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Sommario/riassunto	For many years, scholars struggled to write the history of the constitution and political structure of the Holy Roman Empire. This book argues that this was because the political and social order could not be understood without considering the rituals and symbols that held the Empire together. What determined the rules (and whether they were followed) depended on complex symbolic-ritual actions. By examining key moments in the political history of the Empire, the author shows that it was a vocabulary of symbols, not the actual written laws, that formed a political language indispensable in maintaining the common order.