UNIT 19 STATE AND ECONOMY

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19.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit discusses how the Ghorian conquest and the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate affected the Indian economy. It also attempts to highlight the changes that occurred during the course of the Sultanate.

After going through this Unit you will be able to learn about:

- the nature of land revenue system and its extraction,
- the mechanism of distribution of revenue resources,
- price control measures of Alauddin Khalji,
- the use of slaves in urban economy and sources of enslavement, and
- the increasing use of money in economy and the currency system.

19.1 INTRODUCTION

The conquest of Northern India by the Ghorids and the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate not only changed the existing political structure but also brought economic changes. The conquerors came with fairly well-defined concepts and practices regarding tax collection and distribution, and system of coinage, etc. But the existing systems could not be changed altogether immediately: in the beginning, these were superimposed on the older systems, and modifications and changes were introduced by different Sultans upto the close of the 15th century.

The new rulers wanted luxuries and comforts according to their taste and habits. The slave labour was thus a great help to provide these.

In the opinion of Muhammad Habib, the economic changes that occurred as a consequence of the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate created an organisation considerably superior to the one that had existed before. He felt that the changes were drastic enough to deserve the designation of 'Urban Revolution' and 'Rural Revolution'. D.D. Kosambi recognised that 'hidebound customs in the adoptation and transmission of new techniques' were broken down by the 'Islamic raiders', but he regarded the changes no more than intensifying elements already present in Indian 'feudalism'.

In this Unit we will study the economic institutions and changes that the Delhi Sultanate introduced.

19.2 DISTRIBUTION OF REVENUE RESOURCES

During the 13th century, large territories rapidly passed into the hands of the Sultans.

maintained themselves and their troops by plundering or by extracting tribute from the defeated and subjugated rural aristocracies. Unlike the previous rulers, the soldiers were paid their salaries in cash.

The regions that refused to pay land-tax or **kharaj** were known as **mawas** and were plundered or forced to pay through military raids. Gradually a mechanism of simultaneous revenue collection and distribution had to be introduced.

19.2.1 Iqta and Khalisa

The new rulers brought with them the **iqta** system that combined the two functions of revenue collection and distribution without immediately endangering the unity of political structure. The **iqta** was a territorial assignment and its holder was called the **muqti** or the **wali.** The classical definition of the **iqta** system has been given by Nizam-ul Mulk Tusi, a Seljuq statesman of the 11th century (see Block 5). According to Tusi's definition, the **iqta** was a revenue assignment that the **muqti** held at the pleasure of Sultan. The **muqti** was entitled to collect in proper manner the land tax and other taxes due to the Sultan, he had no further claims on the person, women and children, land or other possessions of the cultivators. The **muqti** had certain obligations to the Sultan the chief being the maintenance of troops and furnishing them at call to the Sultan. The **iqta** was a transferable charge and the transfers of **iqta s** were frequent.

Khalisa: The territory whose revenues were directly collected for the Sultan's own treasury was designated **khalisa.** Its size seems to have expanded quite considerably under Alauddin Khalji. But the **khalisa** did not appear to consist of shifting territories scattered throughout the country. In all probability, Delhi along with its surrounding district, including parts of Doab remained in **khalisa.** In Iltutmish's time, Tabarhinda (Bhatinda) too was in **khalisa.** Under Alauddin Khalji, the **khalisa** covered the whole of middle Doab and parts of Rohilkhand. But during the days of Feroz Tughluq, the **khalisa** perhaps had reduced considerably in size.

Iltutmish (1210-36) is reported to have assigned in lieu of salaries "small **iqtas**" in the Doab to the soldiers of the Sultan's army (**hashm qalb**). Balban (1266-86) made a half-hearted attempt at their resumption without success. It was Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) who established firmly the practice of payment of salaries in cash to the soldiers. A practice that was again altered by Feroz Tughluq who began to assign villages to soldiers in lieu of their salaries. These assignments were called **wajh** and the holders **wajhdars.** These assignments tended to be not only permanent but hereditary.

