When gone is the yod-a…
Regular loss of **^{j} in Tamangic (West Bodish)

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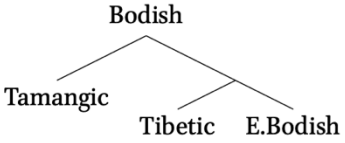
High-level overview

- The internal division of the Bodish subgroup into East Bodish and West Bodish (≈Tamangic) is a generally-accepted working hypothesis (Shafer 1953, Benedict 1972, Bradley 1993, Matisoff 2003, a.o.), but is so far not well substantiated with evidence from regular sound change.



- Differential reflexes of proto-Bodish **^{j} is a promising candidate for a sound law that distinguishes WBod from the rest: **WBod has regularly lost two kinds of **^{j}**, which Tibetic and EBod preserve, each in a different pattern.

Case study: Houghton's Law cognates in WBod. *versus* Tibetic + EBod.

Languages, branches, notational conventions & data sources

West Bodish (Bradley 1997)	WBod	≈Tamang-ish/Tamang-ic
▪ Tamang (Risianku)	Tmg_{ris}	Mazaudon (1994)
▪ Gurung (Ghachok)	Gur_{gha}	Glover et al. (1976)
Gurung (Sikleś)	Gur_{sik}	fieldwork project @ ELA New York, see Ronkos (2020)
▪ Manange	Mng	Hildebrandt (2004)
Occasionally:		
Manange (Prakaa)	Mng_{pra}	Hildebrandt (2004) citing Hoshi (1986)
▪ Thakali (Tukche)	$Thak_{tuk}$	Mazaudon (1994) citing Hari (1969) & Hale (1973)
Thakali (Marpha)	$Thak_{mar}$	Mazaudon (1994) citing Mazaudon (1973, 1978)
Tibetic		≈ "Tibetan varieties" descending from Old Tibetan
▪ Written Tibetan	WT	Hill (2010a) (lexicon of Tibetan verbs)

Old/pre-Tibetan is transliterated using Hill's (2019) system. Note that <ṅ> = [ŋ].
Two-letter abbreviations for particular WT lexicographical sources [i.e. published dictionaries] from Hill (2010a) are occasionally used.

East Bodish	EBod	≈ Group of Bodish languages in E. Bhutan, W. Arunachal see Bodt (2023)
▪ Kurtöp	Kur	mainly Hyslop et al. (2022)
Occasionally on other EBod languages		Donohue (2021)
Chinese & Burmese data	Chn., Bur.	Hill (2019)

Single asterisk *	reconstructions of lower-level subgroups: Old/pre-Tibetan, pEBod, pWBod
Double asterisk **	reconstruction of proto-Bodish (pBod)

1. BACKGROUND: HOUGHTON'S LAW

In Tibetic, many palatal nasal initials *ñ* [ɲ] are secondary. In particular, a subset of *ñ* results from palatalization of pre-Tib. ***ṅ**^{y} **[ŋ^{j}]**.

- This pattern is established in early comparative work between Written Tibetan (WT) and Chinese/Burmese (Hill 2019 citing Houghton 1898, Benedict 1939), with a constrained set of comparanda.
  - Where Tib. shows a palatal nasal initial *ñ*, OChn. and Bur. cognates reflect the proto-velar initial ŋ.
  - Analysis: there was a pST palatalization, *^{j}, which is only preserved in Tibetan, and lost in Chinese and Burmese.

Table 1: "Original" comparanda for Houghton's Law (Hill 2019:§27)

a. Bodish-external	b. Tibetic + EBod.
Bur. ငါး ***ṅāḥ** Chi. 魚 *ngjo* < *ŋa	Tib. ཉ *ña* < *ṅ^{y}a 'fish' Kurtöp *ɲa* 'fish' < **ŋ^{j}a
Bur. ငှား ***ṅhāḥ** 'borrow'	Tib. བརྙ *brña* < *brṅ^{y}a 'lend, borrow' Kurtöp *ɲu* 'borrow' < **brŋ^{j}a
Chi. 齦 *ngjɨn* < *ŋə[n]	Tib. རྙིལ *rñil*~སྙིལ *sñil* < *rṅ^{y}il/*sṅ^{y}il 'gums' Kurtöp *'nê* 'gums' (conflicting) < **{r/s}ŋ^{j}il
Bur. ***ṅanḥ** 'poisonous snake'	Tib. གཉན་པོ *gñan-po* 'antidote; opponent force' < *gṅ^{y}an 'pestilence' < **g-ŋ^{j}an or much rather, ངན *ṅan* 'evil, harm' (see Bodt 2023) < **ŋan

