

An integrated visualization of text and images in Indian art : Ancient and Medieval



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Abstract

Text and images have been creatively intertwined and explored in several ways from the ancient times to the contemporary period. Reading text and viewing images are two distinct modes of human communication that function independently. This research is concerned with the results of the combination of these two distinct modes of expression. The subject being intensively wide ranged, as there are numerous representations of text-image combinations throughout the world history; this research elaborates specifically the examples from Ancient and Medieval Indian art. Text and written forms can be traced from the early rock paintings to the seals of Indus valley civilization, from the Ashokan stone inscriptions to the various illustrated manuscripts of Indian history. Therefore, the study is based on qualitative research method acquiring data from literary sources and artefacts from the National Museum, Delhi. The research favourably collects various creative representations of text-image combination in different forms and genres of Indian art. Eventually the study provides appreciation and visualization of text in the form of inscriptions, captions, declarations, information, signatures and labels surrounded with pictorial art.

Keywords: Text, words, images, pictures, text-image combinations, Indian art, ancient, medieval

Research Paper

Text being one of the fundamental forms of communication, it is also the strongest visual element that can evoke thoughts and draw out emotions. When fused with another prime mode of communication that is visual, it can be graphically thought provoking and impactful. Generally written language and visual imagery are assumed to be two independent and distinct, although closely related forms of human communication; because reading text and seeing an image require different functioning of human brain. The present research is concerned with what happens when these two different modes of expression are deliberately combined. From ancient times to the contemporary period, text and images have been creatively combined and explored in several ways by visual artists. The domains of text and image are like two regions that speak different language but have a long history of mutual migration, cultural exchange and other forms of inter-relations.

Before the arrival and development of alphabetic writing the initial human communication appears in pictorial forms. These forms principally consist of clear recognizable graphic indications of nature such as flora-fauna, human beings, sun, moon and stars (Fisher, 2001). Gradually geometric patterns like circles, squares, rectangles, straight and diagonal lines, dots etc. started appearing as a source of information in Rock art. (Bahn & Vertut, 1988) The need and desire to communicate the composite set of information resulted in the invention of various forms of non-pictographic writing such as the logo-graphic script of Indus valley civilization. Further as the formal history says, writing was developed by Sumerians around 3500 BCE, called 'Cuneiform'. (Stokstad et al., 2001) Cuneiform signs similar to pictographs, most often represented a syllable, but could also represent a word, idea or number and could represent every oral sound made by humans. One of the world's

first great works of literature, an epic poem called “The epic of Gilgamesh” was written in Cuneiform on a clay tablet. As each civilization advanced so did they need to communicate become more complex. From Egyptian hieroglyphs with symbols and ideograms to ancient Greek and Roman who created their own stylised alphabet which was still used today. (Ritner, 1996) Writing in the Indian subcontinent probably derived from Aramaic script. The famous Ashokan Edicts from c.253 – 250 BCE are considered to be the first longest documents. The edicts were inscribed in both Indian scripts- Kharosthi and Brahmi. (Fisher, 2001) In the Middle Ages text was popularised with illuminated manuscript and calligraphy focusing on the handwritten text. Illuminated manuscripts were handmade books, produced between c.500 - 1600 CE. This art of scripting found different modes of expression such as copper plates, palm leaves, handmade paper, bark of trees etc. The introduction of paper changed things drastically. Paper was invented in China during the Han dynasty in c.105 CE and was introduced into the Arab world by Chinese merchants. (Gaur, 1995) Muslim artisans decorated their books with elaborate borders and text accompanying illustrations.

Thus it is evident that there have been numerous text and image combinations throughout the world history. The present study focuses on the text and image relationships of the Ancient and Medieval Indian art. It traces the presence of ‘text’ from the early historic rock paintings and evidence of earliest writings from the seals and poetry of Indus valley civilization. Further with the evolution of Brahmi script the inscription and text image combination can be identified in various forms of art. Many writers and scholars have already provided an appropriate descriptive categorization for text-image relationships in the history of art. Dario Covi, John Sparrow, Mieczyslaw Wallis, Alison Flett, Leslie Ross and John Dixon Hunt have proposed impressive classification for the combined visualization of text and image (concentrating primarily on western art). The classified terms are sometimes incapable and irrelevant to a few examples where text and images appear together. The purpose of this research is to explore the value and objectivity of text that is combined with visual imagery or text used as form of visual art. The study does not intend to strictly categorise such representations, but rather it brings together highly selected examples that represent word-picture combination. The subject is wide ranged and due to the limitations of study, many significant examples may have been not included. Although text and images, the visual and verbal modes

of expression and perception, do differ significantly; the various examples of text and image combinations studied in this research demonstrate thought provoking ideas and concepts created by the visual artists of the ancient India.

