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Department of Chiropractic

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Australia

Prof. Michael Cherry

Editor in Chief

*South African Journal of Science*

Dear Prof. Cherry,

I would be grateful if you would consider the submitted manuscript entitled “Early photographs of the Taung Child” (short title) for publication in the *South African Journal of Science*.

The paper focuses on the history of the discovery of the Taung Child, one of the most significant hominin fossils in palaeoanthropology. Many details concerning this important event in the history of science remain unknown. This paper attempts to further elucidate the events surrounding the discovery through an analysis of the three little known photographs of the Taung Child and Raymond Dart, the scientist who described the valuable specimen.

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Authors’ contributions:

GS (Macquarie University) conducted the archival work, and contributed to the data analysis and authorship of the paper;

KAK (Adam Mickiewicz University) contributed to the data and the photographic analysis and authorship of the paper.

Possible referees:

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Number of pages: 13 (10 of text, plus an additional 3 with the figures included)

Number of figures: 3 (Fig. 1, Fig. 2 a-c, Fig. 3 a-d)

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully



Goran Štrkalj

**Shedding new light on an old mystery: Early photographs of the Taung Child**

**Summary**

Although being one of the most important events in the history of palaeoanthropology, many details of the Taung discovery and the events that followed it are still not completely elucidated. This paper presents a recount of the events surrounding three early photographs (stored in the University of the Witwatersrand Archives) showing the Taung Child skull being held in the hands of the renowned anthropologist Raymond Arthur Dart.

We deliberate upon whether the photographs presented here were among the first photographs of the fossil itself or of the first plaster cast of the Taung Child which was prepared for the 1925 British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley, London.

The photographs are interpreted and their provenance established through analysis which included: historical examination of both published accounts on the Taung discovery and archival materials, comparison of the photographed material with the early photographs of the Taung fossil, and examination of current photographs of both the fossil and a cast.

We conclude that the photographs presented here show the fossil itself. At the same time, they are one of the first pictorial depictions of the Taung skull.

**Key words**: Taung, Raymond Dart, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, history of science