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Sommario/riassunto

While previous studies have contrasted the relative optimism of middle-class social scientists before 1848 with a later period of concern for national decline and racial degeneration, Staum demonstrates that the earlier learned societies were also fearful of turmoil at home and interested in adventure abroad. Both geographers and ethnologists created concepts of fundamental "racial" inequality that prefigured the imperialist "associationist" discourse of the Third Republic, believing that European tutelage would guide "civilizable" peoples, and providing an open invitation to dominate and exploit the "uncivilizable."