Rock art

Indian rock art is a mixture of aesthetics and philosophy. This rock art in the form of petroglyphs and pictography records around one million motifs that include animals, men and symbols. These motifs not only provide a pictorial reference but also suggest tremendous thoughts to understand the lifestyle and philosophy of historic man. Indian rock art identifies abundant forms of men at war, procession, ceremonial walk, detailed animals, weapons, geometric forms and symbols, celestial bodies etc. (Chakravarty & Bednarik, 1997) In many terms, prehistoric art can be considered as a pictorial communication. Although the purpose of these pictographs was recording information or communication, they do not qualify the current standard of ‘text’ because they are incapable of articulating speech.

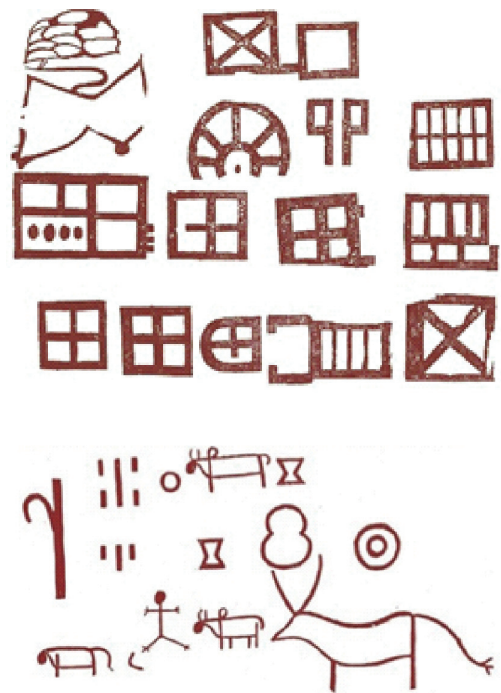


Figure 1. Rock art of Gudahandi, Orissa.

Note. Image depicting rock art of Gudahandi is a sample illustration of the original rock art. Image source - https://www.academia.edu/36339675/Origin_and_Development_of_Indian_Scripts_A_Positional_Study

Figure 2. Yogimatha rock painting, Orissa.

Note. Image depicting rock art of Gudahandi is a sample illustration of the original rock art. Image source - https://www.academia.edu/36339675/Origin_and_Development_of_Indian_Scripts_A_Positional_Study

For example, the rock art of Gudahandi, Orissa displays pictographic painting of stylised human figures, deer and a variety of geometric patterns of square and rectangles. These patterns are either filled with straight-diagonal lines, with dots, wheels with spokes or kept empty. (see Figure 1) Although these are identifiable marks on a durable surface and their then purpose might be recording information or conveying message but fails to articulate speech and thus fails to be a textual form. Further there are a few rock paintings of Orissa where we see evidences of scripts combined with pictorial forms. For instance, the Yogimatha rock painting of Nuapada district in Orissa conveys the text 'Ga' and 'o' (tha). The rock painting represents a person with four animals and some alphabets that mean a word 'Gotha' or group. (see Figure 2) It is one of the ancient forms of Indian scripts and has similarity with Dhauli inscriptions of Ashoka. (Prusty & Dash, n.d.)

Indus Valley Civilization

Following the earliest pictographic and petroglyph representations, the first evidence of writing can be noticed in the Indus valley civilization. Scholars suggest that the Indus script was established around 2500 BCE and probably used from c. 3500 to 1700 BCE, with its earliest evidence on pottery as 'ownership marks'. (Fisher, 2001) Later a mixture of text and images can be seen on stamp sales, copper plates, tools and weapons. The Indus script characters were accompanied by animals such as bulls, water buffaloes, rhinoceros, unicorn and elephants. For example, the Pashupati seal from Mohenjodaro depicts a central figure, Lord Shiva seated on a platform looking straight with legs bent at the 'nees. It is surrounded by four animals- a water rhinoceros, a tiger, a bull and an elephant. Above the figure is seven boustrophedon pictographs that are undeciphered to date. (see Figure 3) The seal inscriptions are extremely short, (two or three signs in a line and five signs in total) making it suspicious to symbolise a writing system. The written characters are mostly pictorial and consists about 400 to 450 signs. (see Figure 4) The signs are believed to have been written from right to left, because various instances of the signs compressed on left side suggest the lack of space at the end of the row. Considering the large number of signs, the Indus script is believed

