



**时间** 2021年2月26日  
**地点** 江西省上饶市婺源县  
**拍摄** 俞孔坚

大历史视野下的景观巨变在不经意间发生并可能成为灾难：看似美丽的田野中，各类包装艳丽的除草剂和农药被广泛使用，与超强度的碳排放一起，将使人类及其持续繁衍了数百万年的景观连同自然系统面临生存挑战。这一巨变超出了自然系统本身的韧性，当然也超出了人类生命与社会系统的适应能力。中国最美乡村尚且如此，广大中国的乡村处境可想而知。

**Date** February 26, 2021  
**Location** Wuyuan County, Shangrao City, Jiangxi Province  
**Photographer** Yu Kongjian

In Big History, huge changes of landscape happen inadvertently and may lead to disasters: besides intensive carbon emissions, all kinds of herbicides and pesticides in showy packages widely used in seemingly beautiful fields pose threat to human beings and the landscapes and ecosystems where we live in for millions of years. These huge changes challenge the resilience of nature, and certainly the adaptive capacity of human beings and the society. This is exactly happening in Wuyuan County, one of the most beautiful rural areas in China, let alone other places throughout the country.



# 大历史视野中的人类景观

## Human Landscapes in Big History

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### 摘要

新冠肺炎（COVID-19）疫情留给笔者诸多不快与悲痛记忆，期间，笔者借助宽带网络参与了线上全球性“前沿论坛”，论坛演讲激发了笔者的思考。若从大历史的视野出发，无论人类自诩其历史何其宏大，相较于浩瀚的宇宙长河而言，依然是微不足道的。笔者以江西省婺源县的巡检司村庄周而复始的耕种变化与延续千年的家族历史为例，阐述了人类社会、乡土景观所具备的独特韧性；也借助化学农药施用、河流枯竭、生物消失等现象证明了近几十年来人类的无度开采与肆意的碳排放行为，而这可能会演变为本就只是短暂存在的人类的灭顶之灾，笔者对这场大历史视野中的巨变深表担忧。

### 关键词

大历史；韧性；碳排放；乡土景观；生存挑战

### ABSTRACT

Although experienced too much bitterness in the COVID-19 pandemic, the author took part in the online global Frontiers Forum. Inspired by one of the lectures which highlighted the view of Big History, the author argues that the human history—no matter how earthshaking it is praised to be—is just barely even worthy of mention. Illustrating with the seasonal farming sceneries and the family history of thousands of years in Xunjiansi village, Wuyuan County, Jiangxi Province, the author elaborates the vibrancy and resilience of local society and vernacular landscapes. Big History insights warn us that the immoderate exploitation of natural resources, increasing carbon emission that exceeds the carbon sequestration capacity of the nature, the overuse of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, disappearing water bodies, biodiversity loss, etc., will eventually lead to a complete collapse and unpredictable disasters that threaten humans’ survival and may rewrite human history.

### KEYWORDS

Big History; Resilience; Carbon Emission; Vernacular Landscapes; Survival Challenge

翻译 | 冉玲于、田乐、嵇扬

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长达一年多的新冠肺炎（COVID-19）疫情，留给我许多不快甚至悲痛的记忆，也带给我许多难忘的经历和难得的思考机会。身处远离大城市的乡村——江西省上饶市婺源县一个叫做巡检司的村庄，在疫情隔离状态中，令我拥有了体验“宁静以致远”的机会；同时，也借由突破了空间和时间限制的网络，拥有了“宽大为兼覆”的时刻。

由于疫情原因，原计划在瑞士召开的全球顶级科学家会议“前沿论坛”不得不改为每月线上举办的学者系列演讲。第一场演讲已于3月2日举办，由全球著名教育家和历史学家大卫·克里斯蒂安主讲，其演讲主题为“大历史：培养能管理星球的下一代”。克里斯蒂安颠覆了狭隘的传统历史观，以一种前所未有的高度和视角引导我们从异常壮阔的大历史视野来审视人类及其存在的时空。非常有意思的是，他还借助了一幅桂林乡村田园风景照片来表达其广阔视野的观点。

克里斯蒂安将大历史概括为8个关键阶段。他通过将宇宙学、天文学、化学、地质学、生物学、人类学、狭义历史学等浩瀚繁杂的学科知识系统地联系在一起，形成了一种认识世界和人类自我的全新知识体系，以作为培养人类下一代的教育框架。<sup>[1]</sup>在这样的视野下，无论人类如何自诩其历史的惊天动地，相较于大历史而言，依然是如此地微不足道，人类始终只是在一个变化规律的栖居环境中适应、进化与繁衍。直到约100年前，尤其是近50年来，人类活动产生的过度碳排放将在人类时空中产生全球性的、超越自然规律和地球韧性的突变。在宇宙的历史长河中，这也不过只是瞬时变化而已，但却可能演变为渺小人类的灭顶之灾。

