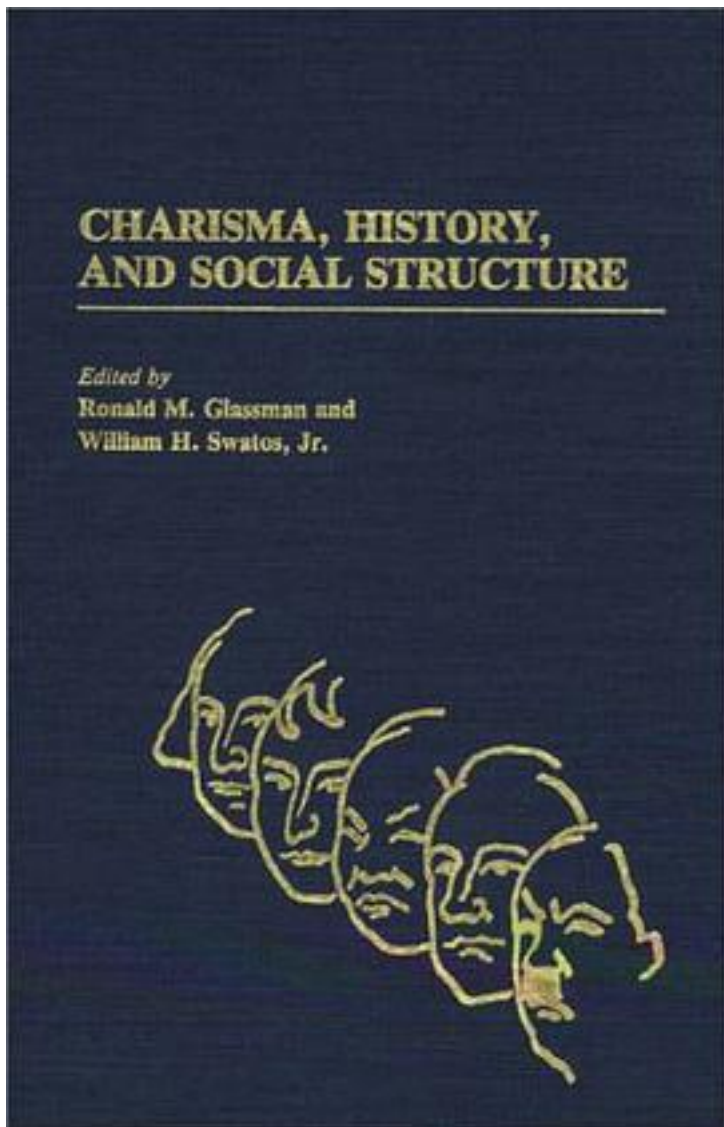


Charisma, History, and Social Structure



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著者:Glassman, Ronald M.; Swatos, William J.

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This new collection of essays looks at Max Weber's concept of the charismatic leader and the role and significance of charismatic leadership in relation to structural developments in contemporary society. Following the editors' overview of Weber's typology, the classical commentaries of H..H. Gerth, C. Wright Mills, and Reinhard Bendix are presented. Responding to these, a subsequent essay redefines Weber's position and examines misinterpretations of his original concept. The question of illegitimate authority is considered, both in terms of specific leaders who have abused power and of the manufacture of charisma. Through case studies of the movements of Calvinism, Hasidism, the Unification Church, and modern Iran, the religious face of charismatic leadership is investigated. The falsification of charisma--the creation of superstars by the media--is studied in connection with the cynicism and impersonality that permeate our rational approach to social life and political action. The complex causal connections between charismatic leadership and social structure are analyzed, using studies of successful and unsuccessful charismatic leaders. Questions such as why some leaders fail while others succeed, and whether, or to what degree, social structure sets limits on the impact of charisma are explored. Particular emphasis is given to the structural and cultural processes that lead nations in a democratic or despotic-authoritarian direction.

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