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## The Grammaticalization of Thai 'Come' and 'Go'\*

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In his 1978 paper entitled "Directional modification in Thai fiction: The use of 'come' and 'go' in text building," Robert Bickner examines the discourse use of the words *paj* and *maa* in detail. He claims that varying use of *paj* and *maa* as main verbs, modals and postpositions builds coherence and texture into Thai text. Bickner looks at the words as used in a Thai short story and analyzes the effects on text building and coherence. What Bickner does not discuss in his work is the semantic development of *paj* and *maa*. Specifically, he does not discuss the issue of how the main verbs *paj* and *maa* are related to the modals and postpositions.

In this paper, I examine the grammaticalization of these two Thai verbs, the Thai equivalents for *go* and *come*. The term *grammaticalization* was coined by Antoine Meillet (1965) in his work *L'évolution des formes grammaticales*. In this work, Meillet claims that there are two ways in which grammatical forms develop. The first is analogy, and the second, which is the focus of Meillet's article, is grammaticalization. Grammaticalization is the name given to the process whereby a lexical content word becomes a grammatical word. Hopper and Traugott (1993), in their book *Grammaticalization*, state that "[w]hen a content word assumes the grammatical characteristics of a function word, that form is said to be 'grammaticalized'" (p. 4).

I hope to also show that the different grammaticalized forms form part of a grammaticalization continuum. Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca (1994) state:

The evidence from grammaticization suggests that it is not worthwhile to search for the one abstract meaning of each gram...but rather it is better to study the different uses of grams as though they were links on a chain, one having given rise to another. (p. 17)

Indeed it looks as though the grammaticalized forms of *paj* and *maa* developed in this fashion. The picture is more convincing for *paj*, as it is the richer example of the two.

Before discussing *paj* and *maa*, I would like to briefly examine the English verb *go*. I would like to use this familiar instance of grammaticalization by way of introduction to the less familiar Thai examples.

Native English speakers would not dispute that, in the first sentence below, *go* is the sentence's main verb and that in the second sentence it can serve as the main or auxiliary verb:

- 1) John is going to the store.
- 2) John is going to eat dinner.

The main verb *go* is a basic motion verb that describes motion away from a deictic center (Lichtenberk 1991:490) to some other location. Sentence 1 is clear and unambiguous to English speakers. Sentence 2, however, where *go* can be analyzed as main verb or auxiliary, has two possible meanings. The first of these, with *go* as a main verb, is the following: "John is physically displacing himself in

order that he reach a destination where he will eat dinner.” In this instance, we understand that John’s movement is away from the speaker, or, in Lichtenberk’s terminology, away from the deictic center (not always, but usually, coincident with the speaker of an utterance). The second interpretation of sentence 2 is of *go* as an auxiliary verb used to indicate the future: “John will eat dinner (in the future).”

The future usage *go* has been derived from its basic meaning as a spatial verb of motion. Metaphor, which is widely accepted as a common mode of semantic change, can account, at least in part, for the grammaticalization of *be going to* into an auxiliary with the grammatical function of indicating the future.

In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim that we use metaphor to better understand and talk about abstract concepts in our world. We can describe abstract domains by mapping elements of concrete domains which are easier to understand onto the more abstract ones. Space, a tangible and visible domain, is much easier for human beings to conceptualize than time.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980), among others, propose that the metaphor TIME IS SPACE aids in our conceptual understanding of time. Hopper and Traugott (1993) confirm this in their statement that “...temporal terms can be derived metaphorically from the spatial term” (p. 79). Using the terminology of Heine, Claudi, and Hünnemeyer (1991), we would want to claim that space is the metaphorical vehicle and time the metaphorical topic. For example, we can speak of the past being behind us. *The past* clearly refers to a time, whereas *behind* is a spatial term which in this context is used to describe a period of time that has gone by.

As for the case of *go*, the word indicates motion away from some reference point. Grammaticalized *be going to* signals the metaphorical distance of a future event from the present time. Figure 1 offers a pictorial aid to understanding this concept.

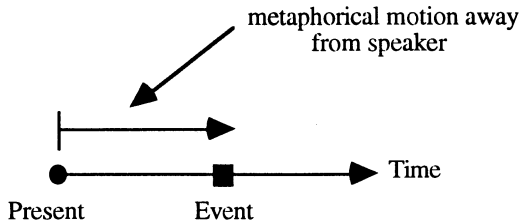


Figure 1.

