

illustrated in diagram *B*, the string being doubled and converted by twisting from a single into a double ply. The covering-tablet having then been put into its proper place, its reverse lying flush with the obverse of the under-tablet, the running loop was drawn tight over the pointed ends of both tablets, and the string passed along the reverse of the under-tablet towards the position of the seal-socket, as seen in diagram *C*. Here the string was laid in regular cross-folds, invariably arranged after the fashion shown by diagram *D*, and visible also in N. i. 103 (Plate IC), over the seal-socket, the grooves communicating with the latter being used to hold the folds in their proper position. Finally, the loose end of the string, after having been passed through the groove of the upper edge nearest to the point of the tablets, was slung over the longitudinal portion of the fastening on the reverse of the under-tablet and, having been drawn tight there, tied into a knot as diagram *C* shows. The socket of the seal was then filled with clay, covering the folds of the string. When once the seal of the sender had been impressed into the clay, it became impossible to separate the pair of tablets without either breaking the seal impression or cutting the string.

Opening
of sealed
'double
wedges'.

The ingenious arrangement here described rendered the communication written on the inner sides of the tablets absolutely safe against unauthorized inspection and any sort of tampering. If the recipient wished to preserve the sealing and also to retain a convenient fastening for the tablets after having acquainted himself with the contents—an obvious advantage whenever such letters had to be kept for subsequent reference—he had only to cut the string near the string-hole. The under-tablet could then easily be slid out from the folds of string running beneath the seal, and after being read be passed back again into its original position just as we can do this now, after so many centuries, in the case of the double tablets (N. xv. 24, 137) reproduced in Plates XCVIII, IC.

Seal at
string-hole
of 'double
wedge'.

There might have been cases in which it was important for the recipient of a 'double wedge' communication, after having opened and read it, to have the connexion of the two tablets attested in an unmistakable manner. An interesting instance of this kind may probably be recognized in the double tablet N. xv. 71 (Plate C), which, besides retaining all the arrangements needed for the regular fastening, including a portion of the string, shows a pendent seal of fairly hard reddish clay attached to a separate short string that passed through the string-hole of both tablets and holds them together. The string used for this purpose seems different in quality from the one which served for the regular fastening; and I conclude from this, as well as from the narrowness of the string-hole, which could scarcely have been intended for two strings, that the present fastening, with its pendent seal, was applied to the document *after* the latter had been opened. Probably this opening was effected by breaking the seal originally filling the socket, which was found empty. Else this seal in its protected position would have been more likely to survive than the wholly exposed one near the string-hole. It is scarcely necessary to point out that the latter seal was manifestly used in the same way as a seal that would be attached to the string or tape uniting several sheets of a modern legal document.

Addressing
of wedge-
shaped
tablets.

Leaving the seals to be described further on, in connexion with those presented on rectangular tablets, I may complete this account of the wedge-shaped documents by a brief reference to the entries invariably appearing on the outside surfaces of well-preserved specimens. The obverse of the covering-tablet always shows, written from the edge of the square end towards the seal cavity, and in some instances, where this space did not suffice, extending beyond it, the name and title of the person or persons to whom the letter was addressed. Thus on the covering-tablet of N. xv. 24, 137 (Plate XCVIII, IC) we read the address *Cojhbo Somjakasa*, 'to the Cojhbo Somjaka'. This is the title and name of the official to whom, as I had already realized