The Marine Corps has always considered itself a breed apart. Since 1775, America’s smallest armed service has been suspicious of outsiders and deeply loyal to its traditions. Marines believe in nothing more strongly than the Corps’ uniqueness and superiority, and this undying faith in its own exceptionalism is what has made the Marines one of the sharpest, swiftest tools of American military power. Aaron B. O’Connell, Assistant Professor of History at the U.S. Naval Academy and lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps Reserves, examines the period from WWII to Vietnam, when the Marine Corps transformed itself from America’s least respected to its most elite armed force. He describes how the distinctive Marine culture played a role in this ascendance, and argues that Corps culture was saturated with romantic and religious overtones that had enormous marketing potential in a postwar America energized by new global responsibilities.

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