CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter, I summarise what I have argued in each of the previous chapters, and consider some possible implications of this work for PIE, syntactic reconstruction, and comparative philology more generally.

7.1 Conclusions

In the opening chapters of this book (Chapters 1–3), I set the scene for the reconstructive arguments put forward in the subsequent chapters (Chapters 4–6). I have been motivated by the sentiment aptly expressed by Clackson (2017: 204) that '[p]erhaps it is time to leave the arguments about methodology to one side, and concentrate on reconstructing syntax'. Nevertheless, I took the opportunity in Chapter 2 to offer as detailed an exposition of syntactic reconstruction as possible, from the Neo-Grammarians through to the methodology of Minimalist reconstruction that most informs this book. Turning then to relative clauses specifically, in Chapter 3 I laid out some of the complex theoretical questions that persist within synchronic analyses of relative clauses. I assessed the applicability of the various hypotheses to some of the patterns attested in ancient IE languages, even though – with some notable exceptions – they are rarely the basis of such theories.

Chapter 4 may serve as a self-standing survey of the descendants of two lexical items we reconstruct for PIE (**yó-* and **k^{w}í-/*k^{w}ó-*) which seem to be the ancestors to the forms of the relative pronoun attested in the ancient IE languages. I have argued systematically against the hypothesis that **yó-* bore any function other than that of a relative pronoun in PIE, at least by the latest stage of linguistic unity. This represents quite a different picture from the one that emerges of PIE **k^{w}í-/*k^{w}ó-*, which clearly did exhibit the functions

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of both an interrogative and an indefinite pronoun in PIE. However, I was unable to exclude the possibility that *k^{w}í-/*k^{w}ó- was also a relative pronoun in PIE, which may either complement, supplant or be supplanted by *yó-. I argued further that there was no reconstructable difference in the syntactic behaviour of *yó- vs. *k^{w}í-/*k^{w}ó- when used as a relative pronoun. For this reason, I concluded that PIE had a relative pronoun, which I label *REL, whose phonetic content may have surfaced as either *yó- or *k^{w}í-/k^{w}ó- . In other words, I argued that PIE had a unitary functional item in Minimalist terms (*REL), whose syntax could be reconstructed by a comparison of the behaviour of descendants of both *yó- and *k^{w}í-/*k^{w}ó-. In the course of making this argument, I also argued against the hypothesis that *yó- and *k^{w}í-/*k^{w}ó- may have coexisted as relative pronouns that introduced distinct semantic and/or syntactic types of relative clause.

Chapter 5 addressed two major topics in PIE syntax that are directly relevant to the study of relative clauses: the left periphery and Wackernagel's law. In particular, the 'landing site' of a relative pronoun fronted to the left periphery (*wh*-movement) is a question that explicitly draws together these two research areas within the broader question of relative clause structure. I took Vedic as a case study, to which I compared Ancient Greek, Latin, Tocharian and Hittite, as representative of the early left-peripheral structures in their respective language families. On this basis, I argued that PIE exhibited a 'dual clitic system' containing two distinct classes of second-position clitics: pronouns (WL1) and conjunctions (WL2). While the second-position effects of clitic conjunctions can be explained almost entirely as a phonological phenomenon, I concurred with previous authors that a syntax-dominant approach is the best way to account for the position of clitic pronouns. The rule posited for their distribution (target C^{o}/Fin^{o}) facilitated the disentanglement of various left-peripheral projections, and accounted for the differing patterns of the descendant languages. I finished the chapter with a reconstruction of the left periphery and second-position clitics in PIE, with an account of the reanalyses that led to the distinct outcomes in different branches, and in particular the shift towards a 'single clitic system' in Anatolian.

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The PIE situation arising from Chapters 4 and 5, informed by the theory of relative clause syntax established in Chapter 3, brings us to the reconstruction of PIE relative clauses in Chapter 6. The reconstruction consists in a set of conclusions of various levels of specificity; these are listed at the end of Chapter 6. The overarching argument is that PIE exhibited correlatives in both RC-MC and MC-RC configuration, with the latter possibly accounting for what look like postnominal 'plain' relatives, as well as providing a plausible genesis for embedded relative clauses. In the course of this reconstruction, I have also addressed the varying semantic types of relative clauses in PIE. In particular, I argued that in addition to restrictive and maximalising relative clauses, PIE had appositive (non-restrictive) relative clauses. I concluded that while restrictive/maximalising relative clauses were syntactically flexible, appositive relative clauses were likely to have been obligatorily postposed.