- Hill (2019), furnishing additional data on this original "core" set of comparanda from non-Tibetic EBod languages, mainly Kurtöp, concludes that *ŋ^{j} > *ɲ* must have occurred at an EBod-wide level (though with a flourish).
- Hill (2010b, 2019) dubs this sound change *ŋ^{j} > *ɲ* **Houghton's Law**.

AS A TIB+EBOD SOUND CHANGE. Hill sees Houghton's Law as a "Bodish"-level sound change, though he was only able to base it on Tibetic + EBod data.

2. WBOD COGNATES TO THE "ORIGINAL" HOUGHTON'S-LAW FORMS [CLASS 1a]

Overwhelmingly, WBod cognates of **Houghton's-Law forms** show a velar nasal initial ŋ (and a comparable vowel), **without palatalization**.

****ŋ$^{j}_{1a}$a**

Tib. ཉ *ña* < *ṅ^{y}a 'fish'

- Kur. *ɲa* 'fish'
- Tmg$_{ris}$ *^{2}ta:rŋa* 'fish', Gur$_{gha}$ *^{2}tãga* 'fish' < *^{B}ta:r-ŋa 'white-fish'

- cf. Bur. *ṅāḥ*, Chi. 魚 *ngjo* < *ŋa (01–31a)

**brŋ$^{j}_{1a}$a

Tib. བརྙ་ *brña* < *brṅʸa ‘borrow’

- Kur. *ɲu* ‘borrow & return’
- Tmg$_{ris}$ ^{1}***ŋan*** ‘borrow’, Gur$_{gha}$ ^{1}***ŋʌẽ*** ‘lend (a durable item)’, Thak$_{mar}$ ***ŋʌn***^{44} ‘borrow’, Mng ^{1}***ŋjeN*** ‘lend, borrow’, Mng$_{pra}$ ^{3}***ŋjẽ*** < *^{A}ŋ̥an ‘lend/borrow’
- Bur. ငှား *ṅhāḥ* ‘borrow’

**{r/s}ŋ$^{j}_{1a}$il

Tib. རྙིལ་ *rñil* / སྙིལ་ *sñil* < *rṅʸil / *sṅʸil ‘gums’

- Kur. *’nê* ‘gums’
- Tmg$_{ris}$ ^{3}***ŋil*** ‘gums’, Gur$_{gha}$ ^{3}***ŋe*** ‘gums’ though Tmg$_{tag}$ ^{1}*nil* ‘gums’,
  The etymology of Mng *ɲérke~jérke* seems to be a bit more obscure.
  < *^{A}ŋil ‘gums, palate’
- Chi. 齦 ***ngjin*** < *ŋə[n]

~~**g-ŋ$^{j}_{1a}$an~~

~~Tib. གཉན་པོ་ *gñan-po* ‘antidote; opponent force’ < *gṅʸan ‘pestilence’~~

- ~~N/A~~
- ~~N/A~~
- ~~cf. Bur. *ṅanḥ* ‘poisonous snake’~~

<u>Impression</u>: whereas Tib. preserves ** ʲ—thus leading to the positing of Houghton’s Law,

- EBod. **tends to preserve** ** ʲ in Hougton’s-Law forms, with one exception (Kur *’nê* ‘gums’).
- WBod **regularly loses** ** ʲ in Houghton’s-Law forms

3. MAIN PLOT: DIFFERENT ** ʲ ’S, DIFFERENT FATES

If one puts WBod into the picture and look more exhaustively for cognates involving velar ŋ vs. palatal ɲ, **four** correspondence classes eventually emerge.

