

CONCLUSION

The notions I had in mind when I started working on Ellora and the conclusions that I have drawn at this juncture divulge a drastic difference. Obviously, due to prolonged and interrupted study on this project, everytime I resumed work after a hiatus of several months, the conclusions derived at an earlier juncture seemed, though not wrong, facile. Some of the readings failed to sound convincing, resulting into factual as well as fundamental, essential alterations in the conclusions. The issues that appeared crucial at some juncture now look sterile and the enthusiastic efforts to collect the material in support of the arguments pertaining to those issues proved futile. Every visit to Ellora negated some of the observations of the previous trip and hinted at more stimulating issues and enquiries and instigated new hypotheses.

Yet some of the enquiries and observations do retain their importance. The possible chronology of the caves, for example, although it was not a central issue, did merit a lot of importance then and now too and I realise that the chronological framework provides the grid to

configure the stylistic developments in the specific context of time. That is why in each chapter the dates attributed to a sculpture or a group of sculptures are justified using every possible evidence; which normally is not a prime concern of the art-historians treating style as central to their discussion. An extensive formal analysis, which normally formulates the core of such writings, is omitted if not avoided in this dissertation, for it tends to get repetitive and cliched. In the course of time, this work that started as an attempt to understand the stylistic development of Ellora sculpture converged into an effort to understand the stylistic development in the Indian context using Ellora as a module.

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Though it was not possible to ignore every bit of information regarding dates, patronage etc. accumulated until then, it was an attempt to react intuitively to the sculpture irrespective of this information and also of the formal qualities believed to be representing a particular phase of evolution. The readings taken were not drastically different than the existing chronology and hence most of my observations do not need any justification, as they are already substantiated by my predecessors. I have concentrated only on those observations which differ from the existing framework, and I have tried to fit these observations into this framework.

Considering the essentially heterogenous nature of Indian art, it will be difficult to try to trace an all pervading pattern of development as it has been done for European art. To discern the nature and possible course of its development, it will be imperative to examine the course of some consistent, prolonged activity at a particular centre or region, e.g. Mathura from the first to the fifth century A.D. can be taken as a unit. Similarly, Karnataka from the fifth to eighth century or Ellora from the fifth to ninth century can be other units. To venture a statement or even a hypothesis about the course of development of Indian art, the changing aesthetics and the possible graph of these changes will have to be configured. The same pattern may not be discerned at every centre or in every region, but if at least the nature of change is similar, some conjecture can be drawn out of it.

At Ellora, the inaugural activity is confused, inert, but certainly not crude or naive. The sculptors know their job, the only thing they lack is the reverberation of life. This early sculpture is a cold, uninspired representation of the artist's visual experience. Later, it reaches a balanced sophistication and then tends to become theatrical, pompous or magniloquent.

Apparently this course is similar to the one that is revealed in Western art. The intense, inevitable expression of archaic Greece gets self-conscious and hence calculative in the early classical period. Then

gradually reaching the highly accomplished stage of classicism, it finally culminates into the flamboyant Hellenistic phase. The course that can be traced from Romanesque to Baroque is also more or less the same.

Yet, even one of the most perceptive art-historians like Kramrisch, who was closely acquainted with the traditions of the east and west, felt and stated assertively that Indian art differs in its development from the course of art in Europe. She observes that every moment of productive activity in the west is usually the consequence of a previous moment, the effect of its continuity. Indian art, on the other hand, repeatedly begins from the beginning.

It appears to be a beginning, I believe, because it does not progress in a cyclical or spiral manner, as we perceive it in the West. If the cycle of this evolution reaches the point where it began, the progression is determinate and hence anticipated. Since the anticipated developments are not discernible in the development of Indian art, it appears to begin anew each time. But it is an uninterrupted art tradition, which kept alive for centuries. Some logical evolutionary pattern must have prevailed. If it is not revealed conspicuously, it is probably because Indian art cannot ever be seen as a monolithic whole. The development at different centres were not merely the idiomatic traits of a period style encompassing the whole culture; they were autonomous styles in their own right. Groping, maturing independently,

borrowing, adopting elements from parallel styles and hence unknowingly conforming to the *zeitgeist* of that era. Each of this style, as suggested before is a unit or a 'molecule' by which we understand the substance of Indian art. These units do not necessarily participate in a sequential progression but they certainly establish the part and whole relationship, where every part betrays all the properties of the whole. Indian theogony identifies it as *piṇḍa-brahmāṇḍa* relationship.