19.2.2 The Iqta System in Operation

You have already read about the **Iqta** system in Block 5. Here, we are adding a few more aspects. In the early years of the foundation of the Sultanate, neither the revenue income of these assignments was known nor the size of the contingent of the assignee was fixed. However, certain modifications and mild attempts at introducing central control to some extent were made by Balban (1266-86) when he appointed a **khwaja** (accountant) with each **muqti:** this may imply that the Sultanate now was trying to find out the actual income of the **iqta** and **muqti s** expenditure.

The real intervention in the **iqta** administration came under Alauddin Khalji. The central finace department (**diwan-i wizarat**) perhaps prepared some sort of an estimated revenue income from each **iqta.** The audit was stringent, punishments severe, transfers frequent and enhancements (**taufir**) were often made in the estimated revenue income of the **iqta** on various pretexts.

Ghiyasuddin Tughluq (1320-25) introduced some moderation. The enhancements in the estimated revenue income by the central finance ministry was not to be more than 1/10 or 1/11th annually. The **muqtis** were allowed to keep 1/10th to 1/20th in excess of their sanctioned salaries.

The attempt at central intervention reached its climax during the time of Muhammad Tughluq (1325-51). In several cases, a **wali** and an **amir** was appointed to the same territory. The **wali** was to collect revenue and, after deducting his pay, to send the rest to the treasury. The **amir** or commander had nothing to do with revenue realization and received his own salary and the salary of his troops in cash, presumably from the

reign the troops of the **iqta** holders were paid in cash by the state's treasury. This possibility infuriated the commanders and created political problems for Muhammad Tughluq. Feroz Tughluq, therefore, decided to make concessions. He enhanced the cash salaries of the nobles and got new estimates of revenue (**mahsul**) prepared which was designated **jama.**

There was no attempt to restore central control by the successors of Feroz. Under the Lodis (1451-1526), the administrative charges and revenue assignments were combined together and these were no more called **iqta** but were simply called **sarkars** and **parganas.** A system of sub-assignments came in vogue particularly under Sikandar Lodi (1489-1517). The main assignees used to sub-assign portions of their assignment to their subordinates who in turn made sub-assignments to their soldiers.

19.2.3 Land Grants

As you know already, the religious persons and institutions such as **dargahs,** mosques, **madrasas** and other dependents of the ruling class were maintained by making grants of revenue income. These revenue grants were called **milk, idrar,** and **in am.** These grants were not generally resumed or transferred. But the Sultan had the right to cancel them. Alauddin Khalji is reputed to have cancelled almost all grants. Ghiyasuddin Tughluq too cancelled large number of grants. However, Feroz Tughluq made a departure and not only returned all the previously resumed grants but also made new grants as well. In spite of this generosity of the Sultan, according to the figures recorded by Afif, the total grants by the Sultan accounted only for about one-twentieth of the total **jama** (estimated revenue income). Nobles, too, made revenue grants out of their own **iqtas.** Noticeably, the Sultans made grants not only in the **khalisa** but also in the **iqtas.** These grants covered cultivated as well as cultivable areas not yet brought under plough.

Check Your Progress 1

1) How will you define **iqta?**

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2) What changes were introduced in the **iqta** system by Muhammad Tughluq?

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3 Mark (√) against the correct and (×) against the wrong statements given below:

(a) Alauddin Khalji allowed the **muqtis** to keep the excess income from their **iqtas.**

(b) Ghiyasuddin Tughluq handed over **iqtas** to revenue-farmers.

(c) The **jama** under Feroz Tughluq meant the estimated revenue income.

19.3 LAND REVENUE AND ITS EXTRACTION

The Islamic land tax with which the new rulers of India were familiar was **kharaj.** The **kharaj** was essentially a share in the produce of the land and not a rent on the land.

During the 13th century, the **kharaj** took by and large the form of tribute. As mentioned earlier, this tribute was paid, in lump sum, either by the potentates

some arrangement. Alternatively, from the recalcitrant areas (**mawas**) where such arrangements were not possible, the tribute was extorted through plundering raids. It was thus probably mostly in the form of cattle and slaves.

