

Limits of Autocracy

Ming Dynasty 1368-1644



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Hongwu (Taizu), founder of the Ming Dynasty 1369-1398

“Orphaned” twice, he becomes a rebel leader of the Red Turbans. Then begins a drive to become emperor in Nanjing.

Daoist and Confucius’ respect for superiors was pushed.

Tax reform and good monetary system benefited the poor.

Paranoid and “purger” of hundreds of thousands

Hongwu’s attempt to deal with the power of the eunuchs didn’t work; they grew in importance and power.

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Southwestern expansion for the frontier

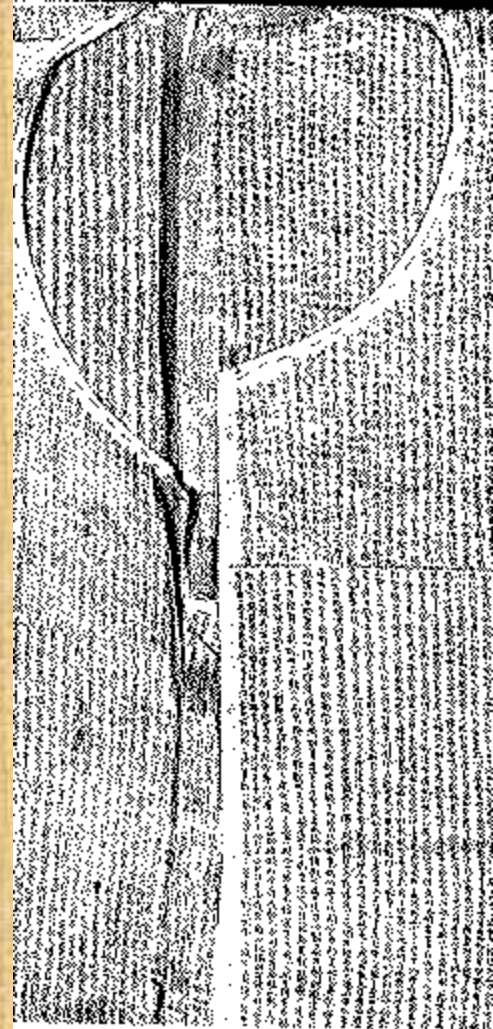
Yunnan and Guizhou regions colonized by the Ming dynasty.

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Literati life and the civil service exams based on the Four Books (Analects, Doctrine of the Mean, Mencius, and Great Learnings)

Jinshi—capital city of exams

Cheat shirt



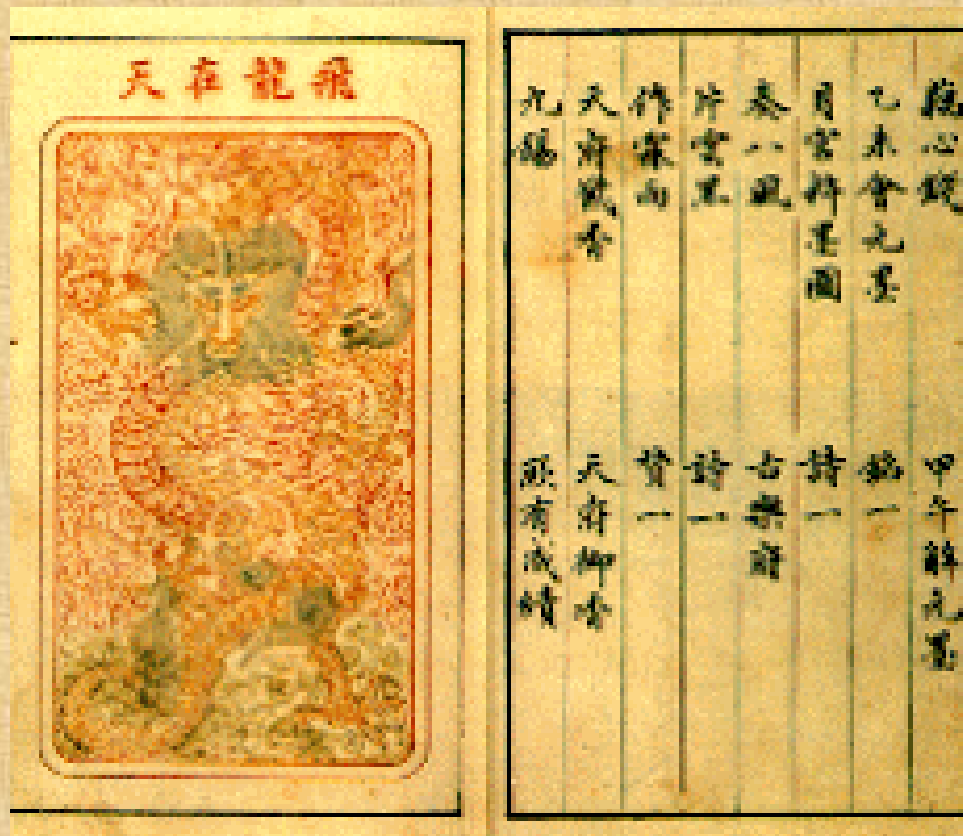
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Matteo Ricci—Catholic missionary

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Ming printing from wooden blocks



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Philosophical Currents



Peony Pavilion—a romantic poem about courtesan life during the Ming dynasty.

