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**Ways of the World: A Brief Global
History with Sources**
Second Edition

Chapter 4
Culture and Religion in Eurasia/North Africa
(500 B.C.E.–500 C.E.)

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China's Cultural Traditions
British Museum/The Art Archive
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1. Who are the two men and the baby in this painting?

On the very left stands the Daoist master Laozi, recognizable by his bald spot, beard, and earring. The larger figure on the right is the Chinese scholar Confucius, clearly identifiable by his headgear and long beard. The baby represents Buddha, recognizable by the tuft of hair on his bald skull. Confucius is gently handing Buddha to Laozi, who seems to both reach out for Buddha and gesticulate to Confucius. The expressions of both men are kind and loving. Both Confucius and Laozi are dressed in long gowns with large open sleeves.

2. What did the artist mean to convey with his work, and what features of this painting accomplish that goal?

Wang Shugu (1649–1731) is the most likely artist responsible for this painting. Shugu shows Confucius—the inspiration for a broad set of rules and values known as Confucianism—handing baby Buddha over to Laozi, the impersonation of another Chinese religious tradition, Daoism. This is an idealized depiction of the two ancient religions—Confucianism and Daoism—accepting the new Indian religion of Buddhism. Their gentle handling of the baby figure and the expressions of love and interest on their faces make this clear. At the same time, the entire metaphor stresses the junior position of Buddhism in comparison with the established traditions, whose deep roots are highlighted by the men's generous gowns. In contrast, Buddha is half-naked.

3. Does the message of this image match the reality of religious coexistence in China? What does this example tell us about religion and religious conflict?

Buddhism did by and large coexist peacefully alongside Confucianism and Daoism. This painting serves as a powerful reminder that strife and conflict are by no means the

inevitable outcomes of differences in religious beliefs.

I. China and the Search for Order

A. The Legalist Answer

1. High rewards, heavy punishments
2. Qin Shihuangdi

I. China and the Search for Order

A. The Legalist Answer

1. High rewards, high punishments: Advocates of Legalism believed that humans were self-serving and short-sighted. Thus, to get them to do good, they had to be sure of high rewards and to keep them from doing wrong, they had to fear heavy punishments.
2. Qin Shihuangdi: China's first emperor used Legalism to create social order out of the chaos of the era of warring states. Unfortunately, his brutal reign discredited Legalism in the eyes of many.

I. China and the Search for Order

B. The Confucian Answer

1. Confucius, *Analects*, & Confucianism
2. Moral example of superiors
3. Unequal relationships governed by *ren*
4. Education and state bureaucracy
5. Filial piety and gender expectations
6. Secular

I. China and the Search for Order

B. The Confucian Answer

1. Confucius, *Analects*, & Confucianism: Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.) came from an aristocratic family in northern China and believed to have found the way to create social harmony. While he sought office where he could put his ideas into effect, he never found such a job and remained a thinker and a teacher. After his death, his students collected his teachings in a short book called the *Analects* and later scholars created a body of thought that came to be called Confucianism.
2. Moral example of superiors: In clear contrast to Legalism, Confucianism taught that the strong moral example of social superiors should teach others how to behave.
3. Unequal relationships governed by *ren*: Confucius taught that *ren* (benevolence, human-heartedness, and goodness) should be cultivated in all social relationships.
4. Education and state bureaucracy: The Han dynasty rejected the Qin use of Legalism and used Confucianism as a governing philosophy for the new state bureaucracy. As government service required an entry test, Confucianism came to dominate the educational system and became central to the world view of civil servants. As civil servants were an embodiment of social morality, they enjoyed an esteemed status, while merchants and soldiers were much lower in the social hierarchy.
5. Filial piety and gender expectations: Confucianism stressed filial piety, loyalty to and reverence of one's parents and ancestors; this loyalty was important in and of itself but also as a model for loyalty to the emperor. Confucian views of the family were rigidly hierarchical and patriarchic. Female subordination was justified by the belief that the superior world of the heavens was male and the inferior material world of the Earth was female.
6. Secular: While Confucius was not an atheist and did not deny religion, the philosophy based on his teachings focused on establishing social harmony in the material world, not religious or other spiritual

worlds.

