During the second session (June 25th 2021) of the Summer Sutta Reading Course on *Sabbâsavasuttṇṇanā* run by Santavana Monastery, USA, Acariya Kaiyin mentioned what language the Buddha might have used and the origin of Pāli. Query was then put to Maha Thera Bhikkhu Bodhi by Dr. Po-Hui Chuang. In response, Bhikkhu Bodhi referred to the relevant paragraphs in the 1997 scholarly work by K. R. Norman. Key information is translated below.

在美國寂靜禪舍夏季讀經班《一切漏經注》第二堂課 (June 25th 2021)中，開印阿闍梨談到有關於佛陀使用什麼語言及巴利語的淵源。博蕙老師請教大長老菩提比丘有關於佛陀所使用的語言。回覆中，菩提比丘提供 K. R. Norman1997 年的學術著作相關段落做為參考資料。關鍵資料翻譯如下。

Norman, K. R. "Buddhism and Regional Dialects." *A Philosophical Approach to Buddhism: The Bukkyō Denduō Kyōkai Lectures 1994*, The Buddhist Forum, vol. 5, London, SOAS, University of London, 1997, pp. 59–76.

K. R. Norman was President of the Pali Text Society from 1981 to 1994.

K. R. Norman 在 1981-1994 年間為巴利聖典協會會長。

We need then have no doubt that the MIA dialects had been formed, and were in use during the time when the Buddha was teaching, but we have little knowledge about the dialect geography of the fifth century B.C.E. If we ask: ''What was the language of the Buddha?'', then we have to admit that we do not know for certain what language or languages the Buddha spoke.

故我們無須懷疑中古印度雅利安語早在佛陀之前就已形成，在佛陀教化的當代也仍然被使用，但我們對此方言在公元前五世紀的地理位置所知甚少。若我們問：「佛陀所用的語言為何?」我們必須承認我們並沒有確切知道佛陀說哪一個或哪幾個語言。(61)

It therefore seems very likely that the Buddha's sermons were preached in a non-Sanskritic language, i.e. a Prakrit, and from the fact that he moved about preaching in various places we can assume that he preached in a number of dialects, varying his language to suit his audience. Much of his teaching life was spent in Magadha…. We can therefore assume that on some occasions, at least, he used the Magadhan dialect of the time, which we may call Old Māgadhī. (61-62)

似乎很有可能佛陀的傳道是用非梵語宣說，也就是俗語；且從他多方遊化宣說的事實看來，我們可以假設他用數種方言宣教，他變化語言以適應其聽眾。他教化的多數時間是在摩羯陀國…。故我們可以假設至少在一些場合，他是用當時的摩羯陀語，我們姑且稱之為古摩羯陀語。(61-62)

This belief might appear to be supported by the fact that the Pāli commentarial tradition tells us that the Buddha's language was Māgadhī. Unfortunately the commentators use this name about the form of the canon which they had before them, i.e. the language which we call Pāli, and as we can be quite certain that Pāli is not Māgadhī, we have to examine carefully just what they meant when they said this. It is probable that they believed that the Buddha spoke the words as they were in the canon, i.e. in Pāli, and as they knew he lived and uttered the words in Magadha, they believed that Pāli was Māgadhī. 這個信念表面上可以從巴利注釋傳統告訴我們「佛陀的語言是摩羯陀語」找到支持。可惜的是，注釋師用這個詞來指涉在他們眼前〔所見〕的聖典形式，即我們稱之為巴利的語言，而因為我們可以相當確定巴利語並非摩

羯陀語，所以我們得仔細檢視他們說這話時所指的究竟是甚麼。有可能他們相信佛陀所說的話語跟聖典中的一致，也就是用巴利語；又因為他們知道佛陀住在摩羯陀國，那些話是在摩羯陀國說的，故他們相信巴利語就是摩羯陀語。(62)

We do not know precisely the form which Māgadhī had at the time of the Buddha. We can deduce to some extent what form that dialect had at the time of Aśoka, and we know what the grammarians writing some centuries later said were the characteristics of the dialect. Extrapolating from this, we can gain what we may regard as a fairly accurate idea of the main features of that dialect at the time when the Buddha was teaching. Its main characteristics would have been: 1 for r, palatal ś for all sibilants, -e as the nominative singular ending.

