

IPACO expert report

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<i>Type</i> I F O	<i>Class</i> B	<i>Explanation</i> Pareidolia	<i>Complement</i>
<i>Document</i> Photographic	<i>Imaging location</i> School Temple, TCV School Upper – McLeod Gnaj., Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh - India	<i>Imaging date</i> October, 2 nd 2005	



TCV 4 023.jpg

I. Imaging circumstances

François Louange was contacted by phone the 05.03.2021 by the witness about photography he took in October 2005 from the upper part of a Buddhist school temple (Tibetan Children's Village or "TCV") located on the heights of Dharamsala, India. The photography was taken towards a temple visible in the background.

The witness did not observe the mysterious object (visible on the right as a luminous, white and opalescent form resembling a silhouette of a religious nature) during the shooting. It wasn't until about a year later, when he reviewed the photographs taken during his several-month stay there that he realized that this silhouette was in one of them.

During the discussions with the witness, we were able to obtain the following details:

1. The model of the device used to take the photograph (see below.)
2. By searching several times in his computer archives, the witness was able to find seven other photographs taken with the same device in 2005 and 2006 on the spot (see details below), then 16 additional a little later, including 11 original and usable.
3. A lamp post is visible in the background in the middle of the photograph, fixed to a low wall.

II. Camera settings

The camera model used was an Aiptek camcorder model “DV 5300” of which technical characteristics are visible in the manual [here](#).



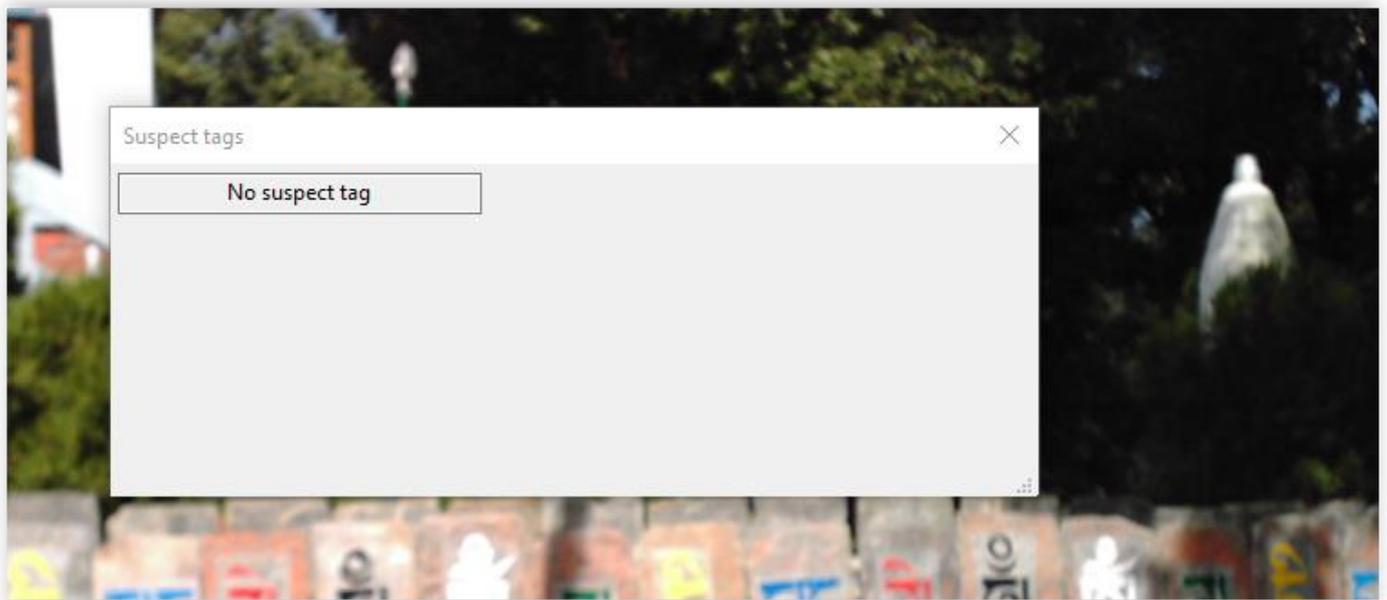
III. Data examination

1. Authentication

A document is deemed an authentic original, within the meaning of the "[IPACO Analysis Methodology](#)", if it results from a direct copy of the original file created in the camera.

