All artifacts come with a main statistic (red circle) and three to four random sub statistics (blue circle) that the player has no control over. Artifacts start with a base level of zero and can be increased to a maximum of twenty levels. Each level increase will affect the main statistics, however, every four level increases, one of the sub-stats will also randomly upgrade. Like

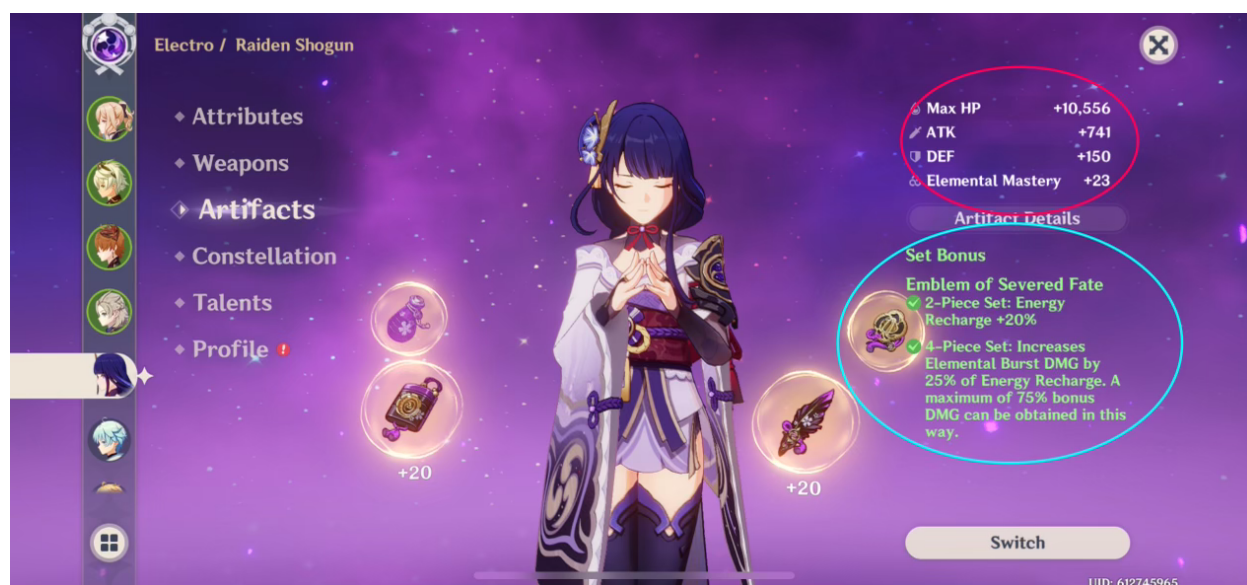
weapons, artifacts can range from a one-star rarity to the highest being five stars.



The first artifact is the flower artifact and this main stat will always be an HP statistic meaning that as the player levels up the flower artifact, their base HP will increase depending on the artifact's level. The second artifact is the feather and this artifact also has a set main statistic of attack percentage. The third, fourth, and fifth artifact's statistics are random and can have a wide range from defense percentage, elemental mastery, energy recharge, critical rate, elemental damage bonus percentage, etc. The artifact statistics that the players strive for truly depend on how the player wants to build their character. For example, players can build characters that have the ability to heal as healers or can build them as sub-damage-per-second (DPS) characters.

Artifacts are meant to be used in pairs or in sets of four as when a player equips multiple of the same family of artifacts, they offer special bonus attributes. In the image below, the red circle showcases all of the artifact statistics combined that will then be added to the character's stats. The blue circle showcases the set bonus from having equipped multiple of the same set of artifacts that gives the character additional stats. In the case of the picture below, my character has equipped four different pieces from the emblem of severed fate set. Because of this, she