to be logo-syllabic. (Parpola, 1996) Taking in account the fact that the Indus Writing system has not been deciphered yet, its use remains unknown. Although it is assumed that the script was used as an administrative tool for trade purposes. In addition, there are opposing hypothesis that consider the signs of Indus script as non- linguistic and assumes them to symbolise family, Gods, clans and religious concepts. Thus, considering the Indus valley artefacts as the earliest example of text-image combination cannot be completely correct, because of the uncertainty of its script. However, if the script articulated speech, then it can be definitely considered as one of the earliest composite examples of text and image in which the images and writing worked closely together to provide the same message.



Figure 3. *The Pashupati seal.*

Note. Image source – National Museum, Delhi.



Figure 4. *Indus Valley seal inscriptions.*

Note. The seal depicting inscriptions are read from right to left, 2500-2000 BCE. Image source- Fisher, S.R. (2001). A history of writing. Reaktion Books Ltd.

Rock and Pillar Inscriptions

After the extinction of Indus valley civilization writing did not initiate until 8th century BC in the Indian

subcontinent. But as soon as writing flourished, India displayed one of the world's most elegant and most assorted literary customs. (Coulmas, 2003) There are several evidences of the earliest scripts- Brahmi and Kharoshti inscribed on rocks, walls of caves and pillars. Notable inscriptions include the Hathigumpha inscription in Orissa, the Junagadh rock inscriptions, the Nasik cave inscription, the inscriptions of Bhaja, Bedsa and Karle caves and many more. (Burgess, 1881) The best known inscriptions are the famous edicts of King Ashoka which were carved on stone pillars and rocks throughout India. These Ashokan Edicts are a series of inscriptions on the teachings of Buddha. (see Figure 5) The inscriptions are written in Prakrit language and were intended to teach people about peace, harmony and civilized living. Although we rarely find any evidence of pictures inscribed along with the text, these inscriptions can be classified as 'text as the central focus' of an art form. Here words, sentences and phrases are presented as works of visual art and draws viewers' attention with their powerful meaning. It is not exactly a combination of visual and text but it is definitely an artful representation of text.



Figure 5. Edicts of Ashoka.

Note. This Ashokan edict is a metal cast of inscribed rock at Girnar, Gujarat. 3rd century BCE. Image source- National Museum, Delhi.

Sculptures of 1st Century BCE–2nd Century CE

Many sculptures of first century CE created under the Indo-Scythian ruler of Mathura, display dedicatory inscriptions. The dynastic art of Kushans in Mathura prompted royal portraits and monumental sculpture. These sculptural works were accompanied by titles inscribed in Brahmi script. (Rosenfield, 1967) For instance the statue of Kushan Emperor Kanishka bears an inscription along the bottom of the coat that reads, 'Maharaja Rajadhiraja Devputra Kanishka'. (see Figure 6)

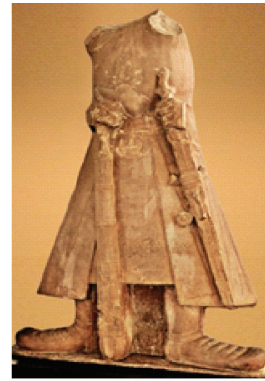


Figure 6. Inscribed statue of Kushan king Kanishka, Mathura

Note. Image source- <https://heritage-india.com/epoch-of-glory-the-kushan-dynasty/>

Further around 2nd century BCE when Kushans adopted the anthropomorphic image of Buddha, statues were inscribed with dates. One such example is the Kimbell seated Bodhisattva inscribed, '4th year of Kanishka'. This dedicatory inscription in Brahmi is inscribed on the pedestal. Another striking example is the inscribed image of Saraswati from the site of Kankali Tila in Mathura from about 132 CE. It is one of the earliest surviving sculptures representing Saraswati from Jain stupa. Sculpted in high relief the figure occupies almost the entire surface of red sandstone. The front of the two tiered pedestal, is a long votive inscription in clear Brahmi script. The inscription is the name of the Goddess and her Jain sponsors. (Tripathi & Jain, n.d.) (see Figure 7)



Figure 7. Jain representation of Goddess Sarasvati.

