THE FOLLOWING SECTION HAS BEEN EXCERPTED FROM A LARGER DOCUMENT.

The Coastline

A contribution to our understanding of its ecology and physiography in relation to land-use and management and the pressures to which it is subject

Edited by

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King, C.A.M. 1972 Beaches and coasts. 2nd Edn., Arnold, London.

Chapter 4

Lagoons

G. COLOMBO

INTRODUCTION

Lagoons are shallow bodies of brackish or sea water partially separated from an adjacent coastal sea by barriers of sand or shingle, which only leave narrow openings through which seawater can flow. Indeed, lagoons may become completely isolated from the sea behind such a barrier, in which case they transform into coastal ponds or lakes—of freshwater if the lagoon receives river discharge. Coastal lagoons are usually found on low-lying coasts and are normally aligned with their largest diameter parallel to the seashore. They may also originate by the transgression of seawater into previously existing freshwater lakes (these are usually deeper and extend perpendicularly to the shoreline), by the invasion of land below sea level after storms have breached coastal-defence systems, or during reclamation of salt-marshes. Lagoons in the two latter categories are normally small and ephemeral (Heerebout, 1970; Barnes and Jones, 1974).

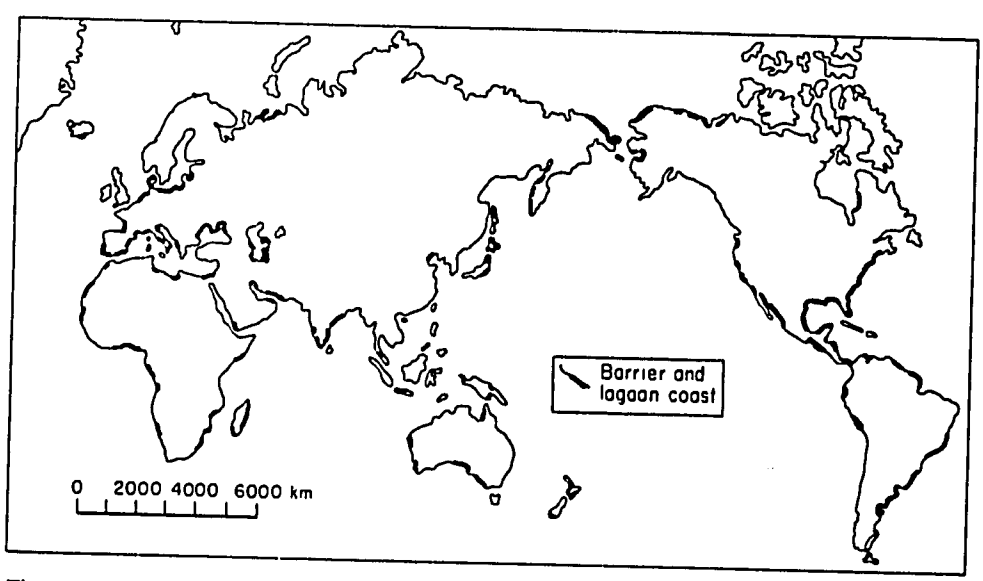

Figure 23. World map showing the distribution of coastlines with barriers and lagoons. (Reproduced by permission, from King (1972))