Primitive Warfare and Disease

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The occurrence of war increases the spread of disease through increased human contact, travel, unsanitary conditions, and limited medical resources. One such war took place in Vietnam starting in 1956 with the termination of the French colony and lasting until 1973 when the last Americans evacuated the country. During the Vietnam War, the United States fought alongside the South Vietnamese forces against Ho Chi Minh and the northern Viet Cong warriors. The South Vietnam alliance used modern weapons and technologies to combat the covert guerrilla warfare tactics of the Viet Cong. The guerrilla soldiers used underground tunnel systems and booby traps to ensnare enemy forces. One type of primitive weaponry used by the Viet Cong was punji traps.

Punji traps are a type of booby trap used to impale enemy soldiers with a sharpened bamboo rod. There are two basic forms of punji traps. The first type of trap is formed when punji sticks are planted into a pit or ditch pointing upward. The ditch is then covered with vegetation to camouflage it in the dense forest in hopes that enemy forces will mistakenly fall into the trap. The second form of a punji trap is a mechanical weapon which is projected toward enemy forces when a trigger is stepped upon.

This form of weapon is most effective, not for impaling ones enemy, but as a form of biological weapon. Before being set in a trap, the sharpened end of the bamboo rod is dipped in fecal matter and biological waste. When the spear pierces the flesh of its victim, the waste enters the body and causes infections. The victim becomes septic as bacteria and viruses enter the blood stream. This can cause illness, lose of limbs, and even death. A Punji trap is a very effective and deadly form of primitive weapon.