

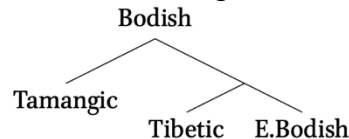
When gone is the yod-a...
Regular loss of **j in Tamangic (West Bodish)

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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 (Sikleš)	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 <ñ> = [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 \tilde{n} [ɲ] are secondary. In particular, a subset of \tilde{n} results from palatalization of pre-Tib. $*\tilde{n}^y$ [ɲ].

- 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 \tilde{n} , OChn. and Bur. cognates reflect the proto-velar initial ɲ.
 - 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. ཇི་ $\tilde{n}āḥ$ Chi. 魚 $ngjo < *ɲa$	Tib. ཇི་ $\tilde{n}a < *n^ya$ ‘fish’ Kurtöp na ‘fish’ <div style="text-align: right;">$< **ɲ^ja$</div>
Bur. ཇོ་ $\tilde{n}hāḥ$ ‘borrow’	Tib. ཇོ་ $brñā < *brñ^ya$ ‘lend, borrow’ Kurtöp nu ‘borrow’ <div style="text-align: right;">$< **brɲ^ja$</div>
Bur. $\tilde{n}anh$ ‘poisonous snake’	Tib. ཇམ་པོ་ $gñan-po$ ‘antidote; opponent force’ $< *gñ^yan$ ‘pestilence’ <div style="text-align: right;">$< **g-ɲ^jan$</div>
Chi. 齧 $ngjin < *ɲ[n]$	Tib. ཇི་ལ་ $rñil \sim ཇི་ལ་ sñil < *rñ^yil/*sñ^yil$ ‘gums’ Kurtöp $nê$ ‘gums’ (conflicting) <div style="text-align: right;">$< **\{r/s\}ɲ^jil$</div>

- Hill (2019), furnishing additional data on this original “core” set of comparanda from non-Tibetic EBod languages, mainly Kurtöp, concludes that $*ɲ^j > n$ must have occurred at an EBod-wide level (though with a flourish).
- Hill (2010b, 2019) dubs this sound change $*ɲ^j > n$ **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 ɲ (and a comparable vowel), **without palatalization**.

$**ɲ^j_{1a}a$

Tib. ཇི་ $\tilde{n}a < *n^ya$ ‘fish’

- Kur. na ‘fish’
- Tmg_{ris} $^2ta:rɲa$ ‘fish’, Gur_{gha} 2tāga ‘fish’ $< *^Bta:r-ɲa$ ‘white-fish’

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

****br_{1a}^ja**

Tib. བློ་ *brñā* < *brñ^ya ‘borrow’

- Kur. *ju* ‘borrow & return’
- Tmg_{ris} ¹*ŋan* ‘borrow’, Gur_{gha} ¹*ŋaẽ* ‘lend (a durable item)’, Thak_{mar} *ŋan*⁴⁴ ‘borrow’, Mng ¹*ŋjeN* ‘lend, borrow’, Mng_{pra} ³*ŋjẽ* < *^A*ŋan* ‘lend/borrow’
- Bur. ཇོ་ *nhāh* ‘borrow’

****{r/s}ŋ_{1a}^jil**

Tib. རྩ་ *rñil* / སྩ་ *sñil* < *rñ^yil / *sñ^yil ‘gums’

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

****g-ŋ_{1a}^jan**

Tib. གཉན་པོ་ *gñan-po* ‘antidote; opponent force’ < *gñ^yan ‘pestilence’

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

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

- EBod. **tends to preserve** ***j* in Houghton’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 *j*, **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	∅	1a	**ŋ_{1a}^ja ‘fish’	§2 i.e. the original Houghton’s-Law comparanda <i>n</i> =2.5
		j	1b	**ŋ_{1b}^jan ‘listen’	§3.2.2 <i>n</i> =1+
∅	j	∅	2a	**ŋ_{2a}^jam ‘feel, experience’	§3.1 <i>n</i> =4
		j	2b	**ŋ_{2b}^jo ‘look~buy’	§3.2.1 <i>n</i> =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.

