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Local versus Global: Changing Patterns of Power in an Isolated Province of Afghanistan (2001-2011)

This presentation will discuss the changing patterns of power in the isolated province of Uruzgan, southern Afghanistan, in the years after the ousting of the Taliban in late 2001. Uruzgan is of particular interest in many ways. It is the province where Mullah Omar, the leader of the Taliban movement, grew up and set up his first militia camps in the early 1990s, before he moved to the Kandahar area. It is hence also the place of origin of many current Taliban leaders. It is furthermore the province where Hamid Karzai started his insurrection against the Taliban in late 2001. And it was the province that between 2006 and 2010 was (partially) controlled by a non-American, non-British military task force, from the Netherlands, that together with mainly Australian military and diplomats followed a policy of close communication with the local population and its leaders. All these various aspects led to a very special development that was successful in including many groups, ethnic, social, political, and historically formed, into a drive towards stability that also included representatives of the Taliban. This presentation is mainly based on my own experiences in Uruzgan between 2008 and 2011 as cultural and regional advisor to the Uruzgan Task Force.

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Some Aspects of Legitimacy of the Mongol Head Lamas and the Political Role of Buddhism in the Process of Forming the Mongolian State

Nowadays the majority of Mongolia's population still consider themselves Buddhists. This may be considered the state religion of this country and one of the central elements of Mongolian identity. In March, 2012, after the death of the 9th Bogd Jebtsundamba, the Head of the Mongolian Church, the attention started to focus on the problem of reversion of Mongolian Buddhist leaders. This question is interesting not just because nowadays there is a great opportunity for redefining this function, but because some of the previous incarnations played a substantial political role in the Mongolian history after the 17th century. This role is rooted in their spiritual and their political legitimation. Öndör Gegen, the first Mongolian Head lama got his political legitimation earlier than spiritual, as the Dalai Lama invested him as Bogdo Gegen later. The political role of the following incarnations became smaller and their investiture by the Manchu emperors was considered mostly formal. In 1911 this situation has basically changed by the invention of the 8th Bogdo Gegen. But the question is that, was he really the first theocrat in the Mongolian history, and in 1911 did Mongolia become a theocracy? What was the role of the Buddhism in the preservation of Mongolian identity in

the Manchu Period, and in the forming of modern Mongolian state in the beginning of 20th century?

Now in this paper I would like to shortly review the political role of the Mongolian Head Lamas focusing on the questions mentioned above.