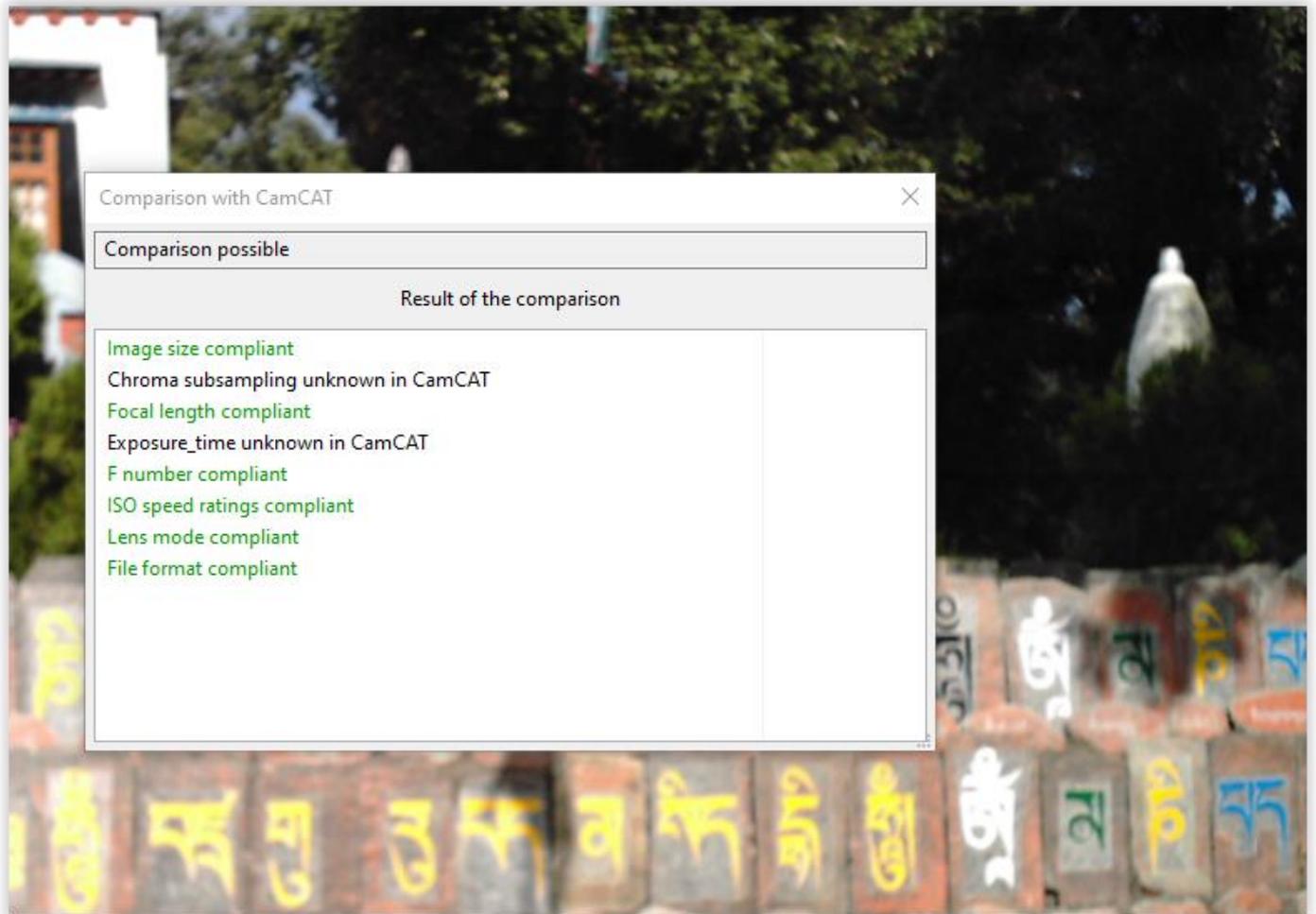
Any modification, made either to the file whilst still in the memory of the camera, or later, can be detected by IPACO with the "*Authentication*" module, in three different possible ways; the results can be displayed together in the IPACO window.