I. China and the Search for Order

C. The Daoist Answer

1. Laozi's *Daodejing* and Zhuangzi
2. Withdrawal into nature
3. Spontaneous natural behavior not rigid education
4. *Dao* ("The Way")
5. Contradict or complement Confucianism?

I. China and the Search for Order

C. The Daoist Answer

1. Laozi's *Daodejing* and Zhuangzi: A sixth-century B.C.E. archivist, Laozi penned a short poetic work before leaving society and escaping into China's wild west. The philosopher Zhuangzi (369–286 B.C.E.) later wrote on Laozi's work in a more explicit manner.
2. Withdrawal into nature: In sharp contrast to Confucian emphasis on social engagement, Laozi taught to leave society and enter nature, appreciating its mysteries, beauty, and truth.
3. Spontaneous natural behavior not rigid education: Also in sharp contrast to Confucian teachings, Laozi did not value education but encouraged people to behave in a spontaneous and natural manner.
4. *Dao* ("The Way"): Laozi spoke of a mysterious force of truth and goodness that surrounded all things. If one could understand this indefinable force, one could live a good life.
5. Contradict or complement Confucianism?: While we might see many obvious contradictions between Confucianism and Daoism, Chinese elites saw them as a natural complement to each other. Many civil servants might have used ideas of social hierarchy to govern during the day and withdraw

into nature, art, and poetry in the evenings.

II. Cultural Traditions of Classical India

A. South Asian Religion: From Ritual Sacrifice to Philosophical Speculation

1. *Vedas* (1500–600 B.C.E.), *Brahmins*, and rituals
2. Upanishads (800–400 B.C.E.)
3. *Atman* and Brahman

II. Cultural Traditions of Classical India

A. South Asian Religion: From Ritual Sacrifice to Philosophical Speculation

1. *Vedas* (1500–600 B.C.E.), *Brahmins*, and rituals: These early Indian texts were initially passed down by oral tradition. They give detailed insights into the early South Asian world, where social hierarchy and religious ritual were very important.
2. Upanishads (800–400 B.C.E.): As lower classes began to react increasingly negatively to the elites' emphasis on social status and ritual obligation, a body of texts by various anonymous authors arose that focused more on mystical and philosophical issues than on formal rituals.
3. *Atman* and Brahman: The Upanishads taught that individual human souls, *atman*, were part of a greater "world soul," Brahman. The eternal unity of Brahman was the true reality and the divisions and diversities of the material world were a mere illusion.

II. Cultural Traditions of Classical India

A. South Asian Religion: From Ritual Sacrifice to Philosophical Speculation

4. *Samsara, moksha, and karma*
5. Gender and the Laws of Manu
6. Cults and deities as different paths

II. Cultural Traditions of Classical India

A. South Asian Religion: From Ritual Sacrifice to Philosophical Speculation

4. *Samsara, moksha, and karma*: Human souls were trapped in a cycle of birth, death, and rebirth known as *samsara*, and their status in life was governed by the consequences of their actions, *karma*. Only those who could rise above the illusions of the material world could break free of the cycles of *samsara*, achieving *moksha*, release from the material world and unity with the divine great soul of Brahman.
5. Gender and the Laws of Manu: The social implications of this world view endorsed caste distinctions and hierarchy as well as patriarchy. Women came to be seen as unclean and dirty and thus inferior. The Laws of Manu institutionalized these inequalities and promoted young girls to marrying older men, wives being obedient, and widows never remarrying.
6. Cults and deities as different paths: Hinduism, as the many diverse traditions of South Asia came to be known, recognized that there were many paths to the divine. With a huge number of gods and goddesses of widely different character and temperament, various devotional cults developed. Often they would draw women or lower-class men who felt left out of practices that emphasized rituals and social hierarchy.