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While tracing the developments taking place in a particular centre or region - where intense - homogenous activity is in existence, the known beginning of the activity will be treated as the point of origin of that unit. The place of this 'autonomous module' in the total evolution will be thought of at a later juncture. Ellora as a unit is inaugurated with a sculptural activity which is static, inert and confused and culminates into a flamboyant expression, as traced all through this compendium. The interactions with other traditions seemingly challenges the autonomy of this module, but it is observed that though stylistic interactions are common and frequent, they only accelerate the pace of the progression. For a style chooses to interact only with the one which essentially corresponds temperamentally with it like a flower which accepts only the pollengrains of its own kind from all those that are deposited on its stigma.

The interactions can at the most cause cumulative effects, but they never alter the course of development. However, even this reading will have to be verified, applying it to some other unit which is almost contemporaneous to Ellora i.e. the Chalukyan unit.

The begining of the Chalukyan activity at Badami takes place on different terms than Ellora. The sculpture that inaugurates this activity is robust, vibrant, intense but earthy and to some extent rustic. At Aihole and particularly in Durga temple it reaches the equilibrium of both emotion and articulation and later on at Pattadakal though apparently it gets theatrical, in reality it becomes contrived, measured and schematic.

Further to the south-east i.e. in Eastern Andhra, the rational intellectual deliberation at Jaggayyapetta and Bhattiprolu acquire the warmth of feeling in Amaravati and later on at Nagarjunakonde, it gets into the intricacies of narration and drama.

With the help of several such examples from any part of India, it can be inferred that if the cycle begins with a rational enquiry, it culminates into a flamboyant expression ends up with a schematic, measured articulation. This also means that at some juncture it crosses a line of equilibrium where the intuitive, instinctual expression gets manifest with restrained articulation, where the abstract feelings find a perfect tangible parallel (See figure).

To describe that state of equilibrium, the era indicating it will be called the 'Realm of incandescence', and the works of art that fall in this region, to my mind formulate Indian classicism, which appears more frequently and at different times in Indian art due to the autonomous modules maturing independently. At Mathura and Pavnar, it appears in the late fifth century; while Ellora sculpture achieves this excellence twice - one in the mid-sixth century (Ramesvara Cave) and then in the second half of the eighth century at Kailasanatha. The classical element discernible in Chola bronzes and Khajuraho sculpture is also a resultant of this recurring classicism, but the 'post-classical' developments in each of these cases will depend on the course traceable in the 'pre-classical' phase. If it matures from rational to intuitive, the post-classical expression will be intensely expressive, dramatic - in short baroque - and if the 'pre-classical' developments mature from intuitive to rational, the post-classical phase will be too articulate, cold and ornate like rococo. This implies that in India the baroque and the rococo (these terms are being used for two reasons - they precisely point out an evolutionary stage since they are very well defined, and this usage will vividly explain the difference between the course of Indian art from the Western, that I am trying to stipulate) are not consecutive but alternative.

This can be illustrated with the examples of Ellora and Gujarat sculpture. The sculptural tradition that commences with Shamalaji and

related sites enter into rococo in the tenth century without passing through the baroque at all. The same is true about Chalukyan sculpture. The element of baroque is eluded in the progression of the art of the Karnataka region. Similarly rococo never forms a part of the idiom at Ellora or of the Mathura cycle.