(Adapted in part from Emanatian, 1992)

If we understand the metaphorical motion away from the speaker to the event as an anticipated time path, it is possible to see why *be going to* is used to indicate the future.

I will now turn to the two Thai motion verbs—*paj* and *maa*. These words can occur on their own as main verbs and can also co-occur with other verbs or verb phrases as preheads or after main verbs or other parts of speech as postheads. My assertion is that, based on similar developments in several other languages, such as English, and grammaticalization patterns in general, one can make an

educated guess at the semantic development of *paj* and *maa*. Before looking at the data, however, I would like to discuss the terms *prehead verb*, *prehead*, and *posthead* as used in this paper. In his *Thai Reference Grammar*, Richard Noss (1964) talks about modal verbs, modals, and postpositions. I will be adopting his framework here, but because of the fact that these terms are used differently in the Indo-European tradition, and in order to avoid confusion, I will not adopt all of Noss' terminology. I will refer to Noss' modal verbs as prehead verbs, to his modals as preheads, and to his postpositions as postheads.

In the *Grammar*, Noss first talks about predications. They are "...any consecutive-order syntactic construction such that some lexeme or constituent other than the first lexeme or constituent can substitute for the whole construction" (1964:74). A predicator is any single lexeme that can substitute for the entire construction, while a more complex constituent that accomplishes the same function is a predicate. Noss' test to identify a predicator is to put a sentence in the form of a yes/no question. Consider the following example:

- (0a) **jaaj tŕŋ paj talàad mǎj**  
 grandmother (mat.) must go market QST  
 Does grandma have to go to the market?
- b) **tŕŋ**  
 must  
 Yes.
- c) **mǎj tŕŋ**  
 NEG must  
 No.

In this example, *tŕŋ* is the predicator, as it can substitute for the entire predication.

A prehead verb, in Noss' framework, is a predicator which has as its object another predicative or predicative expression. An object here is simply what follows the predicator, so the object in the preceding example is *paj talàad mǎj*. Thus *tŕŋ* is a prehead verb, and as the prehead verb, *tŕŋ* can take the negation. Whether a Thai word can be negated or not is a test to see if it is a verb *paj*, in this example, is the main verb.

Prehead verbs are to be distinguished, however, from prehead in Noss' framework. Preheads occur in the same linear position as prehead verbs, but they are not predicators. This means, of course, that a prehead may not substitute for a predication, while a prehead verb, like *tŕŋ* in example 0, can. In addition, a prehead cannot take negation while a prehead verb can.

The following example is from Noss, and I would like to use it here because I feel it illustrates the difference between prehead verbs and preheads quite nicely. Example 1a is of *àad*, a prehead verb, and example 1b is of *àad*, a prehead.<sup>1</sup>

- 1a) **mâj àad ca paj**  
 NEG capable-of FUT go  
 unable to go
- b) **àad ca mâj paj**  
 apt-to FUT NEG go  
 might not go

\Aad as a prehead verb means ‘capable of’, and the same word as a prehead means ‘apt to’. We can see from the above example that prehead verbs occupy the same linear position as preheads; however, the prehead can neither substitute for the entire phrase nor can it be negated. In the case just presented, the difference in syntactic category coincides with a meaning difference between the prehead verb in 1a and the prehead in 1b.

Confusion may arise due to the fact that certain of Noss’ prehead verbs and preheads are homophonous, as in the preceding example. This also happens to be the case for *paj*, and it is sometimes tricky to draw a clear boundary separating these two categories, especially since the words occupy the same linear position syntactically. I would like to show that prehead verbs and preheads represent clines of grammaticalization. Prehead verbs are less grammaticalized forms, while preheads are more grammaticalized forms.

Another term that Noss uses differently than in the Indo-European tradition is “postposition”. In Noss’ words, “A postposition is any bound lexeme that occurs as a latter constituent of an expression, predication, enumeration or phrase, such that the larger construction (prior constituent plus postposition) is less than an entire clause” (1964:183). To avoid confusion with the nomenclature, I will refer to this category as “postheads.”