Table 2: Overview—four correspondence classes pertaining to pBod ** ʲ

EBod	Tib.	WBod	Class	Representative example	Complete list of datapoints
j	j	Ø	**1a**	**ŋ$^{j}_{1a}$a ‘fish’	§2 i.e. the original Houghton’s-Law comparanda *n=2.5*
		j	**1b**	**ŋ$^{j}_{1b}$an ‘listen’	§3.2.2 *n=1+*
Ø	j	Ø	**2a**	**ŋ$^{j}_{2a}$am ‘feel, experience’	§3.1 *n=4*
		j	**2b**	**ŋ$^{j}_{2b}$o ‘look~buy’	§3.2.1 *n=1+*

*3.1. LOSS OF **ʲ IN WBOD AND EBOD* [CLASS 2a]

Looking beyond the "original" Houghton's Law forms, one finds quite a few other cognates showing loss of **ʲ in WBod **AND in EBod**.

****ŋʲ$_{2a}$am**

Tib. *s-ñam* 'think, consider, imagine, wonder, want < *cause (oneself) to experience', *ñam-s* 'feeling, experience, visionary experience' < * ṅʸam 'to feel, experience'[1]

- Kur *'ŋam* 'wonder'
- Tmg$_{ris}$ ^{3}*ŋam* 'experience (happiness or misfortune) > believe; be too salty', Gur$_{gha}$ ^{3}*ŋã*, Gur$_{sik}$ ^{3}*ŋa* 'want to, feel'

Kur *'ŋ* regularly reflects **s-ṅ, as e.g. *'ŋa-ma* 'previous', *'ŋa-ba* 'early', Tib. *sṅa*. Note that this is in spite of Dzongkha: Dz. *he-ma* 'early' (Tib. *sṅan-ma*), *ha-sa* 'early' (Tib. *sṅa-sa*)

****g-ŋʲ$_{2a}$e-n**

Tib. *gñen* 'relative, kinsman, companion' < *g-ṅʸe-n

- Kur. *'ŋen* 'partner, spouse'
- Gur$_{gha}$ ^{1}*ŋẽ-mʌẽ* 'relatives not of the same lineal family'
  Gurung *-mʌẽ* is the human plural suffix.

The Tib. form contains nominalization prefix g- and suffix -n (see e.g. Jacques 2019); the underived root *ṅʸe > *ñe* 'near, close' is therefore also identifiable as a Houghton's-Law root.

That Tib. *gñen* should be the cognate form of Gurung ^{1}*ŋẽ* is supported on both the preinitial and the coda fronts. Gurung tone 1 shows that the pWBod nasal initial must be voiceless *ŋ̊, which would correspond well with the presence of a preinitial in the Tib. form *gñen.* (If the Tib. had no preinitial, then pWBod would most likely attest a voiced *ŋ initial.) On the other hand, the nasal vowel *ẽ* in Gurung is evidence of a pWBod nasal final, which Tib. *gñen* also corroborates.

****ŋʲ$_{2a}$iŋ~ ŋʲ$_{2a}$eŋ**

Tib. *sñeṅ* 'be afraid' < *s-ṅʸeṅ *'cause to be afraid'; *ṅʸeṅ 'be afraid'

- Gur$_{gha}$ ^{3}*ŋĩ*, Gur$_{sik}$ ^{3}*ŋi*, 'be frightened, afraid' Thak$_{tuk}$ ^{3}*ŋin*, Mng ^{2}*ŋiN-pʌ* 'frightening, scary$_{adj}$', though Mng$_{pra}$ ^{2}*ŋji* 'fearful, cowardly'

The WT form contains a preinitial *s* but is apparently intransitive/unagentive. Considering regular correspondence between Tib. unpreinitialed voiced onsets with pWBod tone A voiced onsets, the pre-Tib. comparandum is here identified as *ṅʸeṅ, while *s- is identified as the causative prefix. The erstwhile transitive verb would then have undergone secondary intransitivization in Tib; this is supported by a number of lexicographic glosses: DK glosses *sñeṅ* as transitive 'to frighten, fear, cause to be afraid'; DS glosses it as 'to produce fear', and explicitly indicates it as "archaic."

