

by: Al Saguto

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The following is merely a condensed collation of some principle primary references to this item; and is intended to provide a bit of background and rationale for making a conjectural replica - one design for which appears at the conclusion.

TERMINOLOGY

The English words "snapsack(e)" and "knapsack" both derive from the Dutch term knapzak: knap meaning food, and zak meaning sack. In Dutch the initial letter K is pronounced, as it quite probably was in early 17th century English. Our language still retained many vestiges of Medieval pronunciation, including at this period a verbal registration of the letter K in words like "knight", "knees", etc. Quite uncharacteristically the French, too, adapted the Dutch word knapzak as canapsa, implying that the K sound was an essential feature of the term.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary and other [Dutch] sources, the word first enters the Dutch language in the 16th century, and found its way into both English and French by c. 1600. The English spelling "knapsack" is by far the most dominant from c. 1600, with the "snapsack" variant being popular only between c. 1650 to c. 1700. Why the term was first adopted into English [and French], evidently with the K sounded, then changed to an S for a time, and finally reduced to the modern silent K [ie nap-sak] is not readily explained. Since "k/snapsack" enters our language about the same time as Dutch military innovations, such as collars of bandoleers, were being adopted in England and elsewhere, it might be possible that it was a peculiarly Dutch form at the time. Or, that this new name for the old kit bag was thought to be trendy, and introduced by English soldiers returning from conflicts on the Continent. Either explanation has its merits.

Obviously soldiers, hunters, and foot-travelers have always carried some sort of wearable luggage, to hold food, clothing, and other essentials, so a quick survey of English terms used prior to "k/snapsack" will be helpful here. The word "scrip" or "scryppe" seems by far the most popular in early English sources, with "budget" usually meaning a smaller slung pouch. A "pack" generally indicated a securely-wrapped bundle of goods, such as cloth, with "poke" suggesting a specific volume package. In short, one carried "packs" and "pokes", but one wore a "scrip". In 1610 one reference mentions a shepherd's boy wearing a "hanging scrip of the finest Cordevan [leather]". And as late as Charles Dickens' writings, an English "scrip" was worn "hanging with a long strap round his neck...in which to carry food". Contrary to popular use today, the term "haversack", from the French havresac, specifically meant an "oat-sack" or nosebag for a horse. These were originally carried by cavalry troops to feed their mounts. "Haversack" is not recorded in English until c. 1680, and did not come to mean a canvas bag for carrying food for humans until the mid 18th century. And the familiar "rucksack", from German, did not enter our language until c. 1895, when it meant "a kind of knapsack worn by tourists"!

In the English settlements in America, the words "knapsack" and "snapsack" are to be found as well. In 1607 Captain John Smith, in Virginia, wrote of having a man to carry his "Gowne and Knapsack", and later in the 17th century old leather "snapsacks" are found listed in Maryland's colonial inventories.

DESCRIPTIONS

Now that we have an idea of the terms used for these items, it is sad to say that written clues regarding what they looked like and how, exactly, they were made are woefully vague. By simply identifying the terms, however, two basic forms emerge: side slung envelope bags, and securely wrapped bundles hefted on the shoulders or tied to the end of a stick "hobbo style", the former being the "scrip" and the latter the "pack" or possibly "poke". The third type to remain is the tube-like sack worn diagonally slung across the back, most popularly associated with the 17th century soldiery - this is likely the item known as a "k/snapsack". By way of description, it is not "conical but like a souldiers' pera or Snapsack", according to one 1670 reference. Another source, the surviving contracts for equipment ordered by the New Model Army, include, for the year 1645, a contract with a London leatherseller for 11,200 "snapsacks...large and of good leather" at 9d. each, and produced at a rate as high as 500 in a ten day period. In 1645 the New Model Army contracted out for a total of 20,400 "snapsacks", and in only one reference are non-leather ones even alluded to, this being a shipment of provisions to the army stationed in Ireland which was wrapped in canvas suitable to be made up into "snapsacks".

Art history sources will be presented in the following illustrations, however, one significant painting of Spanish troops at the seige of Aire-sur-la-Lys in 1641, could not be satisfactorily reproduced here. In this is shown a soldier sitting in the foreground with his back to the viewer, he is wearing a rather sad looking tube-sack of leather with the brown hair still on slung across his back. Hair-on leather, especially goatskin, became popular for British military kit bags after the Restoration and on into the 18th century, where "hair", "fur", and goatskin is frequently mentioned in regulations and descriptions. Other contemporary illustrations not reproduced here, seem to corroborate this, as all of them show smooth sacks, not furry ones, as well as additional details such as buckles on the end of the shoulder straps.