II. Cultural Traditions of Classical India

B. The Buddhist Challenge

1. Siddhartha Gautama (ca. 566–ca. 486 B.C.E.)
2. The Buddha's teachings and *nirvana*
3. Relationship to Hinduism

II. Cultural Traditions of Classical India

B. The Buddhist Challenge

1. Siddhartha Gautama (ca. 566–ca. 486 B.C.E.): Buddhism, unlike the collection of traditions known as Hinduism, has a historical founding figure. This north Indian prince lived a life of opulence until he encountered examples of sickness, old age, and death. He then went on a spiritual quest until achieving enlightenment at age 35. He spent the remainder of his life teaching his message.
2. The Buddha's teachings and *nirvana*: The Buddha's central teachings were that life is suffering and that suffering could be ended by ending desire. The enlightened state, or *nirvana*, could be achieved by following the Buddha's path, at which point one's individual identity would fuse with the larger whole and all individual desires and delusions would vanish. Communities of monks formed to follow his teachings.
3. Relationship to Hinduism: Buddhism stemmed from Hinduism and shared many key concepts such as the illusion of the material world, rebirth, and karma. Indeed the end goal of release from individual identity and fusion with the large world soul is shared by both faiths. While both practice meditation, Buddhism was much less tied (and even hostile to) rituals and caste. Some might refer to Buddhism as a simplified and more accessible form of Hinduism.

II. Cultural Traditions of Classical India

B. The Buddhist Challenge

4. Restrictions and opportunities for women
5. Popular appeal
6. Theravada
7. Mahayana's *bodhisattvas*

II. Cultural Traditions of Classical India

B. The Buddhist Challenge

4. Restrictions and opportunities for women: Initially the Buddha did not allow women into the community of monks. However, after some pressure he allowed them to establish communities for nuns but they were clearly subordinate to male monks. Nonetheless, many women found more opportunities for spiritual fulfillment than in male-dominated Hindu communities.

5. Popular appeal: Eschewing the Hinduism elite language of Sanskrit for the popularly used Pali, Buddhist teachings were accessible to the less-educated social classes. The rejection of caste and the establishment of stupas and shrines as sacred sites to visit and Ashoka's promotion of the faith helped to win many converts and establish the faith as distinct from Hinduism.

6. Theravada: The original branch of Buddhism, "The Teaching of the Elders," focused on wisdom passed down through monks. While not denying their existence, there was little talk of gods. The Buddha was not portrayed as a god.

7. Mahayana's *bodhisattvas*: Known as "The Greater Vehicle," this branch of Buddhism began to take on aspects of the supernatural. The Buddha became a godlike figure and there were believed to be numerous *bodhisattvas* who had achieved enlightenment but stayed in the material world to help others achieve enlightenment. These *bodhisattvas* became the subject of popular veneration.

II. Cultural Traditions of Classical India

C. Hinduism as a Religion of Duty and Devotion

1. *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavad-Gita*, and *Ramayana*
2. *Bhakti*
3. Buddhism absorbed back into Hinduism

II. Cultural Traditions of Classical India

C. Hinduism as a Religion of Duty and Devotion

1. *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavad-Gita*, and *Ramayana*: These texts contained epic stories of battle and humans interacting with deities that were both wildly entertaining but more importantly provided a popular communication of Hindu teachings to the masses. Stories such as that of the warrior Arjuna and his charioteer Lord Krishna (an incarnation of Vishnu) gave common people the example of following one's moral obligations in the world as a path towards fulfilling one's spiritual duty.
2. *Bhakti*: Meaning "worship," this movement involved intense and passionate songs, prayers, and rituals towards gods such as Vishnu and Shiva. Often this form of expression was open to all regardless of caste or gender.
3. Buddhism absorbed back into Hinduism: Buddhism waned in India as it faced competition from Islam and some concern about the wealth of monasteries but mostly because Hinduism is a tolerant faith that could incorporate and absorb Buddhism. The Buddha came to be viewed as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu, and veneration of the Buddha became similar to veneration of other deities.

III. Toward Monotheism: The Search for God in the Middle East

A. Zoroastrianism

1. Zarathustra (seventh to sixth century B.C.E.)
2. Persian state support, Achaemenid Dynasty (558–330 B.C.E.)
3. Ahura Mazda versus Angra Mainyu
4. Human free will, struggle of good versus evil, a savior, and judgment day