[1] For this form Hill (2019:§208c, 219e) cites Chn. 恁 *nyimX* < *nəmʔ as a cognate. It should be noted that this Chinese form has a dental initial, which does not reflect to the velar initial as attested in Bodish. This correspondence is thus different from the 'fish' correspondence, where Chinese *does* reflect the velar initial.

****{r/s}ŋ$^{j}_{2a}$ok**

Tib. *rñog~sñog* 'to stir up, cause to be disorderly'; *ñog* 'to be muddy, disorderly, disarrayed'

- Kur. *'ŋot* 'shake$_{tr}$'
- Tmg$_{ris}$ ^{1}*ŋo:* 'tease, tickle'

The long vowel in the Tamang form straightforwardly points to a pWBod final *-k. The final *-t* in Kur. can possibly be explained as a reflex of a final **-s or **-t, comparable e.g. to in the past stem of the Tib. *brnog-s / bsñog-s*. Final -s being reflected as *-t* is not uncommon in Kurtöp or in EBod more generally: compare Kur *nat* 'put down, with Tib. *g-nas* 'stay, settle down'; or Chamkhar *nat* 'barley', Ura *nat* 'millet' versus Trongsa *nas* 'barley, wheat', Ura *nas* 'black barley', Kur. *nas-phi* 'barley flour' with Tib. *nas* 'barley'.

*3.2. RETENTION OF **j IN WBOD* [CLASS b]

In a non-trivial set of cases, where Tib. shows a palatalized initial *ñ,* WBod **retains** palatalization, i.e. WBod cognates show velar initial *ŋ* and a comparable vowel**, BUT ALSO a palatal medial *j***.

3.2.1. RETENTION IN WBOD, LOSS IN EBOD [CLASS 1b]

****ŋ$^{j}_{1b}$an**

Tib. *ñan* < *ṅ$^{y}_{1}$an 'listen'

- Kur *ɲan* 'listen, agree'
- Tmg$_{ris}$ ^{1}*ŋjan* 'listen to, pay attention, obey, be persuaded', Gur$_{gha}$ ^{1}*ŋe* 'obey', Mng ^{1}*ŋjeN-pʌ* 'listen'

3.2.2. RETENTION IN WBOD, RETENTION IN EBOD [CLASS 2b]

****ŋ$^{j}_{2b}$o**

Tib. *ño* < *ṅ$^{y}_{2}$o 'buy' < 'look, look intently, examine'

- Kur *ŋwi* 'buy' < *ŋo-s 'buy-PST'
- Gur$_{gha}$ ^{3}*ŋjo*, Gur$_{sik}$ ^{3}*ŋgjo*, 'look at; look after, care for, seek, divine'; Mng ^{3}*ŋjo* 'look; taste, test, try out', though Mng$_{pra}$ ^{2}*ŋjo* < pWBod * ^{B}ŋjo

The semantic shift of the etymon *ṅ^{y}o from 'look at, look intently, examine' to 'buy' is a Tibetic innovation. Though no longer identifiable with the etymon *ṅ^{y}o, this shift is substantiated by the H-register verb *gzig* '(hon.) look at; buy', which is the H variant of both *lta* 'to look at' and *ño* 'to buy'.

3.2.3. RETENTION IN WBOD, STATUS INDETERMINATE IN EBOD [CLASS 1b/2b]

Four more datapoints show retention of **^{j} in WBod, but remain indeterminate on the EBod side, because I do not have the EBod cognates.

