

The Neanderthal people appear in the fossil record 100,000 years ago during a relatively warm (interglacial) period. By 70,000 years ago, Europe was again in the grip of the Ice Age, and the most numerous classic remains are known from cave sites during this period. Neanderthal used fire for cooking and undoubtedly for warmth to survive the glacial cold.

Instead of merely shaping a single natural stone into a useful object, Neanderthal may be said to have actually manufactured stone tools. This was apparently accomplished by striking several precisely shaped flakes from a single piece of flint. The resulting flakes of flint were then processed into a variety of tools and weapons of advanced design including awls, knives, scrapers, spear points, and hand axes. Tools made from bone have also been found associated with the remains of Neanderthal man.

The Shanidar cave is located in the Zargos Mountains of Northern Iraq near the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. At this site, some 60,000 years ago, a very interesting event is thought to have occurred: a ritual burial with flowers.

Ralph Solecki of Columbia University spent twenty years excavating the cave at Shanidar. He found the remains of several classic Neanderthal individuals that had been carefully laid in a crypt scooped out among rocks and covered with earth. This was not too startling because archeological evidence of ritual burial is found in other Neanderthal sites. What is unusual is that one of the individuals, an adult male, designated by Solecki as "Shanidar IV," had been buried with flowers.

Pollen analysis of the soil indicates that eight different varieties of brightly colored wildflowers were used in this burial. Evidence from soil analysis also indicates that the flowers may have been woven into green branches from a pine-like shrub. The flowers appear not to have been randomly scattered, but rather carefully arranged around the body of Shanidar IV.³

There is additional evidence of those qualities associated with humanity at the Shanidar cave. The analysis of undeveloped bone structure indicates that another man, known as Shanidar I, was a severe cripple from birth. His right arm was entirely useless and may have been amputated just above the elbow. Extensive bone scar tissue indicates that he was blind in his left eye. He was apparently cared for by his people until his death at age forty, a very old age by Neanderthal standards. This is the first sign of compassion and tenderness in the archeological record.



FIGURE 11.3.

Upper Paleolithic tools, typically made by chipping the shape from a narrow flint blade, include a barked blade, *top*, a shouldered point, *middle*, and a long, leaf-shaped point, *bottom*. (From "Ice-age Hunters of the Ukraine," by Richard G. Klein. Copyright © 1974 *Scientific American*.)