我們並不確切知道佛陀時代的摩羯陀語的型態。我們可以在某一定程度上推斷出它在阿育王時代的型態，也知道幾世紀之後文法學家的寫作中說該方言有何特色。由此推斷，我們對該方言在佛陀教化時期的主要特徵可以得到一個算是準確的概念。它的主要特徵會是：l 替代 r；顎音 ś 替代所有齒擦音；-e 作為主格單數的字尾。(62)

If this is correct, then … the language of the Theravādin canon which we have is certainly not Māgadhī. That would indicate that the language has been translated on at least one occasion, presumably to meet the needs of the situation. As Buddhism moved from the land of its origin into areas where different dialects or languages were spoken, and as those dialects or languages developed and changed over the course of time, it would seem to be inevitable that some sort of translation process was needed if the Buddha's teaching was not to become unintelligible to those to whom it was preached. Are there any traces of this？Yes, there are. If we analyse the language of the Theravādin canon, i.e. the language which we call Pāli, we can see that for the most part it has features which we would class as western, using this in a linguistic rather than a geographical sense, since we find eastern forms in the version of the Aśokan inscriptions in the West at Sopārā. Nevertheless, we can detect anomalous forms in it, i.e. forms which do not seem to follow the western patterns of phonology and morphology of the language. Some of these have features which are more appropriate to Sanskrit, e.g. consonant groups containing -r-, and the absolutives in –tvā. Disregarding these for a moment, we can see that there still remain a number of other anomalous forms. There are forms with eastern kkh where we should expect western cch, e.g. bhikkhu and bhikkhunī; forms with 1 where we should expect r, e.g. verbs with the prefix pali- instead ofpari-; forms with -e where we should expect -o, e.g. bhikkhave instead of bhikkhavo, and also some nominative singular endings in -e, instead of -0; examples of the voicing of consonants, e.g. yādeti; forms with intervocalic *y* instead of k or *t;* forms with j where we should expect y, e.g. jantāghara; dental n instead of retroflex ṇ, e.g. in nibbāna; v where we should expect y, e.g. āvuso from the noun āyu(s); and a small group of words where a consonant group including a nasal has developed in an unexpected way, e.g. nt > nd, nd > nn and mb > mm.

如果這是對的，那麼…我們今存的上座部聖典所用的語言就絕非摩羯陀語。這就表示這語言至少曾一度是〔從其他語言〕翻譯過來，可想而知是為了適應當時情況。當佛教從發源地傳到其他說不同語言或方言的地方，而那些地方的語言或方言隨時間發展流變，若要佛陀教法不變成讓聽眾難以理解，一些翻譯的過程似乎是無法避免的。此中是否有些蛛絲馬跡?是，有的。若我們分析上座部聖典，即我們稱作巴利的語言，我們可見大部分它有我們歸類為西部的的特色，這是就語言上而非地理上的意義而說，因為我們可以在西部〔小城鎮〕Sopārā〔找到的〕阿育王石碑的這個版本中找到東部〔方言〕的型態。不過，我們可以在當中偵測到不規則的形式，亦即是不遵循西部語言的聲韻

及語源模式。此中有些特徵較符合梵文，例如含有-r-的子音群，及-tvā 的絕對分詞（absolutives）。先不管這些，我們可以看到還是有一些其他不規則形式。有些形式東部用 kkh 在西部我們會認為該是 cch，比如 bhikkhu 及 bhikkhunī；有些形式我們覺得應是 r 卻出現 l，比如動詞接頭詞是 pali-而非 pari-；有些形式用-e 而我們覺得應是-o，比如以 bhikkhave 取代 bhikkhavo，還有主格單數字尾是-e 而非-o；還有子音的發聲 yādeti；有些形式用半母音 y 取代 k 或 t；有些形式我們覺得該是 y 的卻用 j，比如 jantāghara；用齒音的 n 而非反舌的 ṇ，比如 nibbāna；我們覺得該是 y 的卻用 v，比如從 āyu(s)這名詞來的 āvuso；還有一小群字裡，有一些子音夾帶鼻音有了意外的發展，比如 nt 變成 nd，nd 變成 nn，而 mb 變成 mm。(62-63)

It is generally agreed that these are dialect forms, from one or more dialects, and they may be regarded as being remnants of dialects through which the Buddhavacana was transmitted before it was translated into the language which we find in the Theravādin canon, i.e. Pali. (63)
普遍都同意這些是來自一個或多個方言的方言形式，而他們可以被視作是佛所說法在被翻譯成上座部聖典所用的語言——亦即：巴利——之前，流通時所使用的方言殘留的痕跡。(63)

But Pāli is an abbreviation of pāli-bhāsā, which means the language of the pāli, i.e. the texts, or the canon. It follows, then, that every feature of the language of those texts, however strange, and however inconsistent with the rest of the language of the texts, is Pāli. We can define it, if we wish, as a western dialect with some eastern features, although this in itself is a matter for debate … but it would, technically, be incorrect to talk about these possible eastern features as anomalous forms. It is even more incorrect to call them non-Pāli forms. Nevertheless, I must call them something in the course of my discussion about what to call them, so I shall in general call them "anomalous" or sometimes "eastern", and when I want to stress that the Pāli being used is free from such eastern forms, I shall call it western. (63)
然而巴利 Pāli 其實是 pāli-bhāsā 的縮寫，pāli-bhāsā 意為 pāli 的語言，pāli 亦即是那些經典，或說聖典。準此，所有那些文獻所用的語言當中的每一個特徵，不管如何奇特或與文獻其他地方的語言不一致之處，都是巴利 Pāli。如果想要，我們可將之定義為一個具有一些東部特徵的西部方言，雖然這本身有爭議性，但將這些可能是東部特徵說成是不規則形式，嚴格說來就不正確了。若將它們稱作非巴利形式，那就更加不正確了。不過我在討論該怎麼稱呼它們的過程中，總得要給它們一個稱呼，所以大體上我稱之為「不規則」或有時候稱作「東部」，而當我想強調沒有這些東部形式的巴利文，我就以西部來稱呼它。(63)

