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### RESEARCH ARTICLE

#### AURANGZEB'S APPROACH APPLIED IN THE MUGHAL MILITARY CAMPAIGN INVOLVING THE DECCAN REGION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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#### Abstract

Aurangzeb (1658-1707) was the Mughal emperor who succeeded his father Shah Jahan after successfully defeating his siblings in his efforts to seize the throne of the Mughal Empire. He is known for his strict religious personality and adherence to Sunni beliefs, besides exercising a firm and disciplined leadership. Aurangzeb decided to launch a military campaign during his reign into the Deccan region with the intention of overthrowing the Bijapur and Golconda Sultanates. Aurangzeb decided to conquer the region as he had the experience of once being the Viceroy of Deccan and faced numerous conflicts that threatened the Mughal rule. Hence, Aurangzeb designed an approach to expand his power and deal with the problem. This study aims to conduct a literature review of Aurangzeb's approach in the Mughal power expansion campaign into the Deccan region. This qualitative study adopted the historical study and content analysis methods for the data collection and analysis processes, particularly involving primary and secondary data sources. The literature review was divided into three main sections, namely the history and development of the Deccan region, the Mughal Empire's relationship with the Deccan region and Aurangzeb's political biography. Discussions of the three main themes of this literature review facilitates further research, specifically in identifying factors that influenced the expansion of the Mughal Empire into the Deccan region.

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#### Introduction:-

The Deccan region is located in an area of varied topography lying south of the Gangetic plain between the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, including a large area north of the Satpura Range, which is generally considered to be the dividing line between northern India and Deccan. The plateau is bounded in the east and west by the Ghats, while on the north is the Vindhya Range. The average elevation of the Deccan is about 600 meters (2,000 ft) and the

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surface of the range slopes towards the east. The main rivers in this region are the Godavari, Krishna, and Kaveri, flowing from the Western Ghats eastwards to the Bay of Bengal. Tiruvannamalai in Tamil Nadu is often considered the Southern gateway to the Deccan plateau.

Aurangzeb was born in Gujarat, in the city of Dohad in 1618. His early political career began as the viceroy of Deccan (1636-1637), after he successfully led the Mughal army to crush the rebellion by Jhujhar Singh Bundela (Sarkar, 1962). Aurangzeb's appointment as the viceroy of Deccan was a recognition of his leadership as he was only 18 years old at that time. During his time as the viceroy of Deccan, Aurangzeb created four districts (Khandesh, Berar, Telingana and Dawlatabad) in the region to facilitate the movement of government machinery. In addition, Aurangzeb also consolidated the Mughal position in the Deccan region by signing agreements with several small sultanates, including the Bijapur and Golconda. Among the core elements of the agreement was the Mughal's recognition of Adil Shah as the ruler of Bijapur and Adil Shah's acceptance of Mughal patronage over the Deccan region (Haq, 1962). The agreement was presumably a form of peace bond between the Mughal Empire and the various kingdoms in the Deccan region because the region was often turbulent and described as a 'thorn in the flesh' by the Mughal Empire. Aurangzeb's appointment as the viceroy of Deccan for the second time had an impact on his personality and rule. His experience in the Deccan when he was the viceroy was a key factor as to why he acted decisively against the kingdoms in the region when he was the Mughal ruler. This qualitative study had adopted historical study and content analysis methods in the data collection process. The collected data were then analysed using the thematic analysis method and organized based on pre-determined themes.

### Literature Review:-

The literature review was categorized into three main topics, namely History and Expansion of the Deccan Region; the Mughal's Relationship with the Deccan Region; and Aurangzeb's Political Biography.

#### 1. History and Expansion of the Deccan Region

Mohd. Thariq Anwar (2008) examined the 'Nobility in the Kingdom of Bijapur' from its establishment in 1489 to its capture in 1686 by Aurangzeb and emplaced in the Mughal Empire. This study analysed the noble institutions in the Sultanate of Bijapur, which covered an area between the Bhima River and the Tungabhadra River. The Bijapur formed a relationship with the Maratha tribe as both parties needed each other to fend off attacks by the Mughal Empire. Hence, both these parties (Bijapur and Maratha) were considered to be a threat to the political expansion of the Mughal Empire in India. Geibble (1896) discussed the history of the Deccan region, including the geographical and demographic characteristics of the region. The study found that the Deccan region covered a large part of southern India, which was almost an area the size of Great Britain. The Deccan region was also considered to be an advantage in terms of economy since this region had the largest gold mine in the sub-continent. Moreover, the geography of this region, which places it on the sea trade route, also makes the Deccan region a significant area of concern in the context of economic dominance in India.