The "*Suspect tags*" tool, in particular, can be used to determine, for example, the possible use of third-party software:



We note the absence of any suspicious tags.

The « Comparison with CamCAT » tool allows the analyst to compare the technical data of the studied file with an internal database, in order to check if they comply with what the camera used can produce:



All the parameters are compliant, with the exception of the Chroma subsampling and of the exposure time, which are unknown from CamCAT.

The third method, which we will not enlarge upon here, makes it possible to check, in detail, with the *"Authentication - Remote check"* menu, the content of the metadata that are present. If one (or more) suspicious metadata are present, it is flagged.

In conclusion to this chapter, the photograph can be qualified as "original authentic", in the sense that it shows no trace of modification of the associated metadata.

2. Analysis

We have, with the first sending of the witness, eight photographs entitled as follows:

1. « TCV 4 023 »
2. « TCV 4 024 »
3. « temple TCV-1 »
4. « temple TCV-2 »
5. « inde 06 011[5592] »
6. « idem à 23 en 2006 »
7. « temple TCV »
8. « temple TCV vue gale »

The first is the one object of this analysis and the second was taken shortly afterwards, still on October 2, 2005, from approximately the same position and in a slightly different orientation, more to the left, bringing out the phenomenon off the visual field, which is just outside the frame, on the right:



The next two (“temple TCV-1” and “temple TCV-2”) were also taken in 2005, and more exactly, according to the metadata, on September 16, i-e 16 days before. All the others were obtained in 2006 *, when the witness returned to the site.

The places changed little between 2005 and 2006; we notice in particular that the masonry of the small wall in the foreground has been completed and painted blue:



Photography « idem à 23 en 2006 »

We can also note the visual similarity (color, brightness, overall appearance) between the mysterious object and the lamp post which is stuck on the corner of the upper wall surrounding the temple:

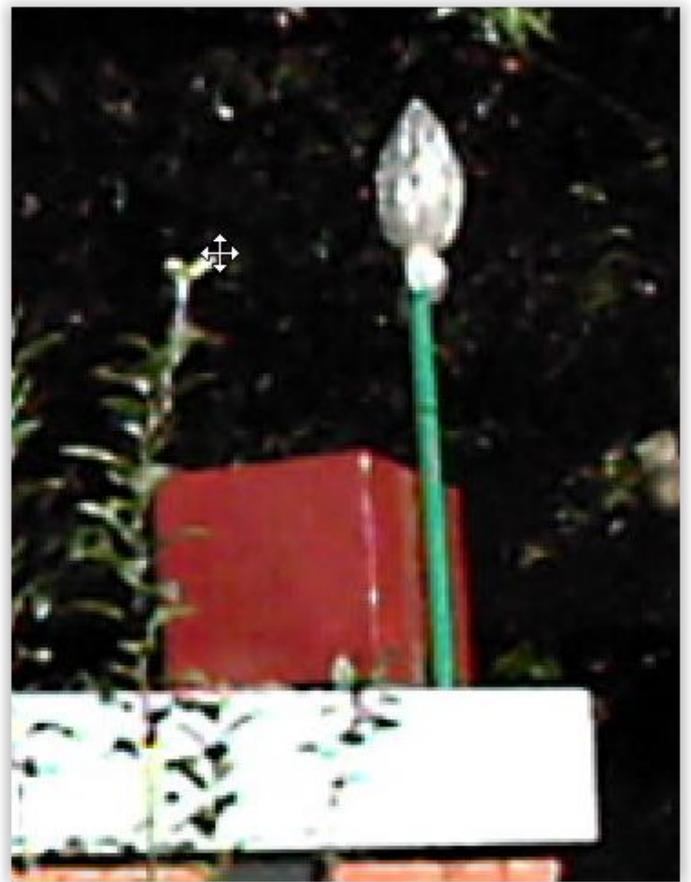
** Unfortunately, it was not possible to date these photographs, the internal clock of the camcorder having been reset and not set again before the photographs were taken.*



This lamp post presents here a singular aspect, elongated, with a smaller lower "protuberance" which seems to be extended by the green rod holding it.

The poor definition of photography to which is added a certain blur makes it difficult to distinguish its form better; the same applies to the photograph "TCV 4 024".

