

pair of tablets was completely protected against any attempt at unauthorized inspection or tampering before delivery to the addressee. The latter, after satisfying himself that the seal impression was intact, could get access to the contents either by cutting the string near the string-hole, and then sliding out the under tablet from the folds of string running beneath the seal, or else by severing these folds. In the former case he retained a convenient fastening for the two pieces, being able to pass the under tablet back again into its original position, as we can still do now with a number of double wedges first opened many centuries ago. The name and title of the addressee are invariably shown to the right of the seal cavity on the obverse of the covering tablet, while a corresponding entry found ordinarily on the reverse of the under tablet records the name of the messenger or other person entrusted with the document.

Curiously enough none of the wedge-shaped double tablets so far deciphered seems to bear a distinct indication of the sender. But this peculiarity, so strange at first sight, becomes intelligible in the light of what information is already available about the general character and contents of these missives. Their official origin was made clear to me from the first by the introductory formula found invariably at the commencement: *Mahanuava maharaya lihati*, "His Excellency the Maharaja orders in writing." Since then the researches of Professor Rapson and his collaborators have brought out the fact that the wedge-shaped double tablets were generally, if not always, intended for the conveyance of brief orders which concerned the bearer, or in the execution of which the bearer was to co-operate. Thus all the fully translated tablets of this class prove to contain directions about the supply of transport and escort to official messengers, about aid to be given to them in certain enquiries, or for the apprehension of fugitives, etc.

It thus becomes highly probable that these 'wedges' represent warrants issued for the purpose of accrediting persons charged with the execution of administrative orders, and of securing for them the needful assistance of the local authority. The clay impression from the seal of the superior officer sufficed to attest the order which his