The sources of Delhi Sultanate do not suggest that before the reign of Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) any serious attempt was made to systematise the assessment and realization of **kharaj.**

19.3.1 Agrarian Measures of Alauddin Khalji

You have already read (Block 5) in some detail about the agrarian measures of Alauddin Khalji. His attempt was to increase the revenue collection by enhancing the demand, introducing direct collection and cutting down the leakages to the intermediaries.

As you know, the demand was thus fixed in kind but realization appears to be mostly in cash. Barani informs us that the revenue collectors were ordered to demand the revenue with such rigour that the peasants should be forced to sell their produce immediately at the side of the fields. At another place, Barani says that Alauddin Khalji brought the Doab into **khalisa** and the tax (**mahsul**) from there was spent on paying the cash salaries to the soldiers.

Yet there is a rather contradictory statement by the same author that the Sultan ordered that the peasant should pay tax in kind and not in cash. According to Irfan Habib, it seems to have reference to only some parts of the **khalisa** in the Doab. From there the Sultan wanted to obtain supplies for his granaries. Otherwise the realization was normally in cash.

Yet these new measures affected the rural intermediaries which we will discuss in Unit 20.

The system of taxation introduced by Alauddin seems to have lasted for long though Ghiyasuddin Tughluq (1320-25) modified it to some extent and exempted the **khots** and **muqaddams** from paying tax on their cultivation and cattle. But he did not permit them to impose any cesses on the peasants.

19.3.2 Agrarian Measures of Muhammad Tughluq

Muhammad Tughluq, first extended Alauddin Khalji's system of revenue collection based on measurement to Gujarat, Malwa, Deccan, South India and Bengal. At a later stage, the scale of agrarian taxation was enhanced considerably. Barani's statement that the increase amounted to 20 or 10 times is undoubtedly a rhetoric but it certainly gives the impression of an enormous increase. Barani suggests that additional new imposts (**abwab**) were levied. Of the other taxes, **kharaj, charai** and **ghari** were more rigorously collected. According to Yahya, cattle were branded and cottages counted to avoid any concealments. But more important than these measures was the fact that for assessment of **kharaj, wafa-i-farmani** (officially decreed yields) and **nirkh-i-farmani** (officially decreed prices) were used. The statement very clearly implies that the yields and prices used for calculating revenue were not actual.

One could very well expect that the decreed yields and prices were certainly inflated. Use of inflated yields instead of actual and prices much higher than what were prevailing, had the obvious result of overstating the value of produce and thus the share of the state. This tremendous increase in revenue demand resulted in contraction of area under plough, flight of peasantry, and, as we will see in Unit 20 in a big peasant revolt in the Doab and around Delhi. This caused failure of grain supplies to Delhi and a famine that lasted for about seven years, from 1334-5 to 1342.

Faced with these problems, Muhammad Tughluq became the first Sultan to attempt to formulate an agricultural policy for promoting agriculture. He introduced the practice of giving agricultural loans named **sondhar** for increasing the area under plough and for digging wells for irrigation. Barani says that 70 **lakhs tankas** (according to Afif 2 **krors tankas**) were given till 1346-7 in **sondhar** but perhaps hardly any

A new ministry designated **diwan-i amir-i kohi** was established to promote agriculture. Its two main functions were to extend the area under cultivation and to reclaim the land that went out of cultivation and improving the cropping pattern. It was recommended that wheat should.be replaced by sugarcane and sugarcane by grapes and dates.

The Sultan was so determined to introduce his project of agricultural improvement that when a theologian said that giving loan in cash and receiving the interest in grain was sin, he executed him.

Barani, however, says that all these measures were almost a complete failure. Feroz Tughluq (1351-88) abandoned these projects but abolished agrarian cesses, forbade levying of **ghari** and **charai.** But he is reported to have imposed a separate tax – **jiziya** – distinct from **kharaj** (land-tax) on the peasants. He also introduced an irrigation tax in Haryana where he dug canals.

There is little information forthcoming for the intervening period but in all probability the land tax continued to be collected in cash by whomsoever be the rulers, till the time of Ibrahim Lodi (1517-26). Owing to the scarcity of currency and cheapening of the grains, he is reported to have ordered collection of land revenue in kind or in grain.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Discuss the land revenue system introduced by Alauddin Khalji.