*paj* as a main verb can be glossed as ‘to go’ in English and is a basic verb which describes motion away from a place. The following examples illustrate usage of *paj* as a main verb.

- 2) **paj thěw teŋ**  
 go main square  
 I went to the main square.
- 3) **paj hōŋ khun-samăaj khà**  
 go room PN POL  
 I went to Khun Samay’s room.

It should be noted that the speaker’s location at the time of utterance is important in the selection of the verb *paj*. For example, sentence 2 is spoken by Choy, one of the characters in the novel *Si Phan Din*, once she has returned to her residence. We understand that Choy is no longer at the main square when this sentence is produced.

The same is true of sentence 3. Only a person who is not in Khun Samay’s room at the time of utterance can use that particular sentence. So far, the Thai verb *paj* looks very similar, if not identical, to our English verb *go*.

The first form on the grammaticalization cline is the prehead verb *paj*. In the following example, *paj* is not the main verb. At the same time, the prehead verb *paj* has not entirely lost its “verbiness.” Thai verbs can be identified by, among other things, the fact that they can be negated. When used as a prehead

verb, then, *paj* can still be negated, as in the following example, where *duu* is the main verb.

- 4a) **khăaw mâj paj duu năŋ**  
 3 PERS NEG go see/watch movie  
 She is not going to see a movie.

Please also recall that a prehead verb can substitute for its entire predication.

- b) **khăaw paj duu năŋ mǎj**  
 3 PERS go see/watch movie  
 Did she go to see a movie?
- c) **paj**                      **mâj paj**  
 go                              NEG go  
 Yes.                              No.

The prehead verb *paj* precedes the main verb *duu*. It can be negated and it can substitute for its entire predication. Besides this, the idea of motion away from the speaker is still involved, as it is understood that the subject went to see the movie elsewhere. So the prehead verb is a slightly grammaticalized form of *paj*.

The following examples are of preheads. The prehead *paj* specifically means “to act away from the speaker or so as to affect interests other than the speaker and his group” (Noss, 1964:135). Preheads are less “verby” than prehead verbs and thus represent another stage of further grammaticalized forms.

- 6) **dɛɛŋ paj wâa khăaw**  
 PN go criticize 3PERS  
 Daeng criticized them.
- 7) **dǎaw ca paj tham hâj khăaw kròd**  
 moment FUT go make CAUS 3PERS angry  
 Watch out you don’t make her angry.

The use of prehead *paj* in example 6 emphasizes the fact that Daeng has gone off and criticized those other people. In this case, *paj* cannot substitute for the entire predication and is thus not a prehead verb and less “verby” than that previous stage of grammaticalized forms.

Example 7 is grammatical without the prehead *paj*. With *paj*, however, emphasis is placed on the notion of doing something to another person (making them angry). Weera Ostapirat (personal communication) commented that with *paj* the sentence seems more specific and more like a strict directive than if the lexeme were left out. Again, *paj* cannot substitute for the predication in 7, nor can it take the negation.

We have seen that as a prehead, *paj* does not in and of itself indicate the future as the English phrase *be going to* does, and in fact it can be used to talk about the past, as in 6. Rather, it indicates that an action has or will occur away from the speaker or deictic center. By ‘away from’, I mean that the action in question has either taken place in a physical location not near the speaker, or that



conceive of the hearer as located at a certain metaphorical temporal location, the present. Her waiting will “go” or continue into the future, which is “in front” of her. Pictorially, the sentence may be represented as follows:

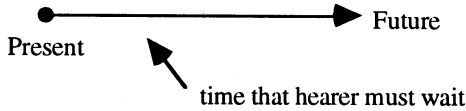


Figure 3.

In this schema, the future is conceptualized as an indefinite location in the distance. The main verb *paj* describes physical motion away from a geographical location. The posthead *paj* as used here describes metaphorical motion away from the present known time toward an underdetermined point in the future.

So it would seem that postheads can be broken down into two loose subcategories thus far. The first is exemplified by examples 8 and 9, where *paj* continues to describe motion and directionality. At the same time, it is not the sentence's main verb, nor according to Noss, is it any sort of verb at all.

The second subcategory of posthead is exemplified in 10. Here we are no longer concerned with physical motion away from a particular location but rather metaphorical motion away from the present to an unspecified point in the future, as it involves spatio-temporal metaphor. It would seem that this second type is further along the cline of grammaticalization.

