

# **History of Anthropology**

## **A. Origins**

Anthropology traces its roots to ancient Greek historical and philosophical writings about human nature and the organization of human society. Anthropologists generally regard Herodotus, a Greek historian who lived in the 400s bc, as the first thinker to write widely on concepts that would later become central to anthropology. In the book *History*, Herodotus described the cultures of various peoples of the Persian Empire, which the Greeks conquered during the first half of the 400s bc. He referred to Greece as the dominant culture of the West and Persia as the dominant culture of the East. This type of division, between white people of European descent and other peoples, established the mode that most anthropological writing would later adopt.

The Arab historian Ibn Khaldun, who lived in the 14th century ad, was another early writer of ideas relevant to anthropology. Khaldun examined the environmental, sociological, psychological, and economic factors that affected the development and the rise and fall of civilizations. Both Khaldun and Herodotus produced remarkably objective, analytic, ethnographic descriptions of the diverse cultures in the Mediterranean world, but they also often used secondhand information.