7.2 Outlook

I locate the implications of my conclusions for future research within three general categories: those that apply to PIE; those that apply to syntactic reconstruction; and those that apply at an interdisciplinary level.

The question of the form of the relative pronoun in PIE remains open, and I have suggested that there may be an irreducible level of variation between **yó-* and **k^wó-*. This is unsatisfactory insofar as reconstruction by its very nature seeks to explain synchronic variation by appealing to a diachronic unity, and so we are almost forced into believing one form or the other must have been the original. Perhaps the **k^wó-*/**yó-* question can be treated as a demonstration of the limitations of this way of thinking, while at the same time remaining a tantalising reconstructional puzzle. Another question, and one that affects PIE more broadly, is the possibility of embedding. The arguments I have put forward in this book are not conclusive on the matter; while correlative RCs are not embedded within the MC, they could have generated structures that were reanalysed as embedded. Moreover, even if the evidence is

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comparatively rare, it is a fact that embedded structures are attested even in the most archaic IE languages, suggesting a possible inheritance from PIE. That said, the attested languages appear to show contradictory trends: in some languages, embedded relatives may appear archaic and recessive; in others, they gain ground and displace correlative clauses as an unmarked relativisation strategy. This does not show a clear drift in any particular direction, but suggests that some embedded structures may have existed marginally in PIE; this could suggest that embedding was a late-stage innovation, but it does not confirm it.

Much more could be said about the left periphery and clisis in PIE. Activity at the front of the clause certainly seems to be responsible for a whole host of different interpretational functions and surface word-order variation. With a finer understanding of the role second-position clitics play in this left periphery, we may further refine the types of left-peripheral position available in PIE. For example, I have addressed interrogative clauses only insofar as they differ from relative clauses; as another type of clause that implicates the left periphery (via *wh*-movement), they certainly offer scope for further research.

This brings me to the second set of implications: those that concern syntactic reconstruction as an enterprise. This book demonstrates the kind of concrete conclusions we may reach about a proto-language via Minimalist reconstruction, even when the attested languages instantiate differing syntactic patterns. In cases of non-identity, where a change must be hypothesised between a proto-language and the attested language, close attention must be paid to the process of syntactic change via reanalysis (and actualisation), coupled with the judicious employment of universal directionality in the form of grammaticalisation theory. While there are analogues here with the Comparative Method as used for phonological reconstruction, there are fundamental differences too. Building reanalysis into the methodology clearly introduces a level of subjectivity that is not present to the same degree in phonology: different researchers may have quite different ideas about what makes a given reanalysis plausible and motivated. Nevertheless, questions of phonological reconstruction are also the object

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of widely differing opinion. The fact that Minimalist reconstruction opens up the possibility of such debate, not in a vacuum but informed by the vast theoretical and typological literature in syntax, demonstrates its programmatic capacity.

I dedicate my last words in this book to the broader disciplinary issue of combining theoretical and philological approaches to ancient languages. This book rests on foundations established by previous scholars who have used contemporary syntactic theory as an analytical tool for the purpose of philological research and theoreticians whose hypotheses are informed by ancient languages as well as contemporary varieties. There remain several disciplinary challenges one must overcome in order to make the connections between these two fields of research, and evaluating contemporary developments in syntactic theory while also providing adequately detailed analyses of philological data requires a commitment to the significance of both in addressing one's research question. In this book, I have aimed to demonstrate that both are integral to reconstructing PIE relative clauses. Yet reconstruction is clearly dependent on synchronic analyses of the attested IE languages: even outside a reconstructional context, therefore, the study of the syntax of ancient languages merits this twofold commitment. To this end, I intend this book to be part of a growing literature that bridges such methodological divisions, and another step towards consilience between theoretical and philological approaches to the study of ancient languages.

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