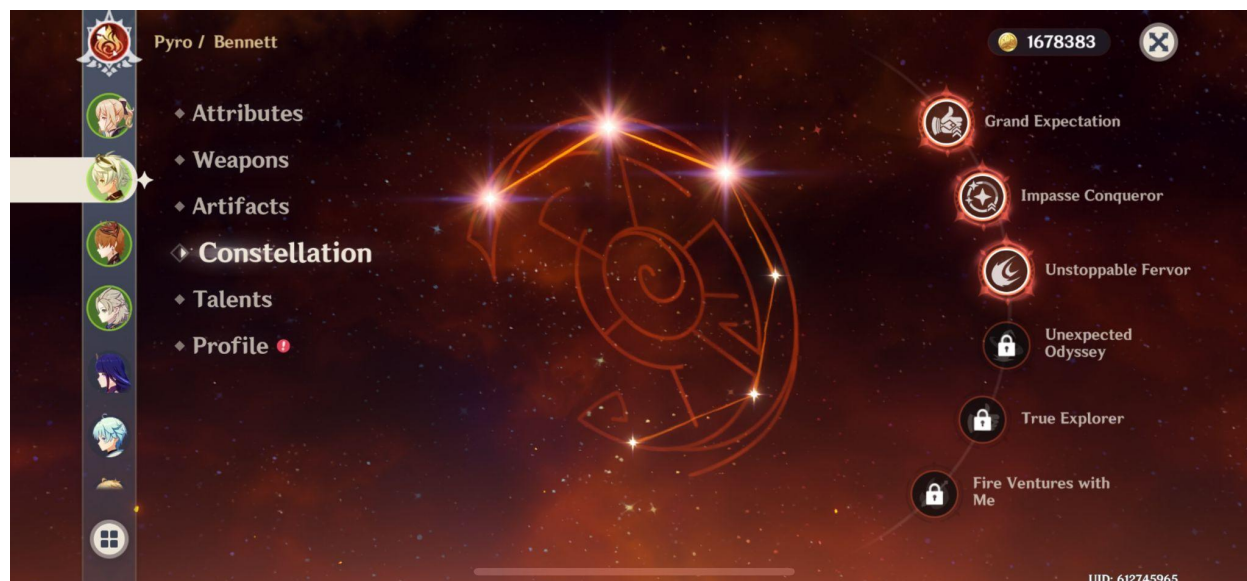
gains an additional 20% energy recharge rate as well as having her elemental burst damage increased by 25%. This is scaled off her energy recharge.



Constellations

We've seen previously how having multiples of the same item such as weapons can be destroyed in order to make the item better, but what happens if we have multiple of the same characters? Character constellations in Genshin Impact offer six additional tier progressions for characters that can either buff existing attributes or introduce new abilities. It should be noted that the primary way to obtain characters aside from special events that Genshin holds is by wishing on them. Because of that, it can be extremely hard to get constellations, especially for five-star characters. Players that tend to spend a lot of money trying to build a full constellation (C6), are "whaling" and tend to only do it for their favorite characters. The average cost for

whaling for a character would be anywhere from around \$1,000 - \$2,000.



Talents

Talents are the last way to directly affect a character's abilities. Each character has six talents and the player can enhance three of them to a maximum level of either 10 or 15, depending on the character's constellation. The first talent affects the character's normal attack, the second affects their elemental skill, and the third affects their elemental burst. Leveling up talents, like enhancing characters or weapons, require certain materials that the player needs to farm for. Talents most often require different books, depending on the character, as well as two additional materials that can be found throughout Teyvat. The screenshot below shows the attributes that would be enhanced if I leveled up my third talent from level eight to level nine. Four additional attributes would be scaled up.



Conclusion

Due to the alluring factor of being able to build characters and teams in an engaging storyline, Genshin Impact has certainly paved its own path for a new cultural influence. In addition to being able to easily play in free co-op modes with friends, Genshin provides countless hours of entertainment for people willing to put in the time. The beautiful artwork in the scenery as well as character design and lore are just part of the reasons that make the game so addicting to me personally, however, being able to interview players provided a deeper insight on why others might also enjoy this game. I also believe that the wide range of mechanics and dynamics provided in terms of how players can interact with the game in order to build their characters or how players can extensively explore the open range map invoke a sense of wanting more.

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