

I was born in Nanjing. But 36 days after my birth, I was taken by my grandmother to our ancestral city of Shengxian in Zhejiang. Shengxian is a small city. It had city walls. The streets were so narrow that I think no automobile could pass through them. I grew up there until almost age 9. We had to go outside city wall to see an automobile arriving occasionally on the highway. There is a river outside the city wall. But no steamships. Never seen a train. Very provincial.

I lived with my grandmother (close to 60), great grandmother (close to 90), and my sister 8 years older. We had one male servant and one female servant. I had a wet nurse (nai ma) when I was a baby. But I have no recollection who she is. That was the entire household. Looking back now from an objective perspective, my childhood must be quite bleak. But I do not think I had an unhappy childhood. Except that I do not remember much about that period.

我生于南京。出生后 36 天，祖母即带我回到老家浙江嵊县。嵊县是个小城，县城有城墙。街道很窄，我估计小汽车都无法通行。在那里我长到 9 岁。只有出了城墙外，我们才能看到马路上偶尔开来的汽车。城墙外有一条河，但没有轮船。那里也看不到火车，实在是一个非常偏僻的地方。

在那里，我和年近 60 的祖母、年近 90 的曾祖母、还有比我大 8 岁的姐姐一起。我们有一个男佣人和一个女佣人。我还曾有过一个奶妈，但我完全不记得她是谁了。这就是一起生活的一家子。现在回忆起来，客观的想想，我的童年生活应该很黯淡。可我并不觉得童年有什么不幸福的，只是记不起来多少那时候的事情了。

It was not in a cultural environment that I grew up during my early childhood. My grandmother was practically illiterate. I do not recall there were any books in my home. My grandmother must have spoiled me. She was very frugal. The food in the family was quite simple. But I always had meat, and only for me. Lean meat, because I refused to eat fat meat, not even today. I did not touch any vegetables, except spinach. The habit was forced to be changed when I started to attend the boarding school in junior high school. But my grandmother was very strict on my studies, although she could not teach me herself. She enforced discipline. I had private tutors when I was 4 or 5, just the junior high school classmates of my sister.

There was only one junior middle school in Shengxian at that time. When I went back to visit in 1986, there were close 20 senior middle school there. I do not know how many primary schools were there at that time. I only knew there probably was only one public Xian-Li primary school. Any way, when I was not quite 6, a family friend took me to the entrance examination for the Xian-Li primary school. He led me for the examination of the 3rd grade. I looked at the examination paper, understood nothing, and started crying. He immediately got me out, and somehow arranged to have me admitted to the 2nd semester of the 1st grade. So I never attended the beginning semester of the 1st grade. Later because of the Japanese bombing, the school moved from one place to other, there was no class for some grades, I skipped another semester. So I had skipped one year in primary school. But that resulted in my graduating from primary school in winter. So I had to wait later at home for half a year to enter the middle school.

我幼年的成长环境没有什么文化氛围。祖母基本上不识字，家里我也不记得有什么书。祖母很节俭，饭菜很简单。但我总有肉吃，而且专给我的。因为我不吃肥肉，所以只给我瘦肉（我现在也不吃肥肉）。我基本上不吃青菜，除了菠菜。这个习惯直到我上初中寄宿了才被迫改掉。虽然她自己教不了我，祖母对我学业要求很是严苛，她会用家法。我四五岁的时候请了私人老师，就是姐姐的初中同学。

那时嵊县只有一间初中。1986 年我回去的时候，看到那里有差不多 20 所高中了。我不知道那时有多少所小学，只是县立的小学可能只有一所。差不多 6 岁的时候，家里的一个朋友带我参加县立小学的入学考试，让我考三年级。我看着卷子，什么也不懂，于是哭起来。他立刻就把我弄出去，并设法让我直接进去读一年级的下学期。因此，我从来没上过一年级上学期。后来，因为日本人轰炸，学校到处迁移，有些年级就没有班了，我又跳了一个学期。总的算起来，我就少上了一年小学。其结果是冬天的时候小学毕业，于是只能等了半年才上中学。

I cannot remember any my classmates in Shengxian. I only remember that there was this girl in the school, who was the daughter of the mayor (xianzhang). I do not remember whether she was in my class. She came to school in a special rickshaw with body guard. A mayor in a small town was indeed like a king. But that was in war time, and Shengxian was notorious with its bandits. So body guard may be necessary to prevent possible kidnapping.

But Shengxian had its prominent native sons, not just bandits. One person you should know was MA Ying-Chu, your old president of Beida. Shengxian had also quite a few high ranking generals in the KMT period. The most prominent was ZHAO Guan Tao who was a core division commander (together with CHEN Cheng, WEI Li Huang) under CHIANG Kai-shek, participating the third campaign against the Red Base in Jiang Xi in 1931. His name was mentioned in Chairman MAO's article, included in his Collected Works. My cousin married one of his daughters. You can imagine what hardships she had to suffer in Shanghai after liberation. But she managed to raise seven children being a primary school teacher while for many years with her husband in jail as a counter-revolutionary.

我记不起来嵊县的同学了，只记得学校里有个女生是县长的千金。不记得是不是跟我一个班，她带着保镖坐着一种特殊的人力车来上学。小城里，县长就像个小皇帝。但那是战时，嵊县闹土匪闹得很厉害。保镖也许是必需的，以防被劫持。

嵊县的豪杰可不只是土匪。一个名人是马寅初，北大的老校长。国民党年代里，嵊县出了不少高级将领，最有名的是赵观涛，他是蒋介石手下和陈诚、卫立煌一起的干将，参加过 1931 年剿伐江西的红军根据地。毛主席文章里提过他，在毛选里有。我的表兄弟娶了他的一个女儿。可以想象出解放后她在上海多么艰难，丈夫作为反革命坐牢，自己在小学教书，她还是抚养大了七个子女。