When a fish reaches 200g in weight it has a master; when a woman reaches 18 years of age she has her own family.

Once children were engaged and had reached the age of 17, they were considered by their parents to be adults at last. The children typically married at around 17 or 18—usually not younger than 15 and not older than 20—and they were typically roughly the same age. Only in the case of a man remarrying after his first wife died was the age disparity greater than five years. Usually the wedding date was set for Kam New Year, which in Xiangye always fell on the first day of the 12th month of the lunar calendar. In the years before Liberation, some marriages began to be arranged for Chinese New Year (during the 1st month of the lunar calendar).

People from poorer families often did not convene a wedding ceremony and ignored the custom of marrying at New Year. Instead, they chose an otherwise auspicious day. Then they invited a middle-aged woman to go on the evening of that day to the bride’s home, to escort her away to the wedding. The bride’s family did not lay on a banquet.

The bride dressed in clean clothes for the occasion and combed her hair. Holding only a pleated skirt in her right hand, as if she had to leave in a hurry, she followed her escort until she arrived at her husband’s home in pitch dark. Members of the groom’s family welcomed her kindly, but without any special ceremony or feast. The bride and groom did not sleep together for three nights and thereafter the bride made the return journey to her parental home. This part of the tradition was the same as for richer people.

Wedding ceremonies in the homes of more prosperous families were lively affairs. Two or three brothers and sisters-in-law of the groom dressed in their best clothes and set off before breakfast in the direction of the bride’s home. Upon seeing her home in the distance, they began
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