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2) Indicate the correct and wrong statements given below by marking (√) or (×).

   (a) The areas which did not pay **kharaj** without the use of force were called **mawas.**

   (b) Ghiyasuddin Tughluq imposed tax on the cultivation and cattle of **khots** and **muqaddams.**

   (c) Ibrahim Lodi ordered for the collection of revenue in cash.

19.4 ALAUDDIN KHALJI'S MARKET CONTROL

Alauddin Khalji's measures did not remain confined to rural economy but extended to urban market as well. He is credited for issuing a set of seven regulations which came to be known as market-control measures. Barani,who is our main source on this aspect,is the only authority who gives these regulations in detail.

The Sultan fixed the prices of all commodities from grain to cloth, slaves, cattle, etc. (Regulation 1). These prices were really to be enforced since the Sultan carefully made all arrangements for making the measure a success. A controller of market (**shahna-i mandi**), **barids** (intelligence officers) and **munhiyan** (secret spies) were appointed (Reg. 2). The grain merchants were placed under the **shahna-i mandi** and sureties were taken from them (Reg. 4). The Sultan himself was to receive daily reports separately from these three sources (Reg. 7). Regrating (**ihtikar**) was prohibited (Reg. 5). While ensuring strict control in the market, the Sultan did not overlook the more essential requirement, namely the regular supply of grains and

No.	Commodities	Alauddin Khalji	Muhammad Tugluq	Feroz Tughluq
			(Prices in Jitals per maund)	
1.	Wheat	7½	12	8
2.	Barely	4	8	4
3.	Paddy	5	14	..
4.	Pulses	5	..	4
5.	Lentils	3	4	4
6.	Sugar (white)	100	80	..
7.	Sugur (soft)	60	64	120,140
8.	Sheep (mutton)	10-12	64	..
9.	Ghi (clarified butter)	16	..	100

Table of prices is reproduced from K.M. Ashraf, **Life and Condition of the people of Hindustan**, Delhi, 1970, p. 160. The table complied from different sources shows that the prices of these commodities went up under Muhammad Tughluq but dropped under Feroz Tughluq to the price level of Alauddin Khalji's reign.

1. Prices of some commodities as mentioned in contemporary accounts of the Sultanate period.

Obviously, the grain merchants could bring supplies to the market only if they could get the grains and that, too, at sufficiently low prices. It was apparently for this reason that the Sultan decreed such a rigour in realization of land revenue in the Doab that the peasants should be forced to sell the grain to the **karvanian** (the grain merchants) at the side of the field (Reg. 6).

The Sultan established granaries in Delhi and in Chhain in Rajasthan. The land tax from the **khalisa** in the Doab was realised in kind. The grain went to the state granaries (Reg. 3). The Multanis who were cloth merchants were given 20 **lakhs** of **tankas** as advance loan to purchase and bring cloth to the market.

The Sultan succeeded in maintaining low prices and ample supplies in the market as reported by all our authorities. But there are varying reasons mentioned for why the Sultan introduced the market control and in what region it was enforced. The poet courtier Amir Khusrau considers the measure to be of immense generosity taken for the welfare and comfort of all, the elite as well as the public at large. The Chishti divine Nasiruddin Mahmud (Chiragh Delhi) attributes it to the Sultan's effort to do good to all the people. But the historian Barani's view was totally different. He did not credit it to Sultan's benevolent intentions but gives a hard financial reason. The Sultan was anxious to have a large army and to take other precautions such as building of forts at strategic places, fortification wall around Delhi, etc. against the Mongol invasions. If numerous additional cavalrymen and troops were to be employed at the prevailing salaries, the drain from the state treasury was to exhaust it totally. The salaries could be reduced only if the prices were kept at a sufficiently low level.

Barani's reasoning appears of course more valid. Since the main **lashkargah** (army encampment) was in Delhi and most of the royal troops were to be stationed in or around Delhi, the main area of price control was Delhi itself. However, since the supplies of cheap grain were to be made available to the grain merchants in the surrounding districts of the Doab, the low prices ought to be prevalent there as well.

