

Memorial to Charles Strachan Hutchison (1933–2011)

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On 18 October 2011, Charles S. Hutchison, emeritus professor at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, died at age 78. He is best known for his research, teachings, and writings on the geology of Southeast Asia.

Hutchison was born in Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire, in the UK on 17 April 1933 and obtained a B.Sc. with first-class honors in geology from the University of Aberdeen in 1955. After working as a petroleum geologist in Trinidad for two years, Hutchison became a lecturer in the newly founded geology department of the University of Malaya in Singapore, where he also completed his doctorate thesis titled “Tectonic and petrological relations within three rock associations of orogenic zones on Malaysia” (1966). Although he often visited the UK, Malay Peninsula became Hutchison’s adopted home for the rest of his life. In 1960, Hutchison moved to the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, where he played a leading role in establishing



Photo courtesy University of Malaya.

the university’s geology department. In 1977, Hutchison was promoted to full professor of applied geology at the University of Malaya, a position he held until 1992. He served as head of the geology department from 1978–1982. He was appointed professor emeritus at the same university in 2004, and from May 2009 until his death, served as visiting senior research fellow.

Hutchison was a founding member of the Geological Society of Malaysia in 1967, and served as its president from 1969–1970. As a visiting professor, Hutchison taught courses at the University of Kansas (Lawrence), the University of Brunei Darussalam, and Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok). He served as co-coordinator for the Studies in East Asian Tectonics and Resources (SEATAR) Transects of the Committee for Co-ordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Areas (Bangkok) and Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (Paris) from 1988 to 1991, and edited and contributed to a number of its reports. During 1993–1994, he was affiliated with the Earth Sciences and Resources Institute of the University of South Carolina, managing the institute’s training program in Southeast Asian countries.

Hutchison was a prolific researcher and author. He was one of the early geologists who applied the plate tectonic theory to interpretations of Southeast Asian geology. He was an author or coauthor of over 120 articles published in various journals and books from the 1960s to the 2000s. He also wrote or edited several books, the first of which (and now a classic) was *Geology of the Malay Peninsula: West Malaysia and Singapore* (1973), edited with D.J. Gobbett and published in the Regional Geology Series under L.U. De Sitter. Hutchison published two textbooks: *Laboratory Handbook of Petrographic Techniques* (1974) and *Economic Deposits and Their Tectonic Settings* (1983); edited two volumes on the geology of tin deposits in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific (1988); and wrote two volumes which are regarded as benchmarks in their field: *Geological Evolution of South-East Asia* (1989) and *South-East Asian Oil, Gas, Coal and Mineral Deposits* (1996, dedicated to his wife, Ann), both published in the

Oxford Monographs on Geology and Geophysics series. The second edition of the former was published by the Geological Society of Malaysia in 2007. Hutchison dedicated his last book *Geology of North-West Borneo* (2005) to the geologists of The Geological Survey, Borneo Region (established in 1949 as the Geological Survey Department, British Territories in Borneo), who “through their pioneering work in a difficult nearly inaccessible terrain, made it one of the greatest in the world.” Hutchison often acknowledged his son Timothy (a graduate of Exeter University) for helping him with his computer, while he was preparing his books.

An excellent and popular teacher, Hutchison trained several generations of Southeast Asian geologists; his publications were seminal contributions to the regional tectonics, igneous petrography, and economic geology of Southeast Asia and influenced many geologists working in this fascinating region. A true gentleman, Hutchison was always willing to help his students and colleagues. He believed that geology involved interpretation at all scales, and did not allow differences in geological views and interpretations to obliterate his kindness and respect toward other geologists.

For his contributions to geoscience, Hutchison was elected honorary fellow of the Geological Society of London, the Geological Society of Malaysia, the Institution of Mining and Metallurgy of London, and the Mineralogical Society of America. In 1994, Hutchison received the American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG)’s Special Commendation Award. In September 2012, the late Professor Hutchison was remembered at two memorial sessions held at AAPG’s International Conference and Exhibition in Singapore.

Professor Hutchison lived long enough to meet his great-grandchildren. His wife, Ann, predeceased him. The couple raised a son Timothy John and a daughter Helen Mary.

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