On the other hand, the photograph "temple TCV-1" taken 16 days earlier and two of the photographs taken in 2006 ("*idem at 23 in 2006*" and "*inde 06 011 [5592]*") show this same lamp post more clearly and also (for the 2005 photography) an identical lamppost, placed symmetrically on an identical wall on the left side of the temple:



16.09.2005



2006

Three remarks can be made when comparing these images:

- 1- The fusiform appearance is identical to that of the lamp post visible in the photograph of the mysterious object
- 2- This aspect differs from that of the street lights visible on the 2006 photographs
- 3- In both cases, the impression that emerges is very clearly that of a translucent or semi-opaque plastic packaging surrounding the part constituting the lighting of the lamp post.

Although for the 2005 photographs, the appearance of this part cannot be distinguished under this packaging, this is less the case for those of 2006, on which dark colored frames are visible and recall this type of lamp posts, typically used outdoors, in gardens:



We then searched the Internet for any images or videos of the temple showing this lamp post.

The only document where it is visible is a video from June 2016 relating to a photo shoot of young candidates for the Miss Tibet 2016 competition.

Part of this video was taken in the left outside corner of the temple, in the immediate vicinity of the lamp post. This lamp post, as for the “2005 version” (see page 9) is a copy of the one on the right, placed symmetrically on an identical wall on the left side of the temple:



Photo shoot for Miss Tibet 2016 competition at TCV temple

As we can see, the shape of the lighting part of the lamp post is again different, spherical this time.

These changes in shape over time suggest that this lamp post has frequently been replaced, perhaps for sealing problems, which explains the presence of a plastic protection around the vulnerable part, that of the lighting unit.

Coming back to the mysterious object, its resemblance to the plastic shield surrounding the lamp post suggests, from the above, that it is the same type of object.

It could therefore be an object that is protected from the elements in the same way as for the lamp post. This object, if it is of comparable dimensions, is necessarily much closer to the camera than this lamp post.

Indeed, many identical marks are present on the various photos and allow to locate the position of the phenomenon relatively well.

We note in particular the presence, between the wall of "*manis*" * in the foreground and the green barriers a little further away, of three bushes of the same species, noted 1 to 3 in red in the following photographs:



Photography « inde 06 011[5592] »

* Tibetan Buddhist stones engraved with mantras



Photography « idem à 23 en 2006 »

We find these same three bushes on the photography in which the phenomenon is visible, n°3 being in the shade of the trees located a little further away (a small part of this shadow is also visible on the right on the upper row of manis).

The phenomenon is therefore necessarily located in a small space, between this bush and the trees in the background.

A careful visual examination of the various photographs allows us to note the following additional points of interest:



Position of the shrubs on the photograph showing the phenomenon

- 1- The area was under construction at the time the photography in which the phenomenon is visible was taken, the manis wall being under construction as evidenced by the pile of bricks at its foot.
- 2- Two other photographs among those additionally sent by the witness and taken (according to the metadata) three days before the one including the phenomenon, show that work is in progress on the right of the temple in order to allow the ambulation.
- 3- A yellow barrier meshed in green was installed between 2005 and 2006 to the right of the manis wall and at the edge of the wooded area (noted 1 in blue on the photograph "*inde 06 11 [5592]*"). It delimits a path leading up to the temple (marked 2 in blue) and the staircase visible in the background.
- 4- A large raised "jar" * also seems to have been installed between 2005 and 2006. It is located behind bush n ° 2:

** The witness told us that this "jar" is in fact a container filled with juniper during the ceremonies in order to embalm the space and to purify the place of the ceremony.*



Extract from the photography "inde 06 11 [5592]"

In addition, sufficient space is present between this container and the manis wall, at least to allow the movement of people:



Extract from the photography "idem at 23 in 2006"

All these considerations allow us to make two explanatory hypotheses:

a. Could the phenomenon be the container itself, protected by a packaging plastic, in the same way as the lamp post?

The hypothesis, although interesting since this container seems to be located roughly in the same place as the phenomenon, is to be rejected from the outset, the witness having certified to us that this container was not present, nor even under construction, during the time the 2005 photographs were taken.

b. Could the phenomenon be another object, present on site temporarily and also protected by a packaging plastic?