****ŋ^j_{2a}am**

Tib. *s-ñam* ‘think, consider, imagine, wonder, want < *cause (oneself) to experience’, *ñam-s* ‘feeling, experience, visionary experience’ < **ñ^yam* ‘to feel, experience’¹

- Kur *’jam* ‘wonder’
- Tmg_{ris} *’jam* ‘experience (happiness or misfortune) > believe; be too salty’, Gur_{gha} *’jã*, Gur_{sik} *’ja* ‘want to, feel’

Kur *’j* regularly reflects ****s-n**, as e.g. *’ja-ma* ‘previous’, *’ja-ba* ‘early’, Tib. *sña*. Note that this is in spite of Dzongkha: Dz. *he-ma* ‘early’ (Tib. *sñan-ma*), *ha-sa* ‘early’ (Tib. *sña-sa*)

****g-ŋ^j_{2a}e-n**

Tib. *gñen* ‘relative, kinsman, companion’ < **g-n^ye-n*

- Kur. *’jen* ‘partner, spouse’
- Gur_{gha} *’jẽ-mãẽ* ‘relatives not of the same lineal family’
Gurung *-mãẽ* is the human plural suffix.

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

That Tib. *gñen* should be the cognate form of Gurung *’jẽ* is supported on both the preinitial and the coda fronts. Gurung tone 1 shows that the pWBod nasal initial must be voiceless ***ŋ^j**, 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.

****ŋ^j_{2a}iŋ~ŋ^j_{2a}eŋ**

Tib. *sñen* ‘be afraid’ < **s-n^yeñ* ‘cause to be afraid’; **n^yeñ* ‘be afraid’

- Gur_{gha} *’jĩ*, Gur_{sik} *’ji*, ‘be frightened, afraid’ Thak_{tuk} *’jin*, Mng *’jiN-pa* ‘frightening, scary_{adj}’, though Mng_{pra} *’nji* ‘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 **n^yeñ*, 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 *sñen* as transitive ‘to frighten, fear, cause to be afraid’; DS glosses it as ‘to produce fear’, and explicitly indicates it as “archaic.”

****{r/s}ŋ^j_{2a}ok**

¹ For this form Hill (2019:\$208c, 219e) cites Chn. 恧 *nyimX* < **nəm?* 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.

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

- Kur. *’ŋot* ‘shake_{tr}’
- Tmg_{ris} *’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_{1b}an**

Tib. *ñan* < **ñ^y₁an* ‘listen’

- Kur *jan* ‘listen, agree’
- Tmg_{ris} *’ŋjan* ‘listen to, pay attention, obey, be persuaded’, Gur_{gha} *’ŋe* ‘obey’, Mng *’ŋjeN-pa* ‘listen’

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

****ŋ_{2b}o**

Tib. *ño* < **ñ^y₂o* ‘buy’ < ‘look, look intently, examine’

- Kur *ŋwi* ‘buy’ < **ŋo-s* ‘buy-PST’
- Gur_{gha} *’ŋjo*, Gur_{sik} *’ŋqjo*, ‘look at; look after, care for, seek, divine’; Mng *’ŋjo* ‘look; taste, test, try out’, though Mng_{pra} *’ŋjo* < pWBod **’ŋjo*

The semantic shift of the etymon **ñ^y₂o* from ‘look at, look intently, examine’ to ‘buy’ is a Tibetic innovation. Though no longer identifiable with the etymon **ñ^y₂o*, 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_{1b/2b}a**

Tib. *ña* < **ñ^ya* ‘full moon’ —in compounds such as *zla-ba ña-rgyas*, *zla-ba ña-gaŋ* ‘full moon’

- Tmg_{ris} *’ŋja* ‘full moon; *purne*’

****ŋ_{1b/2b}al**

Tib. *ñal* ‘lie down, rest’ < **ñ^yal*

- Tmg_{ris} *’ŋja-se* ‘evening’, Gur_{sik} *’ŋge-sa* ‘evening’, though Gur_{gha} *’nesa*

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.

**** $\eta^{j_{1b/2b}}$ am**

Tib. *ñam* ‘physical strength’ < * η^y am

- Tmg_{ris} ³*ñjam* ‘to get along well (*s’entendre bien*)’, Gur_{gha} ³*ñjã* ‘good physical condition’

**** $\eta^{j_{1b/2b}}$ al**

Tib. *ñil* ‘be dessicated, crumble away/fall apart’; *sñil* ‘to destroy, crush, fragment’ < *s- η^y il < *s- η^y al?

- Tmg_{ris} ¹*ñjal* ~ ²*ñil* ‘pound into powder’, ¹*ñjal* ~ ¹*ñjat* ‘chew, ruminate’; Gur_{gha} *lñe* ‘chew’; Mng ¹*ñje* ‘chew’

3.3. ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

Current analysis: posit four different ****j**’s.