Note. Sculpture of Goddess Sarasvati from Kankali tila, Mathura. 132 CE. Image source- <http://ijarch.org/Admin/Articles/5-Sarasvati%20in%20jain%20tradition%20&%20art.pdf>

Now considering these sculptural specimens for text-image combination, they all display descriptive information and thus adapt under the category of 'labels' as classified by John Sparrow. 'Labels' provide basic details such as names, titles, and dates. (Sparrow, 1969) Providing purely descriptive nature, the text here associated with figure is a widely used form of text-image combination throughout art history.

Copper Plate Inscriptions

In ancient India the text were written on palm leaf and bark of trees that faced impermanence due to climatic conditions. Therefore the support material to write text gradually shifted to stone and then to metal. Indian copper plate inscriptions mostly documented the list of royal lineages and record grants of land. The earliest inscribed copperplates were obtained from mature Harappan era, containing maximum of 34 inscriptions. But it is believed that these copper plates were used for printing. (Goswamy et al., 2007) Further in 3rd century BCE the early form of copper plate inscriptions called as 'Sohgaura' have been acquired from the Mauryan Empire. (see Figure 8) The upper part of the plate consist a stripe of symbolic

object drawings and beneath is a four line text written in Prakrit language and Brahmi script. John Faithful Fleet translated the text as-'At the junction called Manawasi, these two storehouses are prepared, for the sheltering of loads of commodities, of Tiavani, Mathura and Chanchu.' (Fleet, 1907)



Figure 8. Sohgaura copper plate inscription.

Note. 3rd century BCE. Image source- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sohgaura_copper_plate_inscription

Although this copperplate inscription serves as a record of ownership of commodities, considering it as an example for text-image combination it can be termed as 'Explanatory text'. As classified by Dario Covi, the explanatory inscription helps in conveying the significance or interprets the images with which it is combined. (Covi, 1958) Around 4th century CE, the copper plate inscriptions advanced. Now they were usually engraved on several folios and strung together with copper ring in Pothi format. One such specimen is the copperplate grant of western Ganga King. (see Figure 9) The grant belongs to 550 CE; it was inscribed by Kongani Perudattakara in Sanskrit language and Hala-Kannada script. It consists of total five plates inscribed on both sides. There is no existence of images along the text in this grant, except the relief image of an elephant which is supposed to be a seal on the ring. This elephant image served as a common symbol even on coins in the western Ganga Kingdom. (Goswamy et al., 2007) The Tamil copper plate inscriptions are well known for their epigraphy. The evidences of grants from this region date from 10th century CE to the mid-19th century CE, created under the Chalukyas, the Cholas and the Vijayanagara kings. Similar to the earlier grants the inscription on these plates records grants of villages, institutions, personal collections, and cultivable lands etc. by the royal dynasties of

South India. Generally, we see absence of images in these later period copper plate inscriptions, although a few had been provided with visuals on the opposite side of the plate. For instance, copperplate depicting artisans of different classes is inscribed with text on one side and the other side bears figures of deities, devotees, artisans and their instruments carved in seven equal divisions. (see Figure 10) The upper form of the first block is known as 'Kirtimukha' that depicts goddesses Kali with a drum, trident, sword and skull cap in her hands and three human heads at her feet. On the left side there is a Shivlingam, a devotee and Kartikeya mounted on peacock, while on the right side there is Nandi and Lord Ganesha. The second division depicts the Five-faced Lord Shiva in the center, Lord Vishnu and Brahma to the right and Vishwakarma and Hanuman to the left. The following five blocks below represent various class of artisans such as carpenters, weavers, blacksmiths, goldsmiths and potters. They are accompanied with their respective traditional working tools and instruments. The reverse side of the plate is inscribed with the prayer in 34 lines written in Tamil and Grantha scripts. The lines merge into one another and the text begins with greetings to Gods and then prayer for the artisans' prosperity. Although this specimen has text and image in opposing sides, considering it as a single piece of art it perfectly fits the 'Invocation' category proposed by Mieczyslaw Wallis in 1973. (Wallis, 1973) Wallis's four major categories for defining text- image visualization are- Inscription that convey information, Inscription that indicates speech or dialogue, Invocations and Artist statements. Invocations are generally the prayers addressed by spectators to holy figures in the painting or any other visual.