The question deserves to be asked, because several parameters can direct us towards this explanatory path:

- 1- The witness is categorical that there is no (permanent) lamp post at this location. He also asked the question to an authority familiar with the place who confirmed this absence.
- 2- The container, clearly visible on the 2006 photographs, is not here on those images taken in 2005. Conversely, the phenomenon is only visible on the 2005 photographs. If we consider that it is not the container itself, then it can only be a question of confusion with an object temporarily present on the same place.

Several clues can support this hypothesis:

- When the 2005 photographs were taken, the site was under construction, in particular the construction of the manis wall.
- At least three substantial modifications are visible between the 2005 photographs and the 2006 ones:
 - o The top of the low walls (bordering the manis wall, the staircase leading to the temple and the low wall surrounding the lamp post) was repainted in blue
 - o The container has been erected
 - o The yellow and green barrier has also been erected

The dates of these modifications are not known, but it does not seem improbable to say that all or part of this work had already started in 2005, when the photographs were taken.

Thus, just as it was necessary to protect the electrically powered part of the lamp post from bad weather by a plastic protection, any material or any temporary installation also vulnerable to bad weather (electrical equipment or other sensitive material) having been used for one or the other or more of the aforementioned modifications could very well have required to be protected in the same way.

His presence there, temporary, at the time of the photographs, would undoubtedly not have seemed implausible to the witness or to any person familiar with the place, who would have quickly forgotten him, especially more than 15 years after the events.

Moreover, the fact of not having paid attention to the presence of the phenomenon, neither during the shooting, nor during the viewing of the photographs by the witness later, confirms its probably innocuous nature on the spot at the time.

Appearance of the phenomenon

Its overall shape is obviously reminiscent of the religious iconography appearing in the representations of the Virgin Mary or any other Catholic religious figure (head, shoulders and long dress falling over her body), with surprisingly "normal" proportions for this representation, yet anthropomorphic.



Representation of the apparition of the Virgin Mary to Bernadette Soubirous in Lourdes's cave - [Source \(in French\)](#)

Often depicted dressed in white and presented as being "luminous" in the various descriptions and representations of the Marian apparitions, she fully conforms to the aspect of the phenomenon visible in the photograph, although the face is not visible.



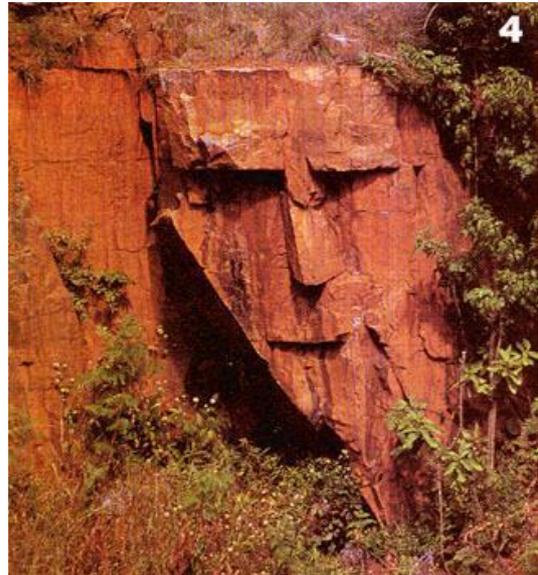
Artist's impression of an apparition of the Virgin Mary in the sky - [Source \(in French\)](#)

We will not go further on the subject of the apparitions and will leave it to religious specialists to discuss them, our purpose being to approach the phenomenon from a scientific point of view.

Several combined phenomena can explain this very particular appearance:

