

Holmes Hinkley Welch (1924–1981)

Holmes Hinkley Welch was a man of many talents who made his academic mark with trenchant studies of Taoism and Buddhism in China. His classic study, *Taoism: The Parting of the Way* (1957), was written while the author was completing both his B.A. (delayed by war) and his M.A. at Harvard. His major work was a trilogy on Chinese Buddhism: *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism 1900–1950* (1967), based partly on interviews; *The Buddhist Revival in China* (1968); and *Buddhism under Mao* (1972). Finally he was coeditor of a conference volume, *Aspects of Taoism* (1978).

Parallel with this scholarly career, Holmes Welch was intermittently a businessman (at Stowe, Vt., where a family estate was made into a winter recreation center) and as a government official. During World War II he served in the Russian section of the State Department's Office of European Affairs, and in 1957–59 he was a political officer in the Hong Kong consulate general.

Returning to academic life, he became a research associate of the East Asian Research Center at Harvard. He lectured for the Yale department of religious studies, became a successful Lecturer in Chinese Studies at Harvard and assistant director of the Center for the Study of World Religions there.

By the time of his death in 1981, Holmes Welch had made his mark in several fields and in addition had fathered a fine family of two sons and two daughters. His outstanding trait was independence of mind and imagination, evident in his wide acquaintance among East Asian Buddhists. A meticulous scholar with a strong sense of form, his books were produced (all by Harvard University Press) as works of art. His interests spanned the ancient and the contemporary. He made an unusual contribution.

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