Wang Yangming's metaphysics emphasized that even the common man could understand through experience of pain, etc.

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Local Society

- **Community Compacts grew in importance.**
- **These compacts functioned like parishes in Europe.**

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Relations with the outer world

- **Tributary relationships with vassal states resulted in invasions of Korea and Vietnam**
- **Maritime trade expanded in silks and porcelain**
- **Imports include plants from the New World—corn, peanuts, potatoes, etc.**
- **Generally, Ming dynasty rejected the “outer world’s” ideas including Christianity.**

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Fiscal collapse

During the Ming Dynasty, financial chaos was created by wars and natural disasters including the “little ice age” and the resultant famine (1627-8).

The lack of silver created a country-wide depression.

These problems finally brought an end to the Ming dynasty with its mixed reviews regarding how effective it was.

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Great Wall of China is approximately 1,500 miles long and crosses northern China from Gansu province to Hebei province. The wall runs roughly along the southern section of the Mongolian plain. The wall was built to protect China from northern nomads out of Mongolia.

While it was started in the 3rd century BCE in the Ch'in dynasty, the more “modern” form the wall dates from the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). It averages 25' high and 15 to 30' thick at the foundation and is 12' at the top. Guard stations and watchtowers are placed at intervals along route. The eastern section of the Great Wall is made from earth, stone, and brick while the western section is simply earthen mounds.

The Great Wall is a successful tourist venue even though it wasn't as successful as a military defensive line.

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Ming
porcelain

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Ming porcelain

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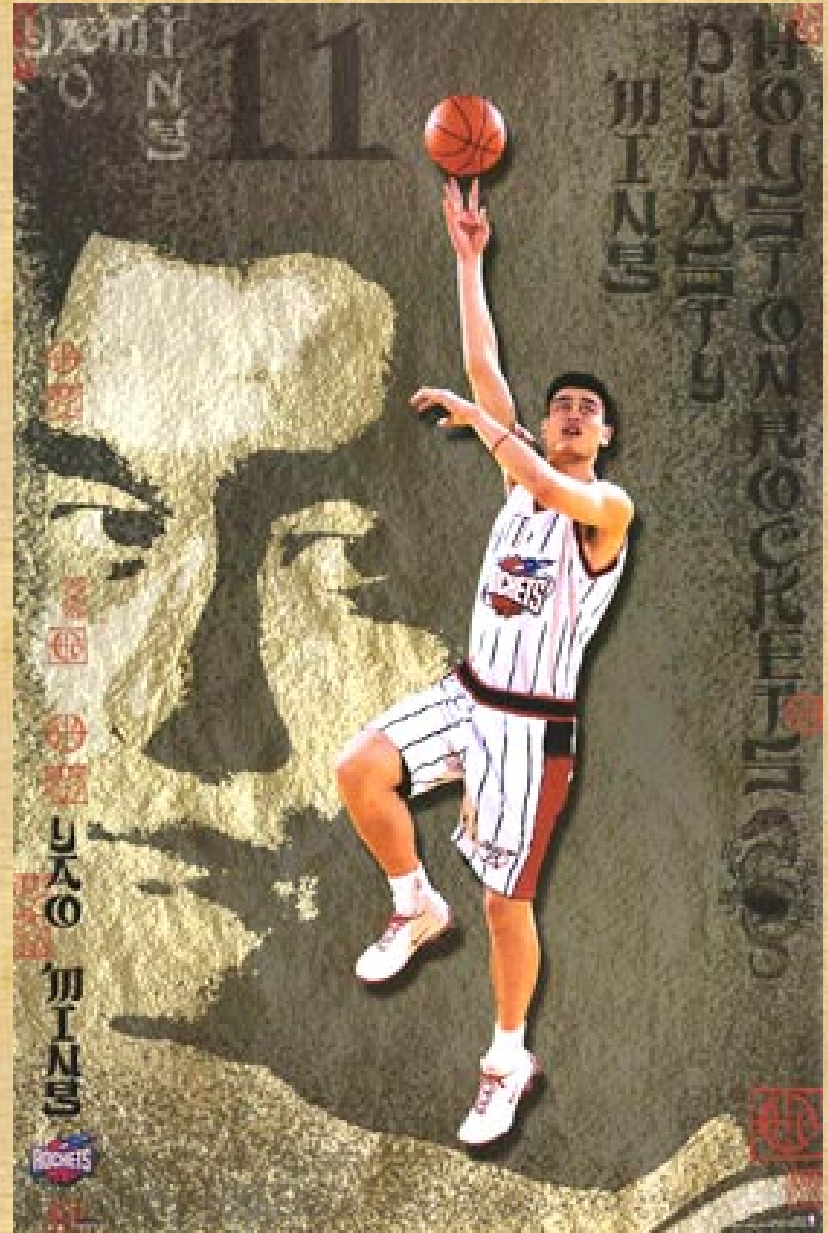
Ming porcelain

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Ming coins

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Another Ming Dynasty