- Hill (2019:§219) already posits * y^1 and * y^2 for Tib+EBod:
* y^1 conditions palatalization in both Tib. and EBod
* y^2 conditions palatalization in Tib. only.
- With WBod in the scene, * y^1 and * y^2 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}	**$\eta^{j_{1a}}$a ‘fish’	§2 i.e. the original Houghton’s-Law comparanda <i>n</i> =2.5
			j	**j_{1b}	**$\eta^{j_{1b}}$an ‘listen’	§3.2.2 <i>n</i> =1+
* y_2	Ø	j	Ø	**j_{2a}	**$\eta^{j_{2a}}$am ‘feel, experience’	§3.2.1 <i>n</i> =1+
			j	**j_{2b}	**$\eta^{j_{2b}}$o ‘look~buy’	§3.1 <i>n</i> =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_aa** vs. ****[j]a** = ****j_ba** ?

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. *l̥, r̥ > ʒ (Benedict's Law, Tibetic-only)	Tib. བཞི <i>bží</i> < *b̥li 'four'	Tmg _{ris} , Gur _{gha} , etc. ⁴ <i>pli</i> 'four'
	Kur <i>ble</i>	
	Tib. ཞིམ་ <i>žim</i> < *ʃim 'tasty'	Gur _{gha} ² <i>li</i> 'fragrant, tasty', Thak _{tuk} ² <i>lim</i> 'fragrant'
	Kur <i>lem</i>	
b. *t̥, *s̥ > č, ś (Hill 2019:§15, Tibetic-only)	Tib. རེ <i>ze</i> < *ʔe 'much, excessive'	Tmg _{ris} ³ <i>le</i> : '(for crops) to grow thick-set', Gur _{gha} ³ <i>le</i> 'many, a lot'
	Tib. རེག་ <i>zag</i> < *r̥jak 'day'	Gur _{sik} <i>-ro</i> 'd'ay (classifier)'
	Tib. སྤྲེག་ <i>śig</i> < *s̥jik 'louse'	Gur _{gha} ² <i>se</i> 'louse'
	cf. Kur <i>se</i>	
c. *r̥l̥ > r̥j (Jacques 2004; EBod)	Tib. སྤྲེག་ <i>śin</i> < *s̥ij 'tree'	Tmg _{ris} ² <i>sin</i> 'wood, firewood', Gur _{gha} ² <i>si</i> 'tree, wood', etc.
	Kur <i>seng</i>	
	Tib. གཅིག་ <i>gčig</i> < *g̥t̥jek 'one'	Tmg _{ris} <i>ti</i> , Thak _{tuk} ^H <i>ti</i> 'one'
	Kur <i>thê</i>	
c. *r̥l̥ > r̥j (Jacques 2004; EBod)	Tib. རྩེ་ <i>rje</i> < *r̥ʔe 'exchange, barter'	Thak _{mar} <i>li</i> ⁵⁵ , Thak _{syang} <i>li</i> ¹¹ 'buy'
	Tib. རྩེ་ <i>rje</i> < *r̥ʔe 'lord'	Tmg _{ris} ⁴ <i>kle</i> 'king'
	Tib. བརྟེན་ <i>brjed</i> < *mr̥ʔet 'forget'	Tmg _{ris} ² <i>mlet</i> , Gur _{gha} ² <i>mli</i> 'forget'
	Tib. རྩེས་ <i>rjes</i> < *r̥ʔies 'afterward'	Tmg _{ris} ¹ <i>li-cha</i> , Gur _{sik} ¹ <i>li</i> 'after'

² Although consider that there is only example of o in Class-a: ****{r/s}ɲ_{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-ñon* 'soft, tender' with Chn. 弱 *nyak* < ***newk** (17-09a).

4.2. NUMERAL ‘2’

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

- Possible explanation: two regular sound changes

**gn^his

> Proto-WBod *gnis

> (some pre-modern WBod) ŋis

> (other pre-modern WBod) nis

- 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:/brja^h/brjay

Tib. *brgyad* ‘8’ < *bryat

Tib. *brgya^h* ‘100’ < *brya^h

Tmg^{ris} ⁴*prat*, Gur^{gha}, Gur^{sik} ⁴*pre*, Mng ⁴*phre*

Gur^{gha}, Gur^{sik} ⁴*pra*, Mng ⁴*phra*

< pWBod *^Bbrat

< pWBod *^Bbra

- Possible explanation: WBod merged **j and **^j before undergoing loss of *^j_b, i.e.

**rj > *r^j > *r

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