Figure 10. Copperplate depicting artisans of different class.
 Note. Period- 17th- 18th century CE. Size- 29.5 x 14 cm. Collection- National museum, Delhi. Image source- Goswamy, B. N. (2007). The word is sacred, Sacred is the word: The Indian Manuscript Traition. Niyogi Books.

Indian Manuscripts

Equalling the Indian land, the world of manuscript in India is vast and complex. Indian manuscripts are written in various languages and scripts, comprising various subjects and representing diverse schools and provinces. These manuscripts are of two style- illustrated and non-illustrated.



Figure 9. Copperplate grant of a Western Ganga King.
 Note. Date- 550 AD. Size- 22 x 6 cm. Collection-National Museum, Delhi. Image source- Goswamy, B. N. (2007). The word is sacred, Sacred is the word: The Indian Manuscript Traition. Niyogi Books.



Figure 11. Folio from Ashtasahasrika Prajnaparamita Manuscript.

Note. Early 12th century CE. Image Source-<https://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/as/original/DP238213.jpg>

The illustrated manuscript are an excellent example of text and image combination and similarly the non-illustrated manuscripts are calligraphic that have magnificent letters virtually transforming into pictures. Indian manuscripts having a long history from approximately 7th century to the 20th century BCE were executed on various materials such as

parchment, bark of trees, palm leaf, wood, clothes and metals. (Dasgupta, n.d.)

The ‘Ashtasahasrika Prajnaparamita’ is one of the most valuable and extensive scriptures of Mahayana Buddhism. (see Figure 11) Prajnaparamita where ‘Prajna’ suggests to supreme knowledge and ‘Paramita’ means fullness, is a fundamental Mahayana rite. The presented folio is a form of manuscript dating back to 12th century CE. Written on palm leaf, the manuscript bears richly painted illustration in the style similar to mural paintings. The images of Avalokiteshwara, Green Tara and other minor deities are skilfully composed. The images do not intertwine with the text but are represented on adjoining leaves to describe the text. The Samarangana Sutradhara is another excellent voluminous work of manuscript. It is based on the subject of architecture by Raja Bhoj of Dhar. (see Figure 12) (Goswamy et al., 2007) He reigned from c. 1010 to 1053 CE and developed a great centre of culture and learning. The Samarangana Sutradhara is primarily concerned with architecture, religious, secular and civil texts. The folios of this manuscript carry maps and diagrams intertwined with text and illustrated using black, red and yellow colour.

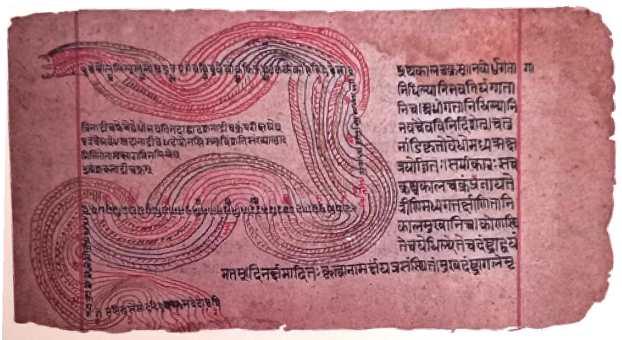


Figure12. Folio from Samarangana Sutradhara.

Note. Date: 1712 AD. Size- 15 x 28.4 cm. Collection- National museum, Delhi. Image source- Goswamy, B. N. (2007). The word is sacred, Sacred is the word: The Indian Manuscript Traition. Niyogi Books.

The manuscript dates back to 1712 CE and was written in Sanskrit language and Devanagari script. Further in 15th century Jain Kalpasutra manuscript is an illustrated copy of the most revered Jain work of Bhadrabahu. It is one of the best known splendid specimens of illustrated Kalpasutra on paper. The folios of the manuscript are full of gleaming designs covering both the written text as well as the illustrated panels. The borders are filled with small figures against rich and varying coloured background. The

Devanagari script is written elegantly using gold colour. The figurative panels are well equipped with the central figure, objects and sacred symbols at the back.

