I. Basic Concepts
- Multiple Buddhas throughout the cosmos
- Buddha-lands or Buddha-fields: where a Buddha dwells
- Buddhas and bodhisattvas can assist suffering beings
- Others may inhabit a buddha-land, but only after great achievements
- The Buddha of Pure Land: Amitābha (Immeasurable Light)

II. The Basic story
- The monk-bodhisattva Dharmākara
- Vows his buddha-land would be the best and most inclusive
- Sets forth 48 vows that specify his future land’s features and inhabitants
- Achieves his vows
- Establishes land called Sukhāvatī (Utmost Bliss)

III. The Basic Practice: nianfo念佛
- Originally any practice if one “dedicated the merit” to rebirth in the Pure Land
- Why it is hard to translate into English
- India: practice of buddha-recollection (Sanskrit: buddhānusmṛti)
- Ambiguity of the word nian 念: contemplation or recitation?
  - Visualization
  - Holding the Buddha’s name as a sound-image in mind
  - Oral recitation of the name
- By the 7th century, Chinese monk Shandao 善導 (613–681) defines practice as recitation
- Results of practice
  - Mental purification, elimination of past bad karma
  - Visualization/vision of the Buddha and his land
  - Rebirth in the Pure Land after death

IV. “Self-power” and “Other-power”
- India: Success in gaining rebirth depends upon one’s own efforts
- China: The Buddha assists by conducting one to the Pure Land
  - Yuan Hongdao (1568–1610): like a sail catching the wind
  - Jixing Chewu (1741-1810): Two minds mutually enmeshed
  - “Two powers of self and other”
- Japan: The Buddha does all the work
  - Hōnen (1133–1212): Start with nianfo (Jpn: nenbutsu) for safety, move to other practices
Shinran (1173–1262): Devotee is helpless. The Buddha does everything, including arousing faith

Ippen (1234–1289): Even faith is unnecessary; just recite the name

- Staircases, escalators, and elevators

V. The Goal: Rebirth in the Pure Land
- Represents final escape from suffering
- Perfect training ground where enlightenment is guaranteed
- Levels of rebirth and the “City of Doubt”

VI. Conclusion: a Path for Ordinary People

Amitābha and retinue coming to meet a dying devotee