III. Toward Monotheism: The Search for God in the Middle East

A. Zoroastrianism

1. Zarathustra (seventh to sixth century B.C.E.): While it is uncertain when this prophet lived, his ideas took hold later. He sought to stop violence and cattle raiding amongst the Persians by declaring a single unique god that was the source of all light and wisdom, Ahura Mazda.
2. Persian state support, Achaemenid Dynasty (558–330 B.C.E.): This dynasty gave the faith and its priesthood state support.
3. Ahura Mazda versus Angra Mainyu: Zarathustra taught that there was a constant struggle between the forces of good and evil and that at some point, a savior would come to help the forces of good defeat evil and there would be a final judgment for all men with either punishment or rewards in an afterlife.
4. Human free will, struggle of good versus evil, a savior, and judgment day: Key elements of Zoroastrianism influenced the Jewish community that lived in the Persian Empire. While the Zoroastrian faith remained small and was later damaged by Greek and Islamic invaders, its ideas found new life in branches of Judaism that would later become Christianity and Islam. A few Zoroastrians survived in India where they are known as Parsis (“Persians”).

III. Toward Monotheism: The Search for God in the Middle East

B. Judaism

1. Migrations and exiles of a small Hebrew community
2. One exclusive and jealous god
3. Loyalty to Yahweh and obedience to his laws

III. Toward Monotheism: The Search for God in the Middle East

B. Judaism

1. Migrations and exiles of a small Hebrew community: In contrast to Zoroastrianism, which developed in a powerful empire, Judaism was the tribal faith of a very small community that went through several migrations, exiles, and a few short-lived kingdoms. Rather than state identity holding these together, it was a shared religious and cultural identity that survived the centuries-long journey from Mesopotamia to Egypt and onto the promised land of Canaan before suffering invasion and exile at the hands of the Assyrians (772 B.C.E.) and Babylonians (586 B.C.E.).
2. One exclusive and jealous God: The first of the laws passed down to the Hebrews was that there would be no other gods but God; this was difficult in the polytheistic agrarian world of the ancient Middle East. However, over time the pro-monotheist priests won out.
3. Loyalty to Yahweh and obedience to his laws: The Jews' relationship with God was contractual: So long as they kept their faith and obeyed him, they would be rewarded with a growing population and prosperity. For many, the link to Yahweh was personal, he was a god that one could appeal to rather than an abstract force. This religious development laid the foundation for Christianity and Islam.



Spot Map Ancient Israel
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IV. The Cultural Tradition of Classical Greece: The Search for a Rational Order

A. The Greek Way of Knowing

1. Questions, not answers
2. Socrates (469–399 B.C.E.), Plato (429–348 B.C.E.), and Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.)
3. Rational and non-religious analysis of the world

B. The Greek Legacy

1. Alexander the Great, Rome, and the Academy in Athens
2. The loss and recovery of Greece in Europe
3. Greek learning in the Islamic world

IV. The Cultural Tradition of Classical Greece: The Search for a Rational Order

A. The Greek Way of Knowing

1. Questions, not answers: The Greek contribution lay in asking a series of analytic questions about a wide variety of issues rather than proclaiming authoritative answers.
2. Socrates (469–399 B.C.E.), Plato (429–348 B.C.E.), and Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.): Greece's three greatest thinkers were a succession of teachers and students (Socrates taught Plato who taught Aristotle who, in turn, tutored the future Alexander the Great as a young boy). Each provided important contributions to Greek thought in regards to questioning assumptions, defining terms and systems, and cataloging evidence.
3. Rational and non-religious analysis of the world: Central to the Greek philosophical contribution was the use of observation and reason to make sense of a complicated world. Their questions, analysis, and answers did not rely on religion, leaps of faith, or great mysteries. Rather the world was knowable.

B. The Greek Legacy

1. Alexander the Great, Rome, and the Academy in Athens: Greek thought was spread by Alexander during his dramatic imperial expansion, embraced by many Romans as that empire united the Mediterranean world, and preserved in the Academy in Athens, funded by Plato.
2. The loss and recovery of Greece in Europe: With the collapse of Rome and early Medieval Christianity's hostility toward things pagan, Europe turned its back on Greek learning, only to rediscover and embrace it after the twelfth century. This rediscovery would contribute to the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution.
3. Greek learning in the Islamic world: So if early Christian Europe rejected Greek learning as pagan, where did it survive? In the cities, libraries, and centers of learning in the Islamic world. Here, at the geographical crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa, Muslim scholars studied, critiqued, and built upon

Greek, Indian, Persian, and other international scholarship. Only when Medieval Europe engaged with the Muslim world during the Crusades was this wisdom brought back into Europe proper.



