

messenger or agent would be expected to set forth verbally with all requisite details. Perhaps we may take it as a sign of the superior importance attached to these verbally transmitted orders that several of the double wedge tablets were discovered unopened. In the case of a well-known official messenger presenting his warrant with its seal intact, examination of the brief and formal mention of his business within the document might well have appeared superfluous.

Of the rectangular double tablets I have already had occasion to discuss the probable purport. The fact of so many of them having been found unopened and with seals intact in that hidden deposit of the ruin N. xxiv. is significant, as also is the frequency of double and treble seals impressed upon them. If such tablets were used ordinarily for agreements, contracts, bonds, or other official records intended eventually to serve as legal evidence, we can understand the care and ingenuity bestowed upon their make and method of fastening. The under tablet, as can be seen from the illustration given of a complete document (Fig. 94), was provided with a raised rim on either of the shorter sides. Between these rims fitted exactly a covering tablet, the obverse of which, in its raised centre, had a square or oblong socket for the reception of one or more clay seals. In order to assure exact fitting the pair of tablets seem always to have been cut out of one piece.

The obverse of the under tablet served for the reception of the text written in lines parallel to the longer side. Where necessary it was continued on the reverse of the covering tablet. The latter was then fastened securely to the under tablet by means of a double-stranded string passed tightly over both in successive folds, which were firmly kept in position by three grooves cut on the obverse of the covering tablet and communicating with the seal-cavity. When once the folds of string laid through the socket had been secured under a clay seal inserted there, it became quite impossible to separate the covering and under tablets without either cutting the exposed folds or completely breaking the seal. Thus any unauthorized