Several manuscripts of later centuries are remarkable examples for word-image combination in Indian art. But in consideration of only the Ancient and Medieval Indian art they are not conferred in this paper. Indian manuscripts exhibit one of the finest examples for word-image combination in the history of Indian art. Western scholars have attempted to place their manuscripts in a category based on previous classifications but found those categories irrelevant for manuscripts. According to Alison Flett, ‘there is no accepted pictorial vocabulary for describing the appearance of the text scrolls of medieval art’. (Flett, 2019) Similarly the Indian manuscripts display extremely creative and uniquely close associations between text and images. In the folios, words may be constructed of pictures, pictures may include words, letters may function as pictures etc. Thus, to some extent the combination of text and images in Indian manuscripts can be classified with Leslie Ross’s classification for medieval manuscripts of western art. According to her theory, manuscripts can be termed as ‘decorated’ and ‘illustrated’. The manuscripts in which the text is intertwined with illuminated foliages, patterns, designs and other adorning forms are classified as ‘decorated’. Whereas the illustrations that have direct textual relevance are classified as ‘illustrated’ or ‘historiated’. These both formats have developed gradually in later centuries exhibiting remarkable representations of text and image combinations. (Ross, 2014)

Fusion of Text and Images in Islamic Art of India

The contribution of Islamic heritage to the field of Indian art and culture is immense. On one hand Islam has restrained the depiction of figurative art and on the other hand Prophet Muhammad has emphasised on beautifying the writings. Thus the artist of Islamic world have played crucial role in the development of the art of calligraphy. Although the Islamic art in India flourished outstandingly during the Mughal Empire, its emergence can be traced back in the 7th century BCE from places occupied by Muslim populations. Further the art prospered with the patronage of Muslim rulers of Delhi sultanate i.e. the Mamluks, the Khiljis, Tughlaqs and the Sayyids. From 1200 to 1526 CE exemplary art was reflected in wood carvings, inlaid metal work, enamelled glass and architecture. The

present study displays the combined visual of words and images before the arrival of Mughals, as the Mughal Empire is witnessed after the medieval period of Indian art. (National Museum, Delhi, 1981)

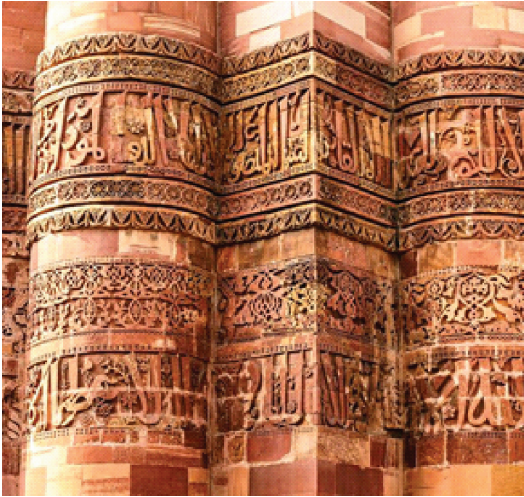


Figure 13. *Inscriptions on Qutb-minar.*



Figure 14. *Inscriptions on eastern gateway of Alai-Darwaza.*

The Qutb complex of Delhi that started under Muhammad of Ghor in 1199 CE and completed by Qutb-al Din Aibak and other sultans is one of the finest architecture examples that displays combined representation of text and images in art. We find inscriptions on almost every structure of the architecture present in Qutb complex. Some of the inscriptions are partially defaced and those remaining are not entirely legible. The Arabic inscriptions in the entire Qutb complex are either verses from Quran, eulogies written for king or records of historical events. The calligraphic bands encircling the plane and fluted exterior of Qutb Minar are mostly Quranic inscriptions and a few historic references of builders and commissioners. (see Figure

13) The word ‘Allah’ written in bold Arabic letters appears repeatedly in few places. Besides reproducing the beautiful calligraphy in Arabic, the sculptors were probably allowed to use their own creativity. The calligraphic bands are intertwined with rows of flowers, foliage and small geometric patterns. Interpretation of calligraphic patterns takes on a new dimension in Alai Darwaza built by Ala-ud-din Khilji. The text on its southern entrance is inscribed with very sophisticated calligraphy. The eastern gateway was built by Qutb-ud-din Aibak and the inscriptions on the gateway records the conquer and building dates. (see Figure 14) The English transliteration of Arabic inscription reads, - ‘This Fort was conquered and this Jami Masjid was built in the year 587 (1191 CE) by the Amir, the great and glorious commander of the army, Qutbu-d-daulatwa-d-din, the Amiru-l-umara Aibak Sultani, may God strengthen his helpers. The materials of 27 temples, on each of which 2,00,000 Deliwalas had been spent, were used in the construction of this mosque. May God the great and glorious have mercy on him who should pray for the faith of the good builder’. (Notes on Indian History, 2018)