The presence of these anomalous forms in the Theravadin canon was, of course, noticed a long time ago, and their value as indicators of an earlier form of the Buddhavacana has been much studied and debated. …. Why they were retained from an earlier version, and what conclusions can we draw from their retention？ (63)
上座部經典中有這些不規則形式當然在老早就被注意到，它們可作為佛陀教法更早期（被流傳的）形式的指標的價值是常被研究與辯論的。為何這些不規則形式會從更早的版本存留下來，而我們又能從它們的存留做出甚麼結論？(63)

If these anomalous forms are remnants of dialects through which the Buddhavacana was transmitted, then our task is to identify the dialects and the areas in which they were used, in the belief that this will give information about the regions of North India through which Buddhism spread. The problem is to see

whether our anomalous forms exhibit any of the characteristic features of any of the dialects about which we have knowledge, in the hope that this will tell us about the regions through which the texts, or parts of them, were transmitted. To guide us in our search we have two main aids: the inscriptions found in India, from the time of Aśoka onwards, and the statements of the grammarians. Both sources are to some extent unreliable, and in any case refer to a time later than the Buddha. … the belief of some that the Buddha's death is to be dated c. 400 B.C.E. This means that the Aśokan inscriptions are about 150 years after that date, and so we have to allow that much time for linguistic change, and we have to accept that the Aśokan inscriptions cannot be entirely satisfactory as a guide to earlier dialects and dialect forms. Furthermore, although we can surmise that Aśoka intended his inscriptions to be carved in the dialects appropriate to each site, there is clear evidence that this was not always done. (64)

若這些不規則形式是佛陀教法被流傳的幾種方言的殘跡，那我們的工作則是要去識別這些方言在哪些區域使用，相信這將會給我們一些關於那些佛教傳布的北印度地區的訊息。問題點在於要看我們這些不規則形式是否展現一些我們已經知道的方言的特色，希望這樣能夠告訴我們那些經典或經典的某些部分，是在何處流傳。有兩個主要助緣可導引我們的探詢工作：在印度找到從阿育王時代開始的碑文，以及文法學家的敘述。兩個來源都有某種程度的不可信度，且不論如何，它們屬於佛世之後。...有些人相信佛滅大概在公元前 400 年。這表示阿育王石碑大約在〔佛滅〕之後 150 年，故我們得容許這麼一段時間所起的語言變化，也必須接受阿育王石碑不能全然令人滿意地作為早期方言及方言形式的指南。再者，雖然我們可以推測阿育王要他的石碑用每個當地的方言刻出，但有清楚的證據顯示並非總是被落實。(64)

The grammarians were writing many centuries later, from the fifth century C.E. onwards, when the dialects had, in any case, been standardised by being used for literary purposes, especially in the dramas, although a literary dialect or language very often represents a fossilised version of a language used as a vernacular long before, and so may retain very old features. As a third aid, there is also the information which can be gained from Jain texts, which underwent the same type of language changes as the Buddhist texts, i.e. different dialects were used as Jainism spread.(64)

文法學家在好幾世紀之後，即公元五世紀開始寫的，不論如何，那時方言早已因作文學用途而被標準化，特別是在戲劇，雖然文學方言或語言常代表一個老早就被當作方言使用的僵化版語言，因而會保留很古老的特徵。第三個助緣是從耆那教經典可得到的一些訊息，因為它們也經歷與佛教經典一樣的語言改變，亦即是：不同方言在耆那教傳播中也被運用。 (64)

Nevertheless, we can, to some extent, use Jain texts to help with the identification of the dialects of Buddhist texts, and vice versa.

不過就某種程度上，我們可以透過耆那教文獻幫助鑑定佛教文獻的方言，反之亦然。(64)

There would, however, have been certain items which remained unchanged: 1) words which had a specific sanctity attached to them because they were regarded as technical or semi-technical terms, and were therefore, despite the air of strangeness which they must have presented, too important to change; 2) words which had no equivalent in the receiving dialect, and which therefore had to be retained; **3)** words retained by an oversight. (65)

然而翻譯過程中，某些項目並沒有更動: 1) 有特別神聖意義的字，因為它們被視作專業或半專業性的詞彙，故即便看起來奇怪，它們太重要而不能改變；2)在接受語言(目標語)當中沒有對等者，故須

保留原狀；3)因疏忽而保留原狀。(65)

The accuracy of such a translation process depended on the knowledge and ability of the translator. (65)
如此翻譯的過程的正確性 端賴譯者的知識與能力。(65)

Translator 中譯者: 禪曦比丘尼