The Death of Socrates
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1. Describe the picture. Who is portrayed here?

The painting shows Socrates—bare-chested with a tunic draped around his waist and thighs—sitting on his deathbed, his right arm raised in a lecturing motion. The room is stripped of furnishing except for a torch and an iron ring anchored higher up in the wall. Nine men surround Socrates' bed, all dressed in tunics, some of them younger and without beards. One man shields his eyes as he hands Socrates a cup; some men listen attentively and others turn away in horror or bury their faces in grief; one man sits on a bench at the foot of the bed in apparent dejection. A view down a dark hallway shows three men walking up a staircase. Half-round windows right above the staircase indicate that this is a cellar or a prison. Broken shackles on the floor in front of Socrates' bed confirm that. Also lying on the ground is a scroll.

2. What historical event does this painting illustrate?

The painting shows the voluntary suicide of Socrates in 399 B.C.E. After being sentenced to death by an Athenian jury for corrupting the minds of the youth of Athens, Socrates refused to go into exile to save his life. He had angered city authorities with his willingness to speak truth to power and value wisdom and virtue over wealth and power.

3. What did Socrates' death seem to signify to the artist Jacques-Louis David, who painted this work in 1787?

David chose to depict Socrates with a bare chest not only to highlight the importance of humanist values with human physiology but also to indicate that Socrates chose suicide out of strength, not weakness. The bedside presence of his disciples—with Socrates debating to his dying breath—indicates that even his own death provides a lesson in Socratic thinking. The twelve students who surround Socrates in this painting could be a

subtle analogy to the last supper of Jesus Christ before his crucifixion. Socrates, the painter means to say, died a martyr for the cause of rational thinking.

V. The Birth of Christianity... with Buddhist Comparisons

A. The Lives of the Founders

1. Encounter with a higher level of reality
2. Messages of love
3. Jesus' miracles and dangerous social critique

V. The Birth of Christianity... with Buddhist Comparisons

A. The Lives of the Founders

1. Encounter with a higher level of reality: Jesus and the Buddha came from very different social backgrounds but both had a very similar and profound encounter with a higher level of reality and taught a path to personal salvation.
2. Messages of love: Both taught a message that put love for one's fellow man (even one's enemies) at the center.
3. Jesus' miracles and dangerous social critique: While the Buddha did not create a social conflict and did not discuss the issue of gods and the supernatural, Jesus was said to have performed numerous miracles and gave sermons that challenged the social injustices and inequalities of the Roman Empire.

V. The Birth of Christianity... with Buddhist Comparisons

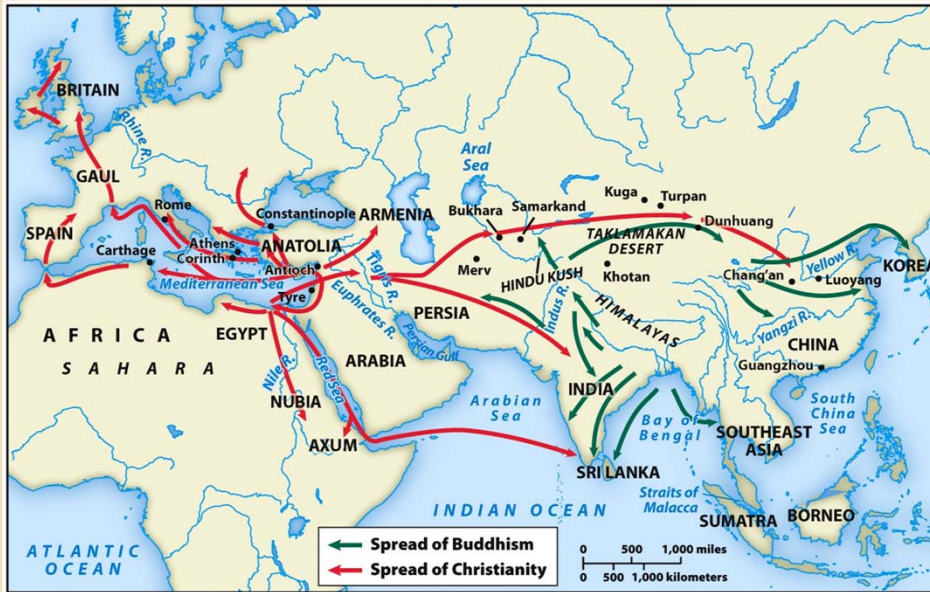
B. The Spread of New Religions

1. New religions after their deaths
2. Paul (10–65 C.E.)
3. Lower social classes and women
4. Non-European Christianity
5. Christianity as a Roman religion

