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The recent reefal sedimentation in the SW New Caledonia lagoon, rôle of the ante-holocene karstic morphology.

DUGAS François, ORSTOM, Bondy, France, and DEBENAY Jean-Pierre, Nouméa, Nouvelle Calédonie.

The distribution of the barrier reef surrounding the New Calédonia island seems to be related to the general flexure faulting and karstic erosion. The barrier-reef the width of which is comprised between 3 to 65 km is composed by an external lagoon consisting of a shallower back-reef, a coral platform of about 20 meters deep, a channel zone or depression 40 meters or so deep, and an internal lagoon (bays).

On the SW lagoon floor, calcareous clastic sediments result from a mixing of three granulometric classes (debris, gravels and sands, silts and clays). Their distribution is controlled by the morphology. Debris (Corals, Algae) can be observed place to place and particularly near reefs and islets. Sands and gravels (Corals, Algae, Molluscs and Foraminifera) largely spread out. Silts and clays are abundant in