Another remarkable art of word-image combination are the manuscripts. Before the Mughal rule the manuscript, illustrations or murals commissioned by Muslim patrons of India are termed as ‘Sultanate painting’. The art of calligraphy was widely practiced by royalty, nobility, scholars and writers. Great importance was imparted to fine calligraphy, an important ever greater than was given to the art of painting. Some calligraphers were also painters and thus we find that along with the art of calligraphy the art of gilding and decorating manuscripts was also practiced. (National museum, Delhi, 1981) Several examples of the Quran with calligraphy and ornamentation have survived from this period, but they do not include figurative illumination. For example, the Holy Quran of 14th - 15th century CE, in the collection of National Museum, Delhi is an extremely beautiful copy called ‘Mushti’ due to its small size. It is written on a very thin paper sprinkled with gold. This copy of the Holy Quran is inscribed in Naskh script of Arabic language. (see Figure 15) It is usually written with short horizontal strokes with equivalent vertical depth and words are generally well spaced. The text is contained within multiple frames which are often filled with elaborate floral patterns, geometrical and abstract motifs in bright colors and embellished with gold. (Rahman, n.d.)



Figure 15. *Holy Quran*

Note. Date- 1602 CE. Size- 6.3 x 3.5 cm. Ink and opaque water color on paper. Image source- National Museum, Delhi.

Similar to Indian manuscripts, Islamic manuscripts display one of the finest specimens of word-image combinations. And as mentioned earlier these visuals can be classified as 'decorated' and 'illustrated'. But it is also believed that this classification by Leslie Ross is very traditional and by no means the only way to categorise the varied forms of manuscripts. Therefore, scholars such as Carl Norden Falk and Jonathan Alexander have developed further sets of classification to describe the formats of letter in medieval manuscript. Norden Falk described the different forms of letter as- 'Filling, Adding and Substitution'. The textual form of Islamic manuscript as well as Islamic architecture very much accords with the term 'adding' which refers to cases where numerous patterns and motifs such as foliage, scrolls and garlands project from the text or curl around and within the text.

Conclusion

Through the ages, the two basic means of human communication-image and text have been linked with quite exceptional and intriguing results. The study successfully demonstrated the interplay between the images and text from the ancient pictographs to medieval manuscripts. Although visualization of text and images or text-based art have different context in conceptual, modern and contemporary art practices, this research has proposed significant ancient and medieval eras when text and image were deliberately combined. This longstanding composite communication has been chronologically demonstrated covering diverse genre of Indian art. The study results with diverse representation of text as inscriptions, captions, declarations, information, signatures, labels and religious verses enclosed with forms and patterns.

The selected examples of medieval Indian period considered in this study determine the remarkable approach of text-image relationships. In Ashokan edicts we see words, sentences and phrases carved on rocks to draw viewers' attention with their powerful messages, and the sculptures from Kushan period provide purely descriptive nature of texts associated with the figure. Further the text-image combinations found in copperplate inscription were termed as 'explanatory' as well as 'invocations' based on their use in respective time period. In addition, the study analysed the various ways of text-image representations in Indian and Islamic manuscripts and based on the depiction of text, illustrations and patterns they were termed as 'decorated' and 'illustrated'. The text-image combinations of ancient Indian art were complicated because of the uncertainty of the script. Although the use of numerous signs, symbols and pictographs in early cave art, pottery and seals do not articulate speech, they are considered as one of the earliest composite examples of text and images.

As stated in the introduction, the sole purpose of this research is to explore the value and objectivity of text and image relationships in art and the study does not intend to strictly categorise such examples. Therefore, the categories proposed in this study only serve as a means of understand the combinations of words and image in art. There is no doubt that several examples from ancient and medieval Indian history stays to be considered in this study but the examples selected for the study potentially served for the intended discussion.

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