Yuan Dynasty 元: 1234 - 1368
Ming Dynasty 明: 1368 - 1644
  Hongwu Emperor 洪武 (reigned 1368-1398)
  Jianwen Emperor 健文 (r. 1399-1402)
  Yongle Emperor 永樂 (r. 1402-1424)

White Lotus Buddhism; a sect of popular messianic Buddhism that worshipped the Maitreya Buddha (also known as the Buddha of the Future); followers of this sect believed that the coming of the Maitreya Buddha would signal the apocalyptical end of this world; it was their duty to help usher in the new age of the Buddha via rebellion.

Manichaeism; a form of Gnostic Christianity founding by Mani (210-275 CE) in Persia; this belief system posited that the world was comprised of two forces - the forces of good/light and evil/darkness, which were locked in fierce battle. This religion makes its way into China by Tang times; thought to have been absorbed into sectarian popular Buddhist beliefs.

Red Turbans (1351-1366); rebellious branch of White Lotus believers; they rise up against the Yuan in 1351; led first by Guo Zixing and then by Zhu Yuanzhang.

Guo Zixing 郭子興 (d. 1355); leader of the Red Turbans from 1351-55; foments rebellion in north China

Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (reigned 1368-1398); founder of the Ming dynasty; peasant origin; adopts the title of the Hongwu Emperor.

Empress Ma; wife of Zhu Yuanzhang; adoptive daughter of Guo Zixing; noted for having had a civilizing effect on the ruthless tendencies of the emperor.

Tax farming system; implemented under Zhu Yuanzhang; authorizes local elites to collect taxes and then deliver them to the central government.

lijia 里甲 mutual responsibility system; initiated in 1381; divided the population into li-units of 110 households and jia-units of 10 households. Each year, one 1 household was responsible for supervision of tax collection and labor services for the other ten; duties rotated year by year for ten years, and then began again in a self-perpetuating cycle; has precedents in Legalist policies dating back to Shang Yang and the Qin dynasty.

Jianwen Emperor (r. 1398-1402); grandson of Zhu Yuanzhang. Civil war breaks out between the Jianwen Emperor and his uncle, the Prince of Yan (power base in the Beijing area) in 1399.

Yongle Emperor (r. 1402-1424); Zhu Di, son of Zhu Yuanzhang and uncle to the Jianwen Emperor; wins the civil war; moves the capital to Beijing in 1421.
Yongle Dadian 永樂大典: imperially sponsored encyclopedia begun under the auspices of the Yongle emperor; takes five years to complete; attempts to collect and publish knowledge in all fields. Only about 700 of the originally 10,000-some encyclopedia volumes have now survived.

Embroidered Uniform Guard; a special imperial bodyguard service staffed by eunuchs; used as military envoys and as a secret police apparatus for the Ming imperial household; responsible for administering the Eastern and Western Depots – capital prisons that become notorious as torture chambers.