当我合上笔记本电脑，穿上高筒雨靴，走入沾满露水的田埂时，却又获得了星空般神奇的变换体验，韧性且恒常，而这，正是人类的土地归属感与认同感的基础。2020年7月，这里经历了一场几十年未遇的洪水。如今，蜿蜒的严溪上那些被冲毁的水碓已得到修复；坍塌的千年古道也已用旧石板进行修补；但是，溪边不远处那几棵千年古樟和溪边那口南宋时期的古井至今依然保存完好，令人感叹奇迹的同时，也不由地感慨其间的艰辛。仅仅过去半年，眼前的景观就已仿若未曾发生过灾害一般。

从今年2月初开始，田埂上便有我熟悉却不知晓学名的乡土野草陆续开花了。先是稻槎菜（*Lapsana apogonoides*）、碎米荠（*Cardamine hirsuta*）、阿拉伯婆婆纳（*Veronica persica*）等；到了2月中旬，则是拟鼠麴草（*Gnaphalium affine*）、雀舌草（*Stellaria alsine*）、鹅肠菜（*Myosoton aquaticum*）等；时至2月下旬，田野里的油菜花也已开始零零星星地吐黄，并迅速进入盛花期；而到我写作的今日（3月11日），放眼望去，三千多亩的田野已尽染金黄。而田埂也被夏天无（*Corydalis decumbens*）的紫色花朵所覆盖，在灿然的油菜花中显得异常美艳；而天葵（*Semiquilegia adoxoides*）的白色小花则总是被忽视。可以想见，去年疫情期间，在人们的无限留恋与惋惜中，田野很快便会卸下油菜花盛装，换上绿色的水稻外套，接着披上沉甸甸的、金色的稻穗秋装，之后便是在晨雾中裹紧泛着银光的冬袄。如此，周而复始，年复一年。

当我再次拨开山边那些高高的茅草，阅读一处处坟冢前的墓碑铭文时了解到，从在北亚热带茂密丛林中破荒开基的第一代先辈算起，他们在此繁衍的历史已近千年；即便如此，他们每一代人所看到的宇宙星空想

必与我今天所见相差无几，他们所见到的应时令而发的野草和田间作物，也与我今天所见几乎一样；就连这田埂和水渠，亦是如此。但是，他们所经历的洪水可能比去年我所见到的还要严峻，他们所经历的瘟疫可能也比今天的COVID-19更为肆虐。尽管如此，这些先辈和他们的家族依然得以繁衍至今——因为自然生命始终跟随着宇宙运行规律生长、繁衍，生死交替。正是这份对土地和生命的依赖和适应，使得浩瀚宇宙中的一方土地和栖居其上的人类及社区——亦可理解为“景观”（landscapes）——得以以相对恒常的状态存在。人类和社区凭借一定的韧性，适应并利用自然，并形成了对这方土地的认同感和归属感，最终体现为独特的乡土景观。

然而，从小生长在这片田野上的我，却已看到一种远远超出这方土地、这群人、这个社会，以及生命韧性范围的全球性灾难正在酝酿，并在迅速积蓄能量，甚至预感到它爆发在即。今天，水沟中已经没有了鱼，田野里已经没有了泥鳅、蚯蚓，就连青蛙也寥寥无几；水田已经板结，即使是在位处上游的小溪里，富营养化现象也已开始泛滥。农民兄弟背着药箱向田野一遍一遍地喷洒农药和除草剂，大把大把地施撒化肥。当然，这并非他们的错，是生存的压力使他们不得不如此。田野上的生命系统正在快速发生巨变，这种巨变将超出自然生命系统的韧性而导致系统崩溃，其灾难性的后果远非去年的洪水和延续至今的瘟疫可以相提并论。

这便是“大历史”告诉我们的：由于人类的无度开采，地球生命积聚了千万年的化石能源正被用来满足人类各类发展欲望，释放了超出自然规律的温室气体；人类用化学方法合成了超出自然生命系统韧性的新物质，包括各类化肥、农药和塑料，使人类赖以生存的自然系统面临崩溃。即使是在140亿年的“大历史”视野下，这也是一种可能改写人类历史的巨变，是当前人类所面临的致命的生存挑战。**LAF**

Experienced too much bitterness in the COVID-19 pandemic, I have also been deep in thought from the lessons learned in the past year. Being in Xunjiansi village in Wuyuan County, Shangrao City, Jiangxi Province, remote from China's metropolises, I owned an opportunity of “keeping calm and carrying on” in the quarantine, as well as a moment of “holding the world with an open mind” via the Internet, across the boundaries of time and space.