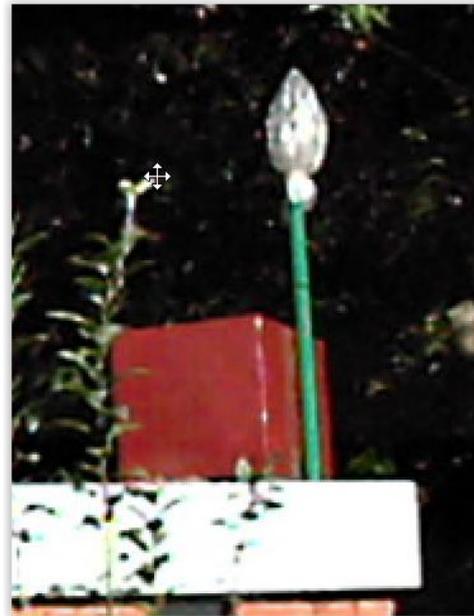
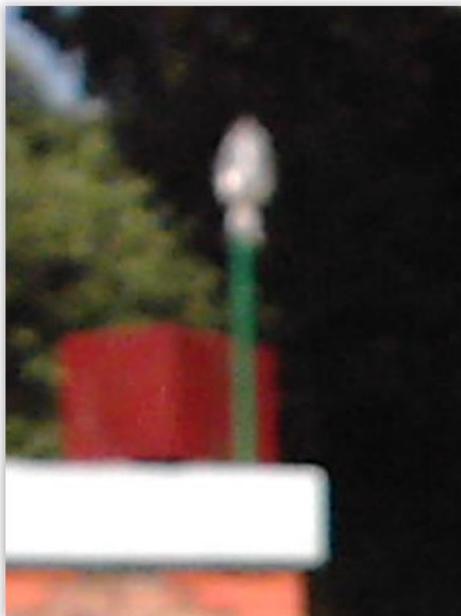
- The main one is that of pareidolia, a psychological phenomenon describing our natural propensity to associate a stimulus, most often visual, formless and indeterminate, with a perception already known and identified. (See the detailed article on [Wikipedia](#)).

The most famous examples are those associating the shapes of clouds with animals or faces:





- This photograph is of poor quality, with a mediocre resolution (1277 x 958) and a rather important blur distributed in a uniform way, the whole being conducive to erase small details which could have helped to better determine the prosaic origin of the stimulus, in the same way as for the lamp post:



Appearance of the lamp post in the photograph "TCV 4023" (left) and "Temple TCV-1" (right) - The erasure of details caused by the blur is clearly visible

- The luminous appearance is explained by a combination of several effects:
 - The weather is sunny whilst photographing and gaps through the foliage of trees present nearby let the sun's rays pass in places, as it can be seen on the foliage of the shrub in front of the phenomenon:



- The material making up the phenomenon or object is white, of the same nature as that enveloping the lamp post, and highly reflective
- A strong contrast exists between the strong light reflected by the phenomenon and the background made up of foliage in the shade of the trees.

A combination of circumstances thus strongly contributed to give to this phenomenon an enigmatic appearance, with a strong inferred religious connotation.

IV. Conclusion

The data collected, consisting of a batch of photographs taken from the same location, including one showing the unexplained phenomenon, and a very detailed testimony, allowed us to formulate two explanatory hypotheses, one of which turns out, after analysis, to be sufficient to enable this case to be classified as “**B**”: observation of a phenomenon for which the hypothesis adopted is considered very probable.

This assumption is that of the temporary presence on site of an object sensitive to bad weather requiring it to be protected by packaging plastic.

This conclusion is based on the following:

- The witness did not pay attention to the phenomenon during the shooting, the presence and nature of this phenomenon probably appearing to him at the time to be completely innocuous.
- The area was under construction when the photograph was taken; sensitive and / or electrical equipment could be present on site and need to be protected, such as the lamp post.
- The appearance (color, brightness, etc.) of the lamp post and that of the phenomenon are remarkably similar.
- Another photograph taken during the same period allows us to clearly see the lamp post and its protective packaging plastic, leading us to believe that the phenomenon is wrapped in the same way with the same material.
- The overall appearance of the phenomenon is surprising and has a strong religious connotation, reminiscent of the iconography of the Virgin Mary. This appearance is, however, very well explained by a combination of factors:
 - o Low resolution and the presence of a relatively large blur in the photograph preventing to distinguish the details.
 - o The solar rays hit the phenomenon just in its precise position, through a gap in the foliage of the trees.
 - o Material composing the phenomenon: white, highly reflective, and strong contrast with the dark background formed by the foliage of trees located in the shade.
 - o And above all, a classic phenomenon of pareidolia, natural psychological propensity of humans to associate a stimulus, most often visual, shapeless and indeterminate, with a perception already known and identified (here the classic iconographic representation of the Virgin Mary).