1. The *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Commentary* [T1775] – which I have analyzed in this thesis – is a collective work including three different commentaries authored respectively by Kumārajīva, Sengzhao 僧肇 and Daosheng 道生; each of these has specific features and peculiar points of interest. The materials contained in Kumārajīva’s *Commentary* mainly derive from the Kucheans master’s oral explanation issued during the translation of the sūtra. This *Commentary* constitutes a captivating blend of Indian patterns of oral exposition, Central Asian storytelling and explanation of Sanskrit terms undertaken with Chinese-like philological accuracy. Together, these elements form a consistent exegetical apparatus making it possible to find a viable middle way between the two extremes of the translation practice characterized as “domestication” and “foreignization”.

2. During Kumārajīva’s era the translation of the Buddhist scriptures into Chinese and the orally delivered exegesis formed two sides of the same process. As we know from the sources, large audiences attended the translation ground and were entitled to pose questions to the translator on specific issues related to the text. The clearest evidence of this interactive discussion mode is constituted by a group of ten questions followed by the correspondent answers that have been preserved in Kumārajīva’s *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Commentary*. These materials – which had previously been considered by some scholars as mere rhetorical questions – actually represent requests of explanation raised by members of the audience followed by Kumārajīva’s replies.

3. The exegesis practiced by Kumārajīva and his Chinese assistants needs to be framed in the wider background of the cross-cultural transmission of Indian Buddhism to China. In such context a culturally-oriented stylistic analysis of the exegetical works (including modes of expression, exegetical styles and formats) acquires a particular importance in that it sheds light on some of the mechanisms of cross-cultural transmission of philosophical and religious ideas. The parallel prose style used by Sengzhao in many speculative passages of his *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Commentary* plays an important role in the process of adaptation of the Indian Mādhyamika to philosophical patterns familiar to the Chinese mind.

4. The Chinese exegetes belonging to Kumārajīva’s entourage were all heavily influenced by traditional Chinese culture and often adapted Confucian or Taoist elements to the Buddhist milieu. In his *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Commentary* Sengzhao re-elaborates the figure of “Perfect Man” (zhiren 至人) (which was found earlier in Taoist and Confucian sources) and identifies it with a bodhisattva at the seventh stage of progression or above. The adaptation of this “model of virtue” to the Buddhist philosophical milieu probably relies on Zhi Dun’s 支遁 (314 – 366) previous elaboration.

5. Particularly during the Medieval times, the cultural divide between different regions of China (particularly the areas North and South of the Yangzi river) fostered the development of distinctive exegetical styles and approaches. Even though it incorporates significant elements of the “Northern Learning”, Daosheng’s exegesis of the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* can be considered in style and content as maintaining a typically Southern approach.
6. The development of Chinese Buddhist exegesis was never linear and uniform, e.g. approaches and materials that were discarded by the mainstream exegetical tradition could be rediscovered and valued again during later ages. This is the case with Daoye’s 道液 Jingming jing Guanzhong shu 淨名經集解閩中疏 [T2777] (760), a work that played a key role in the revival of the old-style literal Guanzhong exegesis of the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa during the mid-Tang period after one and a half centuries of oblivion.

7. Careful analysis of the “metadata” contained in a text (e.g. editorial insertions, prefaces, colophons, afterwords, etc.) often provides valuable clues for a more accurate assessment of the origins and nature of the text itself; sometimes it even allows for relevant findings regarding the editorial process and the history of its transmission. The study of the information related in a colophon of the Taishō version of the Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Commentary [T1775] has led to the discovery that under the Northern Song (960 – 1127) the Collective Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Commentary in 10 fascicles “transited through” the Institute for the Translation of the Sūtras (Yi jing yuan 譯經院) – an official institution established at the capital Bianjing 汴京 in the year 980 at the orders of Emperor Taizu 太祖 (r. 960 – 976) – where it was thoroughly collated, transcribed and revised.

8. Starting from the Tang the private libraries played an increasingly important role in the preservation and transmission of scriptures; this was even more so during the Song when, due to the rapid diffusion of printing and the more affordable prices of printed copies, private book collections multiplied. Investigation into the world of private book collectors has led to the finding that the Collective Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Commentary in 10 fascicles made its way from the Institute for the Translation of the Sūtras (Yi jing yuan 譯經院) into the libraries of some high-ranking bibliophile literati of the capital who served as scribes at the Institute.