Noss claims that *paj* can also be used as a sort of adverbial marker meaning ‘too, excessively’ (1964:189). In this capacity, *paj* follows adjectives or adverbs instead of verbs.

- 11) **rew paj**  
fast go  
too fast
- 12) **mâag paj**  
much go  
too much
- 13) **pεεη paj**  
expensive go  
too expensive

It appears that in these instances *paj* has lost its verbal meaning and thus seems to be a more grammaticalized form than the posthead that follows verbs. I would argue, however, that the notion of metaphorical movement away from, and in these cases beyond, a given point is still relevant. Also, the adverbial phrases in which *paj* appears above would often modify verbs (were they to appear in complete sentences).

In 11, for example, we could assume that there is a particular reasonable speed that one should drive at. If someone is going too fast, she has exceeded this speed. The faster she goes, the further away she gets from the accepted speed.

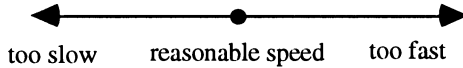


Figure 4.

Thus in this phrase *paj* conjures up the notion of exceeding or going past a certain predetermined spot or speed.

The same argument can be made for sentences 12 and 13. For 12 we can imagine a point which we know to be ‘much’ or ‘a lot’ already, and anything that goes beyond that point is too much. Similarly, if we know that a certain item is expensive if it costs x dollars, than any price that increases as it moves away from x dollars is too expensive (example 13) or “beyond” expensive.

Finally, as a posthead, *paj* can occur after a noun phrase, as in the following:

14) **weekend thád paj**  
weekend next go  
next weekend

15) **tâŋ-těe wan ní paj?**  
since day this go  
from this day on...

Example 14 shows posthead *paj* following a noun phrase where a spatio-temporal metaphor is clearly at play. “Next weekend” is in the future, and we metaphorically advance towards it or “go” towards it. This example is similar to the sentence in 10 except that the amount of time that will transpire is known to us, since the weekend is a clear point in the future.

The last example given above also shows *paj* after a noun phrase. Like the last few examples, spatio-temporal metaphor is involved. The deictic *ní* specifies that we are talking about “this day” (today), and that whatever we are discussing will begin at the present time and continue into the future. The following diagram, with the shaded line beginning at the “present” and moving toward the “future,” is meant to illustrate this.

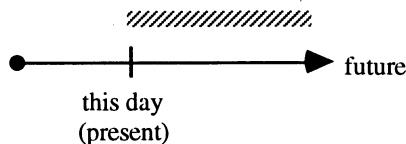


Figure 5.

Above I claimed that prehead verb *paj* serves to indicate the direction of an action away from a given point. The posthead *paj* exploits this notion of directionality, and as a posthead it can refer to the more abstract concept of future time, time that is ahead of, and also away from, the speaker. It would seem that a

meaning shift has occurred from the more specific to the more abstract. As a prehead verb and sometimes as a prehead, *paj* describes actions or events that take place physically away from the speaker. As a posthead, *paj* can still describe physical motion away from the speaker (cf. examples 8 and 9), but its use has been extended to talk about metaphorical motion through time as well, via the spatio-temporal metaphor referenced earlier. Furthermore, the posthead appears with not only verbs but with adverbs, adjectives, and noun phrases as well.

In summary, then, we have seen four functions of the Thai word *paj*. They are the following:

1. Main verb
2. Prehead Verb
3. Prehead
4. Posthead

In his paper “The grammaticization of the Japanese verbs *oku* and *shimau*”, Ono claims that the subtle semantic differences between the two verbs are preserved even in their grammaticalized forms. The author remarks that the two words—put, place and finish, get rid of—remain opposites in meaning despite having undergone extensive grammaticalization. In Thai, the *paj/maa* verb pair parallels Japanese *oku* and *shimau*. We have just examined what I claim are grammaticalized forms of the verb *paj* ‘to go’. The verb *maa* ‘to come’ is another basic verb of motion. Specifically, *maa* speaks of motion toward and not away from a place.

Used as a main verb, *maa* means approximately the same thing as English *come*.