Due to the COVID-19, the Frontiers Forum, an academic conference gathering global top scientists scheduled to be held in Switzerland, had to be changed into an online-lecture series every month. On March 2, the first lecture titled “Big History: Equipping Our Children to Manage a Planet” was delivered by David Christian, a famous educator and historian. Challenging conventional views of history, Christian offers us a magnificent, unprecedented Big History perspective to re-examine human beings and the space-time where they survive and develop. Interestingly, he presented a photo of Guilin's rural scenery to illustrate his ideas.

Christian generalized 8 thresholds of Big History. Combining various disciplinary systems such as Cosmology, Astronomy, Chemistry, Geology, Biology, Anthropology, and Literary History, a new vast knowledge system that helps us understand the world and human beings and serves as an educational framework for next human generation can be created.<sup>[1]</sup> Under the view of Big History, human history, no matter how earthshaking it is praised to be, is just barely even worthy of mention, in which man has always adapted, evolved, and reproduced in a regularly changing environment. In the past century, especially in the recent half, human carbon emission has posed the planet an unprecedented environmental crisis to its natural resilience. Although only a transient variation in the earth's long history, it may lead to a catastrophe to human beings ourselves.

Turning off laptop and putting on my rain boots, I walked into a ridge covered by dew, experiencing the resilience and constancy of nature—the root of people's belonging and identity for land. In July 2020, this area suffered from the most severe flood in decades. On the winding Yan Stream, weirs destroyed by the flood have been restored, and the collapsed thousand-year ancient path repaired with old slates. Amazingly, those several ancient camphor trees standing for over 1,000 years and the ancient well built

in the Southern Song Dynasty near the stream remain so intact that I cannot help imagining how many natural disasters they survived from. Only half a year passes by, the landscape has self-restored, seeming to have experienced no impact.

Since the beginning of February this year, native plants, familiar to me but not known by academic names, have been blooming on the field ridges, including *Lapsana apogonoides*, *Cardamine hirsuta*, and *Veronica persica*; *Gnaphalium affine*, *Stellaria alsine*, and *Myosoton aquaticum* in the middle of February; by late February, rape flowers began to sprout and soon turned the fields into a yellow meadow—on March 11 when I write this article, it became a stunning landscape covering an area of nearly 200 hm<sup>2</sup>. Covering the ridges, purple flowers of *Corydalis decumbens* look gorgeous among bright rape flowers sea. In contrast, *Semiquilegia adoxoides*' small white flowers are often ignored, so were the beautiful landscape during the pandemic last year—people missed the attractive seasonal sceneries from yellow meadow of rape flowers in spring, green crops in summer, golden paddy fields in autumn to sparkling mist and snow in winter. Come and gone, year after year.

Behind the tall grasses at the mountain foot, there are the tombs of my ancestors, with the inscriptions on the tombstones. Since the first generation began to settle in the dense forests of northern subtropics, human beings have been living here nearly a thousand years. The landscapes of starry sky, vibrant grasses, and crops growing in season, as well as the ridges and weirs, are persistent over centuries, just as what we see today. Although I guess that the ancestors must have suffered from more severe floods or pandemics than what we are facing today, life continues—birth, grow, thriving, death... all follow the laws of universe. The dependence on and adaption to land and life allows the earth, human beings, and their communities (which can also be understood as landscapes) to exist in a relatively constant state. By virtue of resilience, humans and their communities adapt to and make use of the nature, forming a sense of identity and belonging to the land which finally is manifested as unique vernacular landscapes.

However, as a native growing up on this land, I can see a global disaster that begins to take shape and is quickly exacerbating and even to break out, which will go far beyond the resilience of the land, of the entire human beings, of the whole society, and even of the planet living system. Now, fish is disappearing from streams, and loaches, earthworms or frogs are disappearing from fields; the soil of more and more paddy fields are hardening or salinizing, and eutrophication is increasingly seen in upstream water bodies. Farmers spray the fields with plenty of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers—they have to do so, of course, down to the pressure of survival. The rapid changes on the fields are challenging the resilience of natural living system, and will eventually lead to a complete collapse and result in unpredictable disasters, far worse than the floods and the pandemic we have been suffering from today.

Big History is warning us: To satisfy human beings' desires, the immoderate exploitation of fossil energy resources that are accumulated by lives on Earth for millions of years has aggravated greenhouse gas emissions that exceed the carbon sequestration capacity of the nature; Humans have chemically synthesized new substances exceeding the resilience of natural living system, e.g. various sorts of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and plastics, which are causing environmental damages and threatening the natural system mankind rely on. Even in the Big History of 14 billion years, this is a critical moment to humans' survival that may rewrite human history. **LAF**

#### REFERENCE

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