CONCLUSIONS

If indeed by exclusion by definition and identification by type, the diagonally slung tube-sack is not a "scrip" or "pack", then it quite likely is the "k/snapsack" referred to in the references we are concerned with. Leather is the most frequently mentioned material for these, and that they could be competently produced by a leatherseller, as opposed to a leather trade used to complex pattern-cutting, and stitching, at the rate of 500 in ten days, might suggest that at least the "snapsacks" for the New Model Army in 1645 were very simple items, perhaps made from a skin folded in half and sewn down along its length with a shoulder strap added.

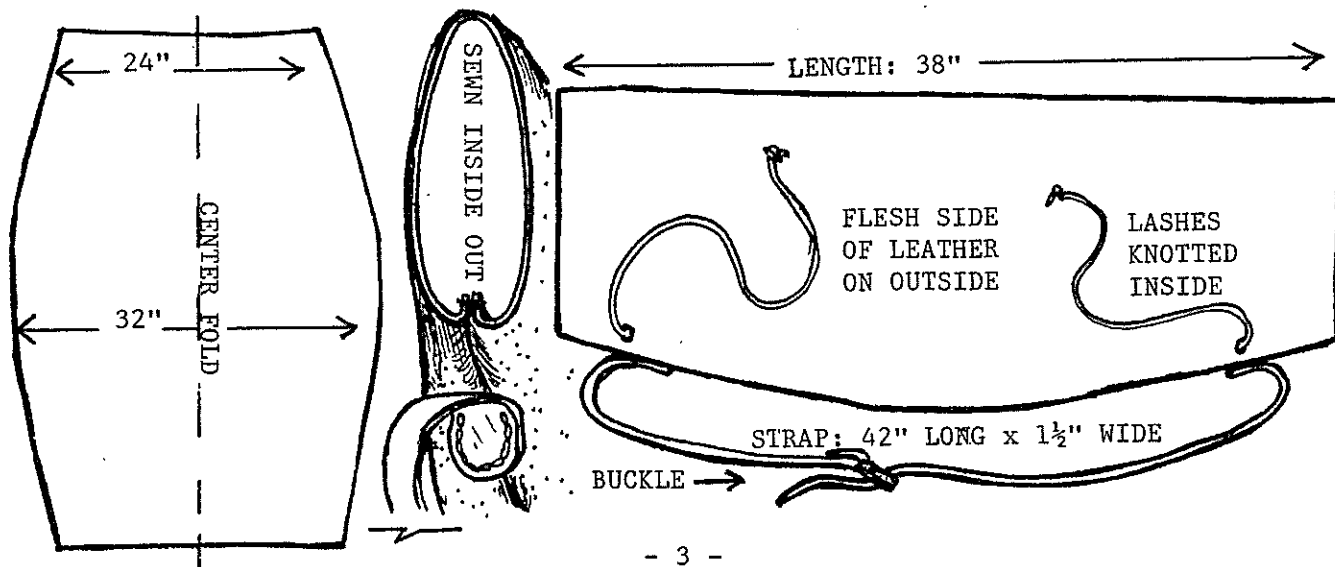
The concluding illustrations have been selected to show a suitable, simple, design of "k/snapsack" which could be easily reproduced in a medium weight [3 to 4 oz.] vegetable-tanned calf or kip skin. All factors considered, this design is felt to be as justifiable as any, and more so than some now being produced for use in living history.

ILLUSTRATIONS

- Figure 1 English, dated 1613, shows a "Foot Post" wearing a side-slung envelope "scrip", which seems to be pleated along the top.
- Figure 2 English, c. 1625-50, suspiciously similar to the previous illustration, this shows a "Countryman" with a side-slung envelope "scrip", with what appears to be both side gussets and an interestingly shaped flap with button closure.
- Figure 3 English, c. 1641, a peddler carrying a "pack", or perhaps a "poke".
- Figure 4 English, c. 1641, another peddler hefting his "pack" or "poke".
- Figure 5 English, c. 1650, a "pack" or "poke" carried hobbo style on the end of a stick. Certain English tradesmen carried their tool kit in such a manner until quite recently.
- Figure 6 French, by Callot, c. 1620's, a Gypsie "Captain" wearing a tube-sack "k/snapsack" across his back. The bag looks to be made of patches, but clearly shows the ends lashed closed.
- Figure 7 French, by Callot, 1620's, two pilgrims, one wears a tube-sack "k/snapsack" with the end lashed shut and a seam running the length of the bag.
- Figure 8 French, by Callot, 1620's, a soldier with a tube-sack "k/snapsack" worn across his back, again with the end lashed shut.
- Figure 9 English, c. 1645, this "Starving Souldier In Ireland" has at his feet an empty tub-sack "k/snapsack" which seems to show both ends open and the lashing cords dangling free with no signs of holes for a draw-string closure. Also visible is part of the shoulder strap. The indications of wrinkles at both ends would seem to confirm lashed closing, rather than a sinched-up draw-string. This is the only known English representation of the "k/snapsack", and significantly it agrees almost exactly with the details of the Continental illustrations.

