The Comparative Method in Domains other than Phonology

In this assignment, you are to take what you know about the basic workings of the Comparative Method and apply them to domains other than the phonological level we have been concentrating on in class. It has two parts, one focusing on using the Comparative Method in regard to semantics and one focusing on using the Comparative Method in regard to syntax. My expectation is that you will be able to answer these questions simply by using the reasoning of the Comparative Method. Don’t spend more than 2 hours altogether on these questions.

a. Semantics and Syntactic/Semantic Reconstruction

In Sanskrit there is an adjective **vadhris** which means ‘castrated; unmanly’; Greek has a noun **ethris** which matches the Sanskrit precisely in form (observing regular sound correspondences), pointing to a Proto-Indo-European word *wedhris*. The Greek word means ‘castrated ram’. The English word **wether**, meaning ‘castrated ram’, also belongs here, being cognate with the Greek and Sanskrit forms. What would you reconstruct as the meaning for the Proto-Indo-European word? What part of speech would you reconstruct it as? Briefly justify your answer.

b. Syntax and Syntactic Reconstruction

In Haitian (French) Creole, there is a copula (the verb ‘be’ used as a “linking” verb between a subject and a predicate), which occurs overtly (in the form ye) only in sentences such as (a) and (b), but is absent in sentences such as (c), as indicated by the Ø:

- a. kote li ye?
  place he COPULA ‘Where is he?’
- b. amerikê yo te dwe ye
  American they PAST must COPULA ‘American they must have been’
- c. mw ète Ø nà bulônzeri
  I PAST LOCATIVE bakery ‘I was in the bakery’

In Mauritian (French) Creole, a copula with the form **ete** occurs overtly in sentences such as (d) and (e), but is absent in ones such as (e):

- d. kot pyer ete
  side Peter COPULA ‘Where is Peter?’
- e. ki pyer ete
  what Peter COPULA ‘What is Peter?’
- f. pyer Ø labutik
  Peter shop ‘Peter is at the shop’

Taking these facts to be representative of the general situation with the copula in each language, state what the conditions are for the appearance of the copula. Then, under the assumption that Mauritian and Haitian are genetically related (this is admittedly controversial, but accept it for the purposes of this assignment), discuss what you would reconstruct for Proto-Haitian-Mauritian for the syntax of the copula. Or, if you feel that you cannot reconstruct here, briefly explain your reasons. Is there any additional information you feel you would need to know to either confirm your reconstruction or enable you to reconstruct? Note: the fact that these are creole languages is irrelevant here.