V. The Birth of Christianity... with Buddhist Comparisons

B. The Spread of New Religions

1. New religions after their deaths: While both the Buddha and Jesus wanted to reform Hindu and Jewish traditions, they were not trying to create new religions per se. However, after their death, their followers did exactly this and turned these two teachers into godlike figures.
2. Paul (10–65 C.E.): St. Paul was central to the spread of the Christian faith as he sent out envoys, established churches, and oversaw the rules of this new community of believers.
3. Lower social classes and women: While Paul and others were openly hostile to women in the church, the new faith provided new opportunities for many women in the Roman Empire. Jesus' social message attracted many converts from the lower social orders.
4. Non-European Christianity: While in the modern era Christianity became synonymous with Europe, in its first few centuries, the faith was strongest in Southwest Asia and North Africa with churches, monasteries, and other institutions spread through the Roman infrastructure of cities and roads and beyond into neighboring lands.
5. Christianity as a Roman religion: While the Roman state was initially suspicious of and hostile to the faith's monotheism (seen as a form of atheism in its denial of Roman gods), once Emperor Constantine converted in the early fourth century, the faith soon became a state religion used to forge unity in a diverse empire.



Map 4.1 The Spread of Early Christianity and Buddhism
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V. The Birth of Christianity... with Buddhist Comparisons

C. Institutions, Controversies, and Divisions

1. The exclusion of women from leadership
2. Debates over doctrine and texts
3. Council orthodoxy and expulsion
4. Roman and Greek cultural traditions
5. Diversity in the Buddhist world

V. The Birth of Christianity... with Buddhist Comparisons

C. Institutions, Controversies, and Divisions

1. The exclusion of women from leadership: While in its first few generations Christianity provided many opportunities for women to assume positions of leadership, by the fifth century they were being systematically excluded.
2. Debates over doctrine and texts: The faith was beset by numerous debates about the teachings and nature of Jesus, as well as which texts to include as part of the faith and its practice.
3. Council orthodoxy and expulsion: A series of church councils sought to establish an orthodoxy in regards to teachings, texts, and ritual. Those who did not adhere to what the councils proclaimed would be expelled from the Christian community.
4. Roman and Greek cultural traditions: The Roman empire was characterized by a distinct linguistic and cultural divide between the Latin west and Greek east. This divide influenced the interpretation and practice of the Christian faith, creating a profound distinction that survives until today.
5. Diversity in the Buddhist world: Buddhism also experienced a diversity of traditions and a series of councils that failed to impose unity upon the

faith and its practitioners.

VI. Reflections: Religions and Historians

- A. Secular, evidence based history versus faith**
- B. Change of time in the faith?**
- C. Verifying the divine?**
- D. Schisms within the faiths**

VI. Reflections: Religions and Historians

A. Secular, evidence-based history versus faith: How are historians who use a social scientific method of analysis based on evidence to deal with the mysteries of faith?

B. Change of time in the faith?: What if historical research shows that the faiths have changed over time and may be unlike what they were decades or centuries ago?

B. Verifying the divine?: How can a historian assess one's claim to have encountered God?

C. Schisms within the faiths: If historians give an account of various sides in a religious conflict, do they risk entering the debate?



Visual Source 4.1 Footprints of the Buddha
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Visual Source 4.2 A Gandhara Buddha
The Temptation of Buddha by Mara and His Daughters. India, Gandhara, 100s–200s; gray schist, 73.6 x 57.2 cm. © The Cleveland Museum of Art. Leonard C. Hanna, Jr., Fund 1997.151
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Visual Source 4.3 A Bodhisattva of Compassion: Kannon of 1,000 Arms
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Visual Source 4.4 The Chinese Maitreya Buddha
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