**** ŋ$^{j}_{1b/2b}$a**

Tib. *ña* < *ṅ^{y}a 'full moon' —in compounds such as *zla-ba ña-rgyas*, *zla-ba ña-gaṅ* 'full moon'

- Tmg$_{ris}$ ^{3}*ŋja* 'full moon; *purne*'

**** ŋ$^{j}_{1b/2b}$al**

Tib. *ñal* 'lie down, rest' < *ṅ^{y}al

- Tmg_{ris} $^{2/4}$*ŋja-se* 'evening', Gur_{sik} ^{4}*ŋge-sʌ* 'evening', though Gur_{gha} ^{2}*nesʌ*

The vowel *e* in Gursik suggests the presence of a coronal coda in pWBod which would condition the fronting of *a>*e*. This is straightforwardly corroborated by the Tmg_{ris} form.

**** ŋ$^{j}_{1b/2b}$am**

Tib. *ñam* 'physical strength' < *ṅ^{y}am

- Tmg_{ris} ^{3}*ŋjam* 'to get along well (*s'entendre bien*)', Gur_{gha} ^{3}*ŋjã* 'good physical condition'

**** ŋ$^{j}_{1b/2b}$al**

Tib. *ñil* 'be dessicated, crumble away/fall apart'; *sñil* 'to destroy, crush, fragment' < *s-*ṅ^{y}il < *s-ṅ^{y}al?

- Tmg_{ris} ^{1}*ŋjal* ~ ^{2}*ŋil* 'pound into powder', ^{1}*ŋjal*~^{1}*ŋjat* 'chew, ruminate'; Gur_{gha} *1ŋe* 'chew'; Mng ^{1}*ŋje* 'chew'

3.3. ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

Current analysis: posit four different ** ^{j} 's.

- Hill (2019:§219) already posits * ^{y1} and * ^{y2} for Tib+EBod:
  * ^{y1} conditions palatalization in both Tib. and EBod
  * ^{y2} conditions palatalization in Tib. only.
- With WBod in the scene, * ^{y1} and * ^{y2} each bifurcates, creating 4 correspondence classes.

Table 3: Four different **j 's in pBod

*pTib+EBod (Hill 2019)	EBod	Tib.	WBod	**pBod	Representative example	Complete list of datapoints
* y_1	j	j	Ø	** j_{1a}	****ŋ$^{j}_{1a}$a** 'fish'	§2 i.e. the original Houghton's-Law comparanda *n=2.5*
			j	** j_{1b}	****ŋ^{j1b}an** 'listen'	§3.2.2 *n=1+*
* y_2	Ø	j	Ø	** j_{2a}	****ŋ^{j2a}am** 'feel, experience'	§3.2.1 *n=1+*
			j	** j_{2b}	****ŋ^{j2b}o** 'look~buy'	§3.1 *n=4*

Conclusion:

WBod has regularly preserved the *a*-class, and regularly lost the *b*-class, *whereas* EBod has regularly preserved the 1-class, and regularly lost the 2-class, Tib. has preserved both the 1/2-classes and the *a*/*b*-classes.

Outstanding questions:

- Are any of the four **^{j} 's collapsible? = Is there further phonological conditioning?

- Observation:
  Class-b contains the vowels **{a, o}**
  Class-a contains the vowels **{a, o, e, i}** [2]
- Problem:
  Vowel {a, o} straddles classes a & b.
- Guess:
  Front vs. back distinction? **[^{j}a] = **$^{j}_{a}$a vs. **[^{j}ɑ] = **$^{j}_{b}$a ?

4. SOME DIACHRONIC IMPLICATIONS

4.1. PALATALIZATION OF OTHER INITIALS

By and large, WBod has **not** undergone palatalization-conditioned sound changes targeting other initials: l, r, t, s.

- Explanation: WBod's loss of **^{j} **preempts** these palatalization-conditioned sound changes.