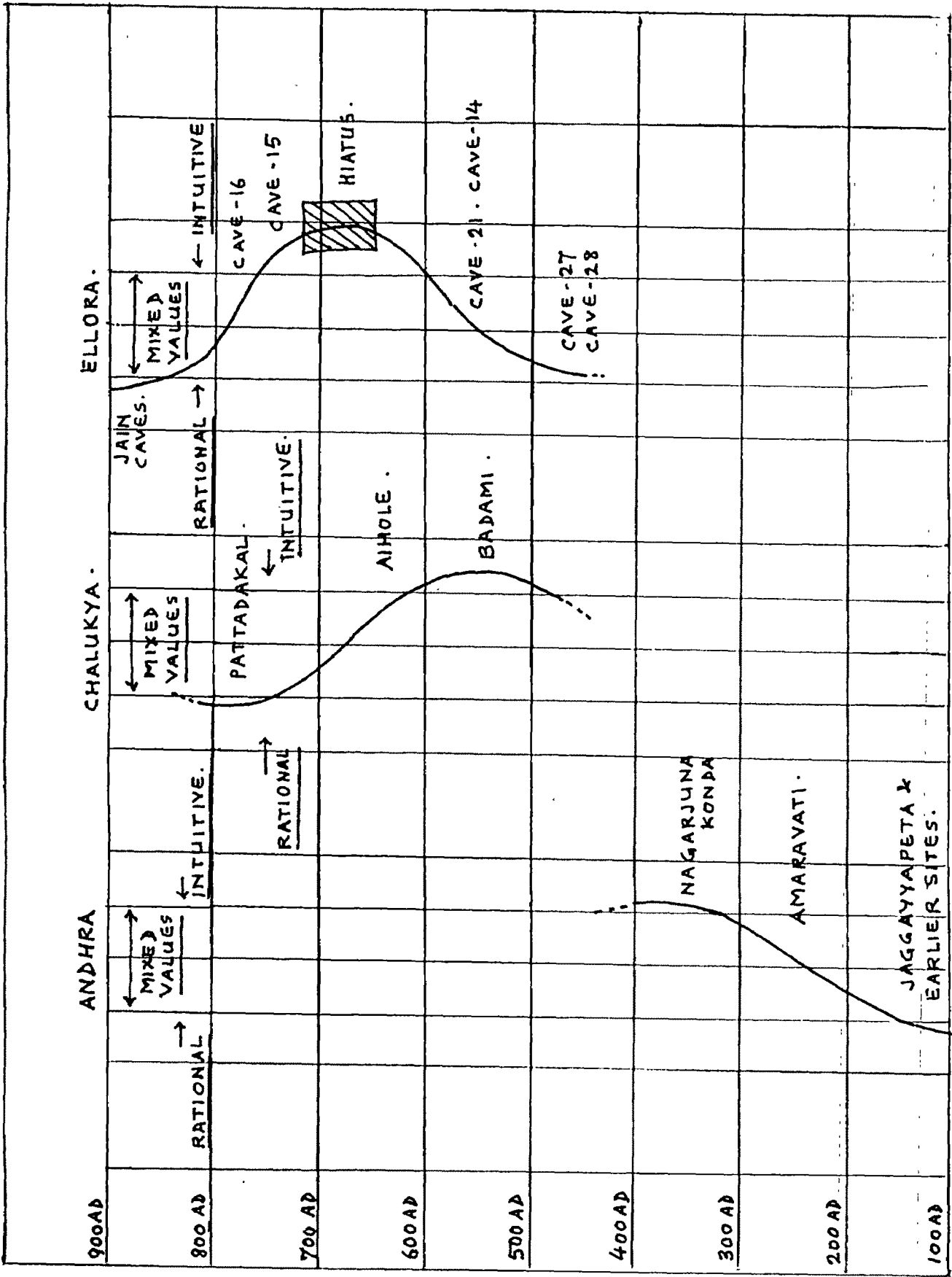
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These reciprocating developments co-exist in the development of Indian art probably because of parallel developments in popular art and elite art, which is also noticed by the doctrinaires of ancient India. Terms like *grāma śilpa* and *rāja śilpa* in the content of visual arts, *lokadharmi* and *nātyadharmi* in theatre or *deśi* and *mārgi* which are applicable to these parallel cultures not only indicate their co-existence but also suggest their equal status. They are considered different but not necessarily superior or inferior to each other and that is why a great poet of the status of Gunadhya, a cultivated Sanskritist, chose to express in *Paiśachi* and was also appreciated by the elite. The interaction between the popular literature and elite literature is beyond doubt and has caused significant changes in the course of each other. Indian philosophy too evolves in a similar two-fold manner. The conflict between rationalism and intuition is manifest and represented by *yoga* or *jñāna* and *bhakti*. These two attitudes also blend with each other culminating into *jñanottara bhakti*.