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Below are approximate dimensions and a diagram of a successful replica



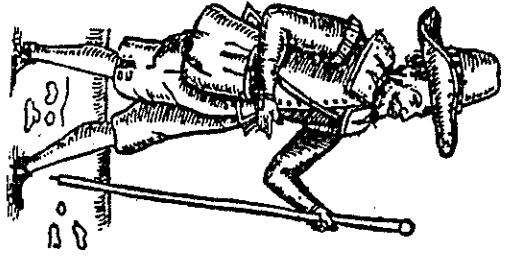


Fig. 1

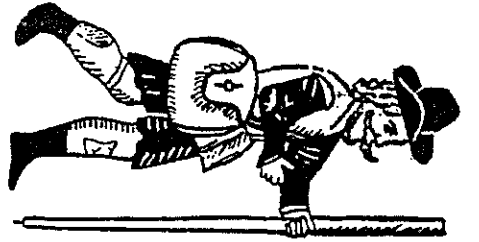


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

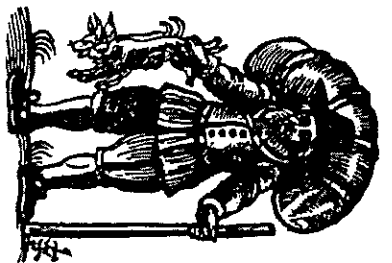


Fig. 4

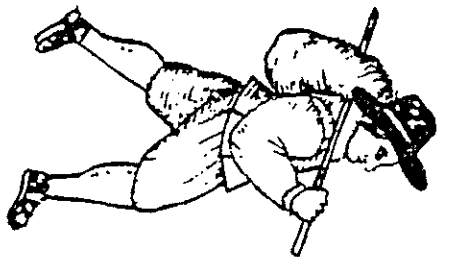


Fig. 5

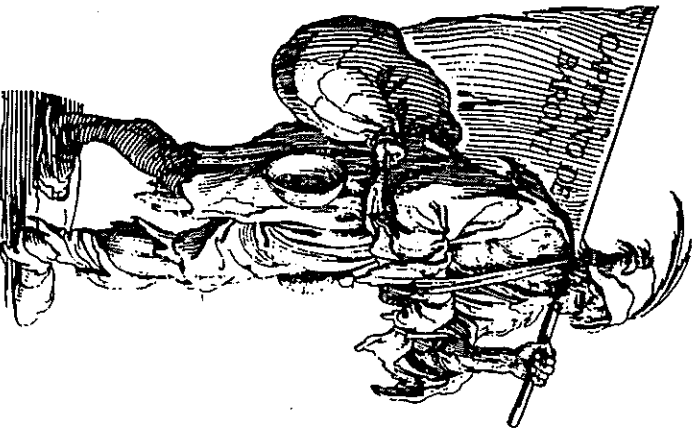


Fig. 6

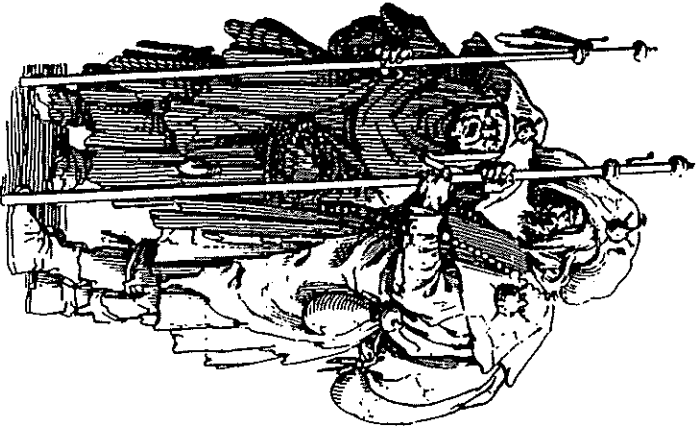


Fig. 7



Fig. 8

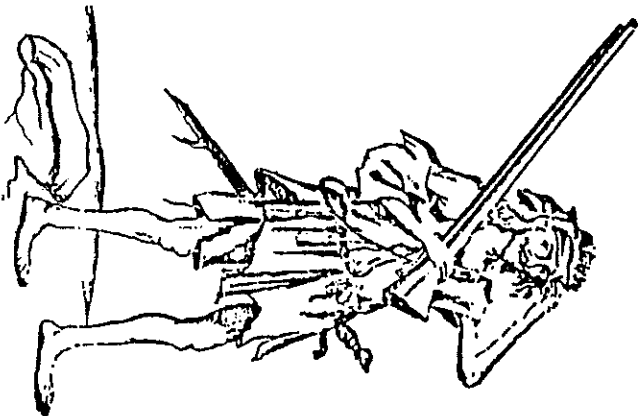


Fig. 9