Fischel (2016) discussed the history of the Deccan Sultanates, which replaced the Bahmani Sultanate as a ruling party in the region. Among the kingdoms that emerged under the crimson of the Deccan Sultanates were the Ahmadnagar Sultanate founded by Nizam Shahi, Berar Sultanate founded by 'Imad Shahi, Bijapur Sultanate founded by 'Adil Shahi, Bidar Sultanate founded by Baridis and the Golconda Sultanate founded by Qutb Shahi. The study stated that the Deccan Sultanates inherited the administrative, social and cultural aspects formerly introduced by the Bahmani Kingdom. In general, the Deccan Sultanate's development period can be divided into three, namely the Emergence and Unification Period (1482-1565), Stability Period (1565-1636) as well as the Decline and Fall Period (1636-1687).

According to Leonard (2009), the Mughal Empires decline is related to its military campaign to claim the Deccan region. Although the Deccan region was successfully captured by the Mughal Empire in 1687, the success had a negative impact on the economy of the Mughal Empire because the Mughal Empire had to spend more to strengthen its political position in the region. The *mansabdar* and *zamindar*'s roles in guaranteeing Mughal political dominance in the region had required the Mughal Empire to use enormous financial recourses to 'buy' their loyalty to the Mughal government. In addition, the high level of indebtedness among the Mughal aristocrats in the Deccan to Mughal banking firms also led to the decline of the Mughal economy. This led to a decline in the dominance of the Deccan region and a negative impact on the Mughal Empire's treasury. Meanwhile, Raghubans (2014) focused on the artistic achievements of the Deccan Sultanate. The pluralistic society in the Deccan region had made the art of that time rich with various elements, including the elements of Hindu aesthetics. In fact, the integration of Islamic

and Hindu elements exists in architectural motifs and decorative art including paintings. The harmonious co-existence of these rich cultural and religious elements can be witnessed in some buildings today, such as palaces, mosques, tombs and madrasahs.

Thomas (2014) had examined the development of the Deccan Sultanates based on Portuguese sources. He mentioned about the location of several kingdoms in the Deccan Sultanates, such as Ahmadnagar and Bijapur, which were located adjacent to the Portuguese colony of Goa. He also noted the migration of Persians, including influential individuals, to the Deccan region. These factors enabled the cementing of a close relationship between the various kingdoms in the Deccan region and the Safavid Empire in Persia instead of the Mughal Empire, which controlled the northern part of India. This close relationship led to the hastening of bilateral relations between the Deccan region and Persia, both in diplomatic relations and trade. Consequently, this development posed a threat to the Mughal Empire's position because it was flanked by two areas that are political rivals to the Mughal Empire.

## **2. The Relationship Between the Mughal Empire and the Deccan Region**

According to Osborne (2020), the Mughal Empire was at its peak during the reign of Aurangzeb (1658-1707) but the glory began to decline after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707. However, the decline had begun much earlier when the integrity of the Mughal economy was threatened due to the expansion efforts into the Deccan region. Although the Mughal Empire managed to control the region, the cost of military operations in the Deccan region was enormous by Mughal standards. Moreover, the constant threat from the Marathas, who often launched guerilla attacks against the Mughal positions in the Deccan region, also added to the problem. Hence, the success of controlling the Deccan region did not have an overall positive impact on the power and grasp of the Mughal Empire because Aurangzeb had to deal with various other issues, both from economic and political standpoints, until he died.

Kumar (2013) opined that the Deccan region was one of the main threats faced by the Mughal Empire, besides the Safavid and Uzbek Empires. The threat to the Deccan region was not only limited to the rejection of the Mughal Empire's presence in the Deccan by the Ahmadnagar, Bijapur and Golconda Sultanates. The appearance of the Marathas also added to the confusion faced by the Mughal Empire in the region. However, military action initiated by Aurangzeb had managed to overcome the problem after successfully defeating the Bijapur and Golconda Sultanates and dealing with the constant threat of the Marathas. Eaton (2005) also touched on the bilateral agreement between the Golconda Sultanate and the Mughal Empire. The agreement signalled the Golconda's recognition of the Mughal Empire during the reign of Shah Jahan. Based on the agreement, the Golconda Sultanate was required to pay an annual tribute and recite a prayer during the Friday sermon in the name of Shah Jahan. In order to strengthen the Mughal Empire's position in the Deccan region at that time, Shah Jahan appointed Aurangzeb as the viceroy. Aurangzeb's experience as a viceroy had influenced his political and military policies while he was at the helm of the Mughal Empire. Aurangzeb initiated military action against the Deccan region due to the confusion that arose and he failed to resolve the issues when he was the viceroy of the Deccan.

