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)

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

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 朱棣, son of Zhu Yuanzhang and uncle to the Jianwen Emperor; wins the civil war; moves the capital to Beijing in 1421.

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.

Hanlin Academy 翰林院; an imperial institution founded in the 8th century; members of the Academy served as scribes and archivists for the dynasty and provided the court with interpretations on the Confucian classics; this institution is greatly expanded under the Ming, staffed by some of the most illustrious talents drawn from the civil service examinations; posts to the Academy were low in status but high in prestige; by mid to late Ming times, members of the Hanlin staffed the Grand Secretariat.

Grand Secretariat (Neige 內閣); begun under the Hongwu Emperor as a cabinet to perform much of the paperwork for emperor, this institution developed into the most powerful central court agency of the Ming; staffed by Hanlin academicians; by the mid Ming the grand secretaries also often doubled as the heads of the six ministries of central administration (Personnel, Revenue, Rites, Justice, War, Works).

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 錦衣衛; the imperial bodyguard service for the Ming emperors; used as military envoys and as a secret police apparatus for the Ming imperial household; this agency worked in close consort with the palace eunuchs, who were responsible for administering the Eastern and Western Depots – capital prisons that become notorious as torture chambers.

Zheng He 鄭和 (1371-1433), a Muslim eunuch; later in life a devout Buddhist. Serves under the Jianwen and Yongle emperors; leads seven maritime expeditions between 1405 and 1433, some of which travel as far as to the east coast of Africa.
Single-whip tax reforms (*yitiao bianfa* 一條鞭法): instituted between 1522-1619; name is actually a pun meaning "all combined into one"; commuted at taxes into payment by silver; combined land and labor taxation; taxes paid once annually; promoted as national policy by Zhang Juzheng.

Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525-1582), Grand-Secretary under the Wanli Emperor; criticized in his day for being too activist or Legalist in his approach to statecraft.