- 16) **maa càg nǎj**  
come from where  
Where are you coming from? or Where do you come from?
- 17) **deej maa thīi talàad**  
PN come at/place market  
Daeng comes to the market.
- 18) **khǎaw maa jurðob bòj**  
3PERS come Europe often  
She comes to Europe often.

As with *paj*, the speaker’s location at the time of utterance is important in the selection of the verb *maa*. For instance, the utterance in 18 could not be used except by someone in Europe at the time it was said, or by someone who is usually in Europe.

Examples of *maa* as a prehead verb are harder to find than for *paj*. I attempted the yes/no test on several sentences, and many instances of *maa* failed to meet the crucial criterion of a prehead verb—that it be able to substitute for its predication.

- 19a) **maa kin khâw thîi bâan mǎj**  
 come eat food place house QST  
 Would you like to come over and eat at my house?
- b) **\*maa \*mâj maa**
- c) **paj m»aj paj**

The question would not make sense if the person being invited were already at the house. The speaker's use of *maa* tells us that the invitee is not habitually at the speaker's home. For the invitee to reply with *maa* would be strange. Since she does not live with the host, she must use *paj* to indicate that the house is in a different physical location, away from her. So basically yes/no questions fail when concerning the second person due to the deictic character of *maa*.

If, however, the question is about a third person, *maa* meets all the requirements of a prehead verb. The following example is such a case.

- 20a) **khǎaw maa kin khâw thîi bâan mǎj**  
 3 PERS come eat food place house QST  
 Is she coming over to eat at our house?
- b) **maa mâj maa**  
 come NEG come  
 Yes. No.

Here *maa* can substitute for the entire predication, and it can (and must) also take the negation for the sentence. We should recall that taking sentence negation is a characteristic of verbs and prehead verbs in Thai. For example, the sentence *khǎaw mâj maa kin thîi bâan* —'she didn't come over to eat at our house' or 'she isn't coming to eat at our house'—is perfectly grammatical.

On the other hand, there are many instances of *maa* as a prehead. The prehead indicates an "...act toward the speaker or so as to affect the speaker and his group" (p. 135). Consider the following:

- 21) **ca hâj khǎaw maa jùu khâaŋ lǎaŋ**  
 FUT give 3PERS come stay side below  
 I'm going to have her move downstairs (where I am).
- 22) **dǎaw ca maa tham hâj kròod**  
 moment FUT come do/make give angry  
 Watch out you don't make me angry.

Whereas *paj* emphasized the effect on others, *maa* emphasizes the effect on oneself or one's group. By using *maa* in sentence 21, the speaker tells us that she is also downstairs and that the person moving will come closer to her.

Sentence 22 uses *maa* to emphasize the fact that the hearer's actions will serve to make the speaker angry (and not someone else). This idea is depicted below in Figure 6. Contrast this with Figure 1 for *paj*.

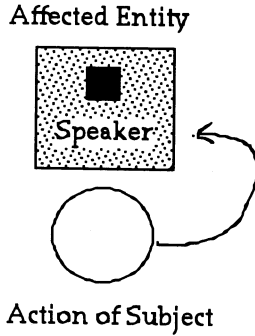


Figure 6.

Finally, *maa* can be used as a posthead. Where *paj* involved orientation away from the speaker, posthead *maa* indicates orientation of action "...toward the speaker, up to the present or toward a definite, relevant, nearby goal" (Noss 1964:185). The sentences below use *maa* as a posthead.

- 23) **măa wîŋ maa naj bâan**  
 dog run come in house  
 The dog ran into the house (where we were).
- 24) **rôt wîŋ maa thaaj sáaj**  
 car run come way left  
 A car is coming up on the left
- 25) **raw tham kaan-bâan maa nan léew**  
 we make homework come long already  
 We've been doing our homework for a long time  
 now (already).
- 26) **...pen khon tîi jùu naj waj maa nan léew**  
 to be person that stay in palace come long (time)  
 already  
 ...she was someone who'd been in the palace for a  
 long time now.

Sentence 23 should be compared to example 8, the "equivalent" *paj* sentence. *maa* indicates that the dog is in fact coming toward the speaker, that the speaker is inside the house.

In example 24, the speaker is, let's say, in a car, and there is another car alongside. The use of posthead *maa* tells us that the car is approaching on her left. The word follows the main verb, indicating the direction of motion that the other car is pursuing.