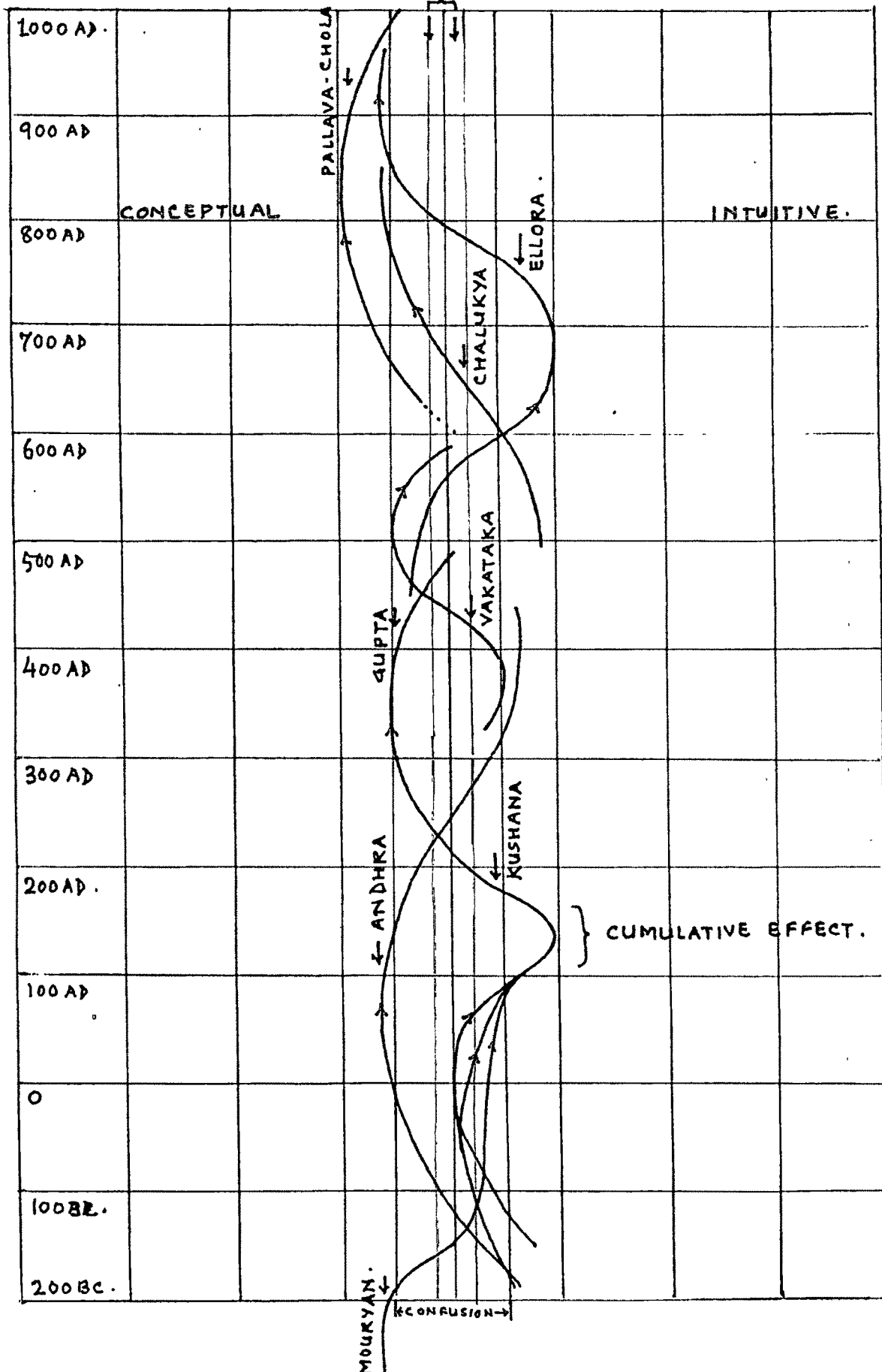
Philosophy has its repercussions on mythology which also gets reflected in the iconography of art. The changing iconography in Indian sculptural betrays the commitment of that era to *bhakti* or *yoga*. The audacious Ravana from Cave 21 is converted into an ardent devotee by the eighth century. In the first relief in the northern wing of the rear corridor of Kailasa, he is shown offering his own heads in place of flowers, to his Lord. Markandeya anugraha and Karivarada are some more manifestations of this cultic variation. If the cult divulges its obvious leanings on the iconography, somewhere it ought to resonate in the visual delineation too.

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Intuition without concept is blind and the concept without intuition is lame. The spontaneous manifestation of intuition, perhaps in search of objective universal approval gradually heads towards abstraction and the meticulous search for perfection, somewhere realizes its inadequacy and yearns to acquire the warmth of human emotions to supplement this impersonal search and make it more worthwhile and relevant. The two attitudes always get attracted towards each other and their intercourse results into the braided pattern of the development of Indian art.



REALM OF INCANDESCENCE .



**COMPARATIVE CHART OF THE CHRONOLOGICAL
SEQUENCE OF ELLORA AND RELATED CAVES**

CAVE	SOUNDARA RAJAN	SPINK (MARG, 1967)	SUGGESTED DATES
JOGESHWARI	675-740	524-546	500-520
ELEPHANTA CAVE 1	625-655	530-550	560-580
AURANGABAD 1-5 (GANESH LENA)		541-556-561	
AURANGABAD	720-750	561-581	570-590
TAKLIDHO- KESHWAR	678-695	568-584	
ELLORA			
1.			
2.		618-640	530-570
3.		625-643	
4.		630-650	
5.		608-630	
6.			
7.		620-640	
8.			
9.		623-643	570-600
10.		619-655	
11.		630-655	
12.		640-655	
13.			

CONTD...

CAVE	SOUNDARA RAJAN	SPINK (MARG, 1967)	SUGGESTED DATES
14.	655-670 730-755-CAVE	602-621	560-575
15.	752-770-MANDAPA		740-760
16.	760-865		750-815
17.	710-720	576-601	570----
18.	780-800		-
19.	700-725	554-566	540----
20.	620-640	556-571	540----
21.	595-630	558-590	550-580
22.	725-750		735-745
23.			
24.			...600...
25.	790-810		
26.		553-576	
27.	665-710	551-581	500-520
28.		551-561	480-500
29.	670-685	556-601	600-650