Table 4: Tib. and/or EBod sound changes preempted by loss of **^{j} in WBod

Tib/EBod sound change	Tib/EBod examples	WBod comparanda
a. *l^{j}, r^{j} > *ź* (Benedict's Law, Tibetic-only)	Tib. བཞི་ *bźi* < *bl^{j}i 'four' Kur *ble*	Tmg$_{ris}$, Gur$_{gha}$, etc. ^{4}***pli*** 'four'
	Tib. ཞིམ་ *źim* < *l^{j}im 'tasty' Kur *lem*	Gur$_{gha}$ ^{2}***lĩ*** 'fragrant, tasty', Thak$_{tuk}$ ^{2}***lim*** 'fragrant'
	Tib. ཞེ་ *źe* < *l^{j}e 'much, excessive'	Tmg$_{ris}$ ^{3}***le:*** '(for crops) to grow thick-set', Gur$_{gha}$ ^{3}***le*** 'many, a lot'
	Tib. ཟག་ *źag* < *r^{j}ak 'day'	Gur$_{sik}$ -***ro*** 'd`ay (classifier)'
b. *t^{j}, *s^{j} > *č*, *ś* (Hill 2019:§15, Tibetic-only)	Tib. ཤིག་ *śig* < *s^{j}ik 'louse' cf. Kur *se*	Gur$_{gha}$ ^{2}***se*** 'louse'
	Tib. ཤིང་ *śiṅ* < *s^{j}iŋ 'tree' Kur *seng*	Tmg$_{ris}$ ^{2}***siŋ*** 'wood, firewood', Gur$_{gha}$ ^{2}***sĩ*** 'tree, wood', etc.
	Tib. གཅིག་ *gčig* < *g**t^{j}***ek 'one' Kur *thê*	Tmg$_{ris}$ ***ti***, Thak$_{tuk}$ ^{H}***ti*** 'one'
c. *rl^{j} > *rǰ* (Jacques 2004; EBod)	Tib. རྗེ་ *rǰe* < *rl^{j}e 'exchange, barter' Tib. རྗེ་ *rǰe* < *rl^{j}e 'lord' Tib. བརྗེད་ *brǰed* < *mrl^{j}et 'forget'	Thak$_{mar}$ ***li***^{55}, Thak$_{syang}$ ***li***^{11} 'buy' Tmg$_{ris}$ ^{4}***kle*** 'king' Tmg$_{ris}$ ^{2}***mlet***, Gur$_{gha}$ ^{2}***mli*** 'forget'

[2] Although consider that there is only example of o in Class-a: **{r/s}ŋ$^{j}_{2a}$**ok** , Tib. *(r/s)ñog*, and that a Tibetan (Bodish) vowel *o* could be secondary, with a diphthongic origin at a higher level, notably ***aw *or* ***ew: see e.g. Hill's (2019:§22) comparison of Tib. *ñog-ñoṅ* 'soft, tender' with Chn. 嫩 *nyak* < *newk (17-09a).

	Tib. རྗེས་ *rǰes* < *r**l**jes ‘afterward’	Tmg$_{ris}$ ^{1}***l**i-cha*, Gur$_{sik}$ ^{1}***l**i* ‘after’

4.2. NUMERAL ‘2’

WBod shows variable reflexes of the initial in numeral ‘2’ (ŋ~n).

- Possible explanation: *two* regular sound changes

****gn^{j}is**

> Proto-WBod ***gn**is

> (some pre-modern WBod) **ŋ**is

> (other pre-modern WBod) **n**is

- Interestingly, this would demonstrate that the **serial contamination** involving a velar preinitial *g on the numeral ‘2’ dates back at least to proto-Bodish.

4.3. MEDIAL *j AND LI FANG-KUEI’S LAW: NUMERALS ‘8’ AND ‘100’ IN WBOD

Medial *j (NOTE: different from *^{j}, as argued by Li F.K. 1959:59), also displays complete loss in WBod.

****brjat**	****brja:/brjaɦ/brjaɣ**
Tib. *b**rgy**ad* ‘8’ < *br**y**at	Tib. *b**rgy**aḥ* ‘100’ < *br**y**aḥ
Tmg$_{ris}$ ^{4}*prat*, Gur$_{gha}$, Gur$_{sik}$ ^{4}*pre*, Mng ^{4}*phre*	Gur$_{gha}$, Gur$_{sik}$ ^{4}*pra*, Mng ^{4}*phrʌ*
< pWBod *^{B}brat	< pWBod *^{B}bra

- Possible explanation: WBod merged **j and **^{j} before undergoing loss of *^{j}$_{b}$, i.e.

****rj >* r^{j} > *r**

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