

the terms. The final authority was the National Assembly, which was composed of representatives from all over Tibet, but chiefly from the three great monasteries at Lhasa. Both monks and laymen attended as well as many officials, but the Councillors (Sha-pés) were not included in it, and the Dalai Lama had no representative there.

I told the Ta Lama that this seemed rather extraordinary, for the Councillors were presumably the most able men in the State, and yet their counsels were liable to be overridden by the decision of a body of irresponsible and less capable men. "Supposing," I said, "that the Dalai Lama and the Councillors wished to agree to the terms I was asking and the National Assembly declined to agree, whose views would be adopted?" The Ta Lama said that the Dalai Lama and the Councillors never disagreed with the National Assembly, for the decision of the latter was final. I said this made matters very difficult for me; for I negotiated with the Councillors as being the leading men in the State, and yet they could not even enter the National Assembly to report what I had said to them. The Ta Lama said the custom was for the Councillors to send one of the secretaries to present their views to the National Assembly. I asked who presided, what was the number of representatives, and whether the decision was arrived at by votes. He said no one presided, that there were about 500 representatives, and that they arrived at a decision by discussing till they were all of one mind.

I remarked that in these circumstances the negotiations promised to last a considerable time. Did he think they would be concluded in a year? He said a good deal depended upon how we proposed to set about negotiating. If we took each point separately, and had it discussed in the National Assembly till agreed to, the settlement might be made fairly quickly; but if we gave the whole treaty in a lump, and said this and nothing less must be agreed to, he did not think a settlement would ever be made.

I told the Ta Lama that it was a matter of indifference