Meanwhile, Ashiq (2017) had examined the relationship between the Deccan region and Iran, from prehistoric times until the reign of the Mughal Empire, in the context of trade and diplomacy. The Deccan Sultanate's existence indirectly strengthened its political tendency towards the Safavid Kingdom that ruled Persia at the time because both kingdoms had a common characteristic, whereby both kingdoms were followers of the Shia sect and strongly supported by Persian aristocrats. Therefore, the close relationship amongst several kingdoms in the Deccan region with the Safavid Kingdom was also considered a threat to the Mughal Empire in India. This situation forced Aurangzeb to mobilize a military expedition to fully wrest control of the Deccan region. Ziauddin (2008) examined the same aspects, especially discussing the Persian nobles who served in India, either in the Mughal Empire's administration or in that of the Bijapur and Golconda Sultanates. The role of the Persian nobility is seen as being important for the Indian government as they were skilled, brilliant, rich and highly capable in carrying out administrative tasks.

## **3. Aurangzeb's Political Biography**

Mohd Roslan and Mohamad Zulfazdlee (2017) had discussed Aurangzeb's political biography, especially his transgressions with Dara Shikuh, which led to a civil war with the aim of seizing the throne of the Mughal Empire in 1657. Differences in ideology and approach between Dara Shikuh and Aurangzeb not only involved these two stalwarts but also involved Shah Jahan's other sons, namely Shah Shuja' and Murad. Aurangzeb's experience as the viceroy to the Deccan region for two tours gave him an advantage in competing for the throne until he succeeded in eliminating the rivalry posed by his siblings. The success finally placed Aurangzeb as the Mughal ruler in 1658.

Ajid (2009) had also discussed the development of Mughal politics during Aurangzeb's reign, which witnessed the oppression of Hindus, including restricting the opportunity to serve in the government. Besides that, Aurangzeb's harsh policies towards non-Muslims included the destruction of Hindu temples, enforcing the *jizyah* tax and compiling the *Fatawa 'Alamgiri* legal code. In general, Aurangzeb's political approach can be described as harsh and unfavourable to non-Muslims. Shapiah (2001) opined that Aurangzeb's political approach often created controversy because there were two views on the approach, either it was a favourable or unfavourable view. Nevertheless, Aurangzeb is described as a strong leader who supported and instilled Islamic values in his administration due to him being a principled Muslim who always aspired to uphold Shariah values in his government. In addition, his close relationship with religious scholars also shaped his leadership style, which was influenced by Islamic values.

Bilal et al. (2020) had contradicted with what Ajid has stated earlier. He described Aurangzeb as a Muslim leader who always strived to cater justice for all his people, including Hindus. Aurangzeb provided various financial assistance to refurbish Hindu temples during his reign. In addition, he also appointed several qualified Hindus to be involved in the Mughal government, both in the administrative and military sectors. In fact, the *mansab* system, which is the main system involved in the formation of the Mughal military hierarchy, also attracted Aurangzeb's attention as well as the interest of Hindu figures who eventually became involved in the Mughal military movement.

### Conclusion:-

Aurangzeb was seen as being seriously committed and diligent in conquering the Deccan region throughout his reign. His composure and outlook changed compared to when he was the viceroy to Deccan once upon a time as he became very puritanical and unrelenting towards this small government. This study found indications that something happened and caused Emperor Aurangzeb to become unrelenting and merciless towards the Sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda. In addition, Indian scholars labelled Aurangzeb as a failed and cruel Emperor because he presumably cruel and showed no mercy towards the Indian people at that time. However, Islamic and Western scholars found Aurangzeb to be a noble character who vehemently adhered to his faith. Aurangzeb extended tremendous assistance to his people regardless of race or religion. Hence, although the Mughal Empire showed signs of decline towards the end of his reign, the blame was not solely on Aurangzeb's shoulders as there were other factors in play.

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