

M: So, that concludes my lecture on the golden age of the Anasazi. Strangely enough, relatively soon after that age ended, the Anasazi disappeared as a culture. The question, of course, is ... [pauses] why did they disappear? Many of my colleagues suggest war was the reason. However, I, and some other anthropologists, subscribe to a, uh, a different theory. We believe that it was due to a water shortage that the Anasazi disappeared.

First, there is the curious feature of the burned areas around Anasazi settlements. Remember, some of these burned areas include their ritual sites. Well, some of us believe that it was the Anasazi themselves who burned their own sites. [pauses] No, seriously. We think they were holding ceremonies in which they burned their own sites in a plea to their gods to help them find new sites with access to water.

Another point of interest at many digs is the large number of scattered articles. Normally, archaeologists don't find this many objects of importance at a dig site. However, the evidence again points to a, er, water shortage. The Anasazi, thirsting for water, simply had no need for extra personal belongings, so they left them in their settlements when they departed in search of new homes.

Finally, let me again call your attention to the fact that the Anasazi had just enjoyed a golden age in which their population increased to almost, uh, let me think ... [pauses] ah, yes, ten times its original number. [stresses] Ten times! When the rains began to fall less frequently, what was once a land with lots of water suddenly became barren and dry. What few water supplies remained simply could not satisfy such a large population. This, in turn, led to the rapid decline and eventual disappearance of the Anasazi Indians.