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The Nandimitrāvadāna: a living text from the Buddhist tradition

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English Summary

This dissertation offers a comprehensive treatment of the textual sources of the **Nandimitrāvadāna**, a Buddhist narrative which is deemed an authoritative source for the cult of the Elders or Arhats in Central and East Asia. It is not only the first monographic study of this narrative and its textual history, but also the first systematic disquisition on living texts from the Buddhist tradition, a type of Buddhist texts that seem to lack a stable text-form and a unitary authorship. Putting all the three (i.e., Khotanese, Tibetan, Chinese) versions of the **Nandimitrāvadāna** under philological and historical scrutiny, the dissertation draws attention to the interplay between the fluid text and the cultic practice, and sheds light on the complexity of the tradition as well as the reception of the narrative in various cultural spheres. With the **Nandimitrāvadāna** as a case, the dissertation attempts to tackle methodological issues raised by living texts of that nature and to uncover the mechanism by which these texts have come into being. The conclusions reached may have far-reaching implications for the study of other genres of Buddhist literature, such as Mahāyāna sūtras, apocrypha, etc.