Geophytes in time and space

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image from Vinnicombe, 1976
Resources available for survival

• Protein Resources: Aquatic/Terrestrial
• Wood Resources
• Plant Resources?
  1. Fruit/Vegetables
  2. Geophytes (Underground Storage Organs)
Geophyte foraging in time:

- Evolution fueled by better quality food
- Meat and fallback foods
- Caloric hungry brains
- Higher cognition: cooking and tools: even better food
Quintessential for geophyte foraging

- Botanical knowledge: taxa and veg types
- Knowledge of climate
- Tools
- Processing

Centuries of knowledge and experience
Evidence in the Stone Age Cape

- Geophyte remains
- Digging Sticks
- Digging Stones
- Adze
Geophyte remains

- Vast amount of evidence in LSA
- Mostly inland sites

Courtesy of Neil Rusch
Digging Stick, Bored Stones and Adze

• Digging Stick: sharpened constantly
• Adze had to be developed
• Bored stone for extra momentum
• Time consuming to produce

Bleek and Lloyd, 1911
Geophyte resources and space

• How would geophyte foraging vary over the GCFR
• Various rainfall regimes: Diversity and Phenology
Phenology in time and space
Bushman came to me at home, requesting, and indicating that they needed leave from school (as they called it), with the aim to go and gather ants (HvV: meaning here ant-eggs) and uintjies, their most favourite food which at this time is particularly abundant and which they eat raw or roasted.

occasions brought back to the cave. Here they may have been ground and roasted as small cakes on the coals. It has been suggested by Grevenbroek.
What about processing?

Vincent., 1985

Muray et al., 2001

O’Connel et al., 1981
Summary

- Rare in the MSA, widespread in LSA
- Phenology forced a narrow time frame
- Requires incrementally built knowledge
- Geophytes importance might have varied
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Watsonia (Suurkanol) Cormlet Salad

- Available in October
- Corms have to be peeled
- Pickled to remove tannins
- Cooked
Ferraria (Spinnekopblom) fritter • Available from June - November • Grated • Boiled
Available July - November
• Peeled (Adze required)
• Leached
• Roasted

Pelargonium (Kaneelwortel)