Example 25, on the other hand, uses *maa* as a posthead to talk metaphorically about a time period up to the present and possibly beyond.

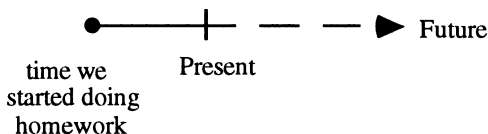


Figure 7.

Figure 7 shows that the activity was started in the past and metaphorically approaches or “comes” to the present. The activity can but does not necessarily continue on into the future.

Example 26 from *Si Phan Din* can be explained in a similar way. Here, Ploy remarks that Choy has obviously been living in the palace for a long time. The time at which Choy began living in the palace is a definite point in the past, the act of living there “comes”, if you will, to the present, and in this case, we know it continues into the future.

In the following example, the posthead follows a noun phrase.

- 27) **tâŋ-têe wan nán maa.**<sup>3</sup>  
 since day that come  
 From that day (in the past) on...

The above phrase, like its *paj* counterpart, involves a spatio-temporal metaphor. Example 15 referred to the present (today) and the undetermined time period following it. The *maa* sentence, however, concerns a day in the past—“that day”—and the time period between it and the present (and perhaps beyond the present). Consider the following diagram:

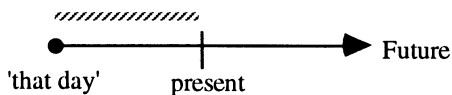


Figure 8.

Thus we see that *maa* has four related functions, just as *paj* does:

1. Main verb
2. PreheadVerb
3. Prehead
4. Posthead

I would like to conclude this paper with a few comments regarding the question of semantic weakening, or Meillet’s “*dégradation progressive*.” Sweetser points out that “[w]henver abstraction occurs...there is a loss of meaning” (1988:400). In the case of *paj* and *maa*, we could claim that the loss of real physical motion in the more grammaticalized forms is such a loss. On the other hand, I think that some specification through inferencing has taken place (Traugott 1988). Mainly, this specification concerns directionality and

metaphorical directed movement toward a temporal goal. Bickner's analysis of *paj* and *maa* in literary text supports the idea that the words are used in different ways to achieve particular pragmatic results.

Let's also consider the following observation from Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca (1994:16):

Since we are claiming that semantic substance evolves in grammaticization and that the meaning of the source construction determines the subsequent grammatical meaning, we are not surprised to find that certain more specific semantic nuances of the source construction can be retained in certain contexts long after grammaticization has begun.

This appears to be true of the grammaticalized forms of both *paj* and *maa*. The main verbs are motion verbs describing motion away from or toward a particular goal. As prehead verbs and preheads, *paj* and *maa* retain "verbiness" in only certain cases, but aspects of directionality in all cases. As postheads, the words can take on metaphorical meaning as well as serving to indicate physical relationships between objects. When spatio-temporal metaphor is involved, we still sense that motion, albeit metaphorical, is central. Choice of word will also determine the direction of that metaphorical motion, either toward or away from the present. Some of the most grammaticalized forms, those that follow adjectives or adverbs, carry the idea of metaphorically moving beyond a particular goal. At the same time, the context in which one can use a particular grammaticalized form is more specific than that in which one would use either of the main verbs.

It appears, then, that some loss of meaning is involved, mainly verbiness, but that the grammaticalized forms of *paj* and *maa* are far from being semantically void. I contend, on the contrary, that abstraction for pragmatic purposes makes meaning more specific, as Traugott suggests. Furthermore, the grammaticalized forms of *paj* and *maa* still have a clear relationship to their lexical source. Perhaps the fact that the two words remain opposites even in their grammaticalized forms provides the clearest evidence of this.

\*I am grateful to James Matisoff and Gary Holland for their advice on this paper and to my informants for all of their patient help. I would also like to thank those who asked questions and gave suggestions at the Special Session.

<sup>1</sup>Native speakers disagree as to the grammaticality of 1a. One of my informants commented that although she would never say the phrase, she would not be surprised to see it in written Thai. Since at least half of my informants had no trouble with the phrase, I have chosen to leave the example in.

<sup>2</sup>From Noss, p.185

<sup>3</sup>From Noss, p.185.

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