The market control did not survive its enforcer and we do not hear about it after Alauddin Khalji's time. A very efficient and alert administration was imperative for the success of price control. Therefore, one possible reason for its not surviving could be the lack of sufficiently competent administration. Irfan Habib, however, offers a different reason for the abandonment of price control by the successors of Alauddin Khalji. Since the prevalence of low prices implies lower revenues from the low-price zone, the price control was viable as long as the zone of low prices was restricted and most of the expenditure was concentrated there. With the Mongols no more remaining a threat, the army and the expenditure was to be dispersed more widely and not to be concentrated at and around Delhi alone. The interest of the state treasury was now in dismantling the price control.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Discuss the measures taken by Alauddin Khalji to introduce 'price control'.

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2) Explain briefly the reasons for:

(a) Introduction of price control according to Barani.

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(b) Dismantling of price control under the successors of Alauddin Khalji.

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19.. CURRENCY SYSTEM

The establishment of the Delhi Sultanate was marked by a considerable growth of money economy which accelerated particularly in the first half of the 14th century. Since the growth of money economy in simple words means larger use of currency in transactions (monetisation is another term for this phenomenon), a large scale minting of gold, silver and copper coins that followed the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate was an attendant process of the monetization of Indian economy.

The period prior to the foundation of the Delhi Sultanate was marked by the scarcity of coinage particularly of pure silver. The early Ghorid conquerors found mints uttering coins of copper with very small silver contents. Except an increase in the number of coins stamped, no changes were introduced in the beginning. The coins continued to bear the image of goddess Lakshmi or bull-and-horseman, etc. Only the name of the new ruler in a corrupt form got inscribed over it in Nagri script. These coins were called Dehliwal.

Iltutmish (1210-36) is credited for standardizing the coinage of the Delhi Sultanate. The currency system established by him in its essentials survived the Delhi Sultanate. He introduced gold and silver **tankas** and a copper **jital** that was reckoned at 1/48th of a **tanka** in North India and 1/50th in the Deccan after the conquest of Devagiri.

A firm ratio of 1:10 between gold and silver appears to have been established.

For studying the currency system we not only have the testimony of the chronicles but also the physical evidence available in the form of surviving coins (this is called numismatic evidence).

The Sultanate mints generally uttered coins in three metals: gold, silver and billon (copper mixed with very small quantity of silver). The main coins were **tanka** and **jital** but some smaller currencies were also in circulation. Barani mentions **dangs** and **dirams** in use at the capital Delhi. The equation between these currencies in the north has been worked out as:
1 silver **tanka** = 48 **jital** = 192 **dangs** = 480 **dirams**

The gold and silver remitted from Bengal was the main source of coinage during the 13th century. The seizure of treasure hoards in northern India and later in the Deccan was the other major source of silver and gold for coinage.

The Sultanate mints should not only have coined government money but also stamped bullion and foreign coins brought by the private merchants.

The silver currency remained dominant till the reign of Alauddin Khalji. From Ghiyasuddin Tughluq's reign, a decline in silver coinage in relation to gold and billon set in. Under Muhammad Tughluq gold coinage overshadowed the silver, and silver coinage practically disappeared under Feroz Tughluq. In the 15th century, billon coinage dominated (the Lodis (1451-1526) uttered no other coins).

Token Currency of Muhammad Tughluq

The only major innovation in the currency system established by Iltutmish was made by Muhammad Tughluq. The Sultan introduced a coin of copper and brass alloy and reckoned it at the value of a silver **tanka.** This coin for the first time carried an inscription in Persian. This new currency whose face value was much higher than its intrinsic value (that is, value of the metal it was made of) is termed as token currency. The introduction of token currency was already attempted in sister Asian empires. In China, Qublai Khan (1260-94) had introduced a token currency of paper and the experiment was successful. In Persia, Kaikhatu Khan (1293), too, tried to introduce a token currency but the attempt failed.

Muhammad Tughluq's experiment, too, met total failure perhaps owing to the fact that the new currency could easily be forged. Barani says rhetorically that every 'Hindu' household became a mint. However, the Sultan accepted the failure with grace and exchanged all the token currency brought to the treasury with pure currency.

Check Your Progress 4

1) Discuss the introduction of 'token currency'.

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2) Mark (√) against the statement if it is true and (×) if false.
   (a) Alauddin Khalji established the currency system of the Sultanate.
   (b) One silver **tanka** was equal to 48 **jitals** in North India.
   (c) The main source of silver for coinage in the Deccan were the treasure hoards of the local rulers.
   (d) Silver coins in Feroz Tughluq's reigh outnumbered gold coins.

19.6 SLAVERY AND SLAVE TRADE

The Ghorians found slavery in existence in India where it had an ancient history. They certainly had no ethical qualms about it. Slavery was permitted in Islam and it was prevalent in the Islamic world. According to Irfan Habib, the Ghaznavid and the Ghorid invasions of Northern India, like Julius Caeser's invasions of Britain, were partly for acquiring slaves. The success of a campaign was to be measured by the number of captives acquired along with gold, silver, cattle and horses. Qutbuddin Aibak captured 20 thousand slaves in his Gujarat campaign of 1195 and 50 thousand slaves in raid on Kalinjar in 1202. Even after the establishment of the Sultanate, the enslavement continued through campaigns in yet to be conquerred areas. One of the main objects of Balban's raid of Ranthambor and Malik Kafur's campaigns in the Deccan was to get slaves.

Another source of getting captives was the plunder raids of rebellious villages (**mawas**) in the Sultanate that refused to pay the **kharaj** or tribute. The number of slaves received from these sources was enormous. There were 50,000 slaves in Alauddin Khalji's (1296-1316) establishment. The number increased to 1,80,000 under Feroz Tughluq (1351-88). Besides the Sultans, nobles had their private large retinues of slaves including large number of concubines. Even the respectable poor kept slaves.

The slaves were of great use to the new ruling class that needed things fashioned to

their taste. At the beginning, it might have been somewhat difficult for the traditional Indian craftsmen and artisans to adjust themselves to the demands of the new aristocracy and to new production technology such as spinning wheel, carding bow, etc. The previously unskilled slaves could be trained in any craft. Feroz Tughluq's slaves included 12,000 artisans.

There was a large slave market. The prices of slaves of the two sexes and of various ages fixed under Alauddin Khalji are recorded by Barani. The abundance of slaves encouraged continuous export of slaves from India to the Islamic World. But Feroz Tughluq prohibited the export of slaves.

Check Your Progress 5

1) Indicate the correct statement by marking (√) and wrong by (×).
   (a) Slaves were maintained only by the Sultan and his nobles.
   (b) Ghorid campaigns were partly invasions of slave raiders.
   (c) Feroz Tughluq had a large number of slave artisans.
   (d) Alauddin Khalji prohibited export of slaves from India.

2) What were the main sources of supply of slaves in the Delhi Sultanate?

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19.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, you have studied the impact of the Delhi Sultanate on Indian economy We have traced how gradually the previously existing systems of revenue collection and distribution changed, cash nexus grew, and pure silver currency was introduced.

19.8 KEY WORDS

Jital	:	A coper coin; 48 **jital** = **1 tanka**
Karwanian	:	Grain Merchants
Kharaj	:	Land revenue
Mahsul	:	Estimated revenue
Mawas	:	Rebellious area/village where land revenue was extracted by the use of force
Madrasa	:	A Muslim educational institution
Milk, Idrar, Inam	:	Revenue free grants
Wajh/Wajhdar	:	See Block 5
Wali	:	**Iqta**-holder/provincial governor

19.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sub-sec. 19.2.1

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sub -sec. 19.3.1
2) (a) √ (b) × (c) ×

Check Your Progress 3

1) See Sec. 19.4
2) See Sec. 19.4

Check Your Progress 4

1) See Sec. 19.5
2) (a) × (b) √ (c) √ (d) ×

Check Your Progress 5

1) (a) × (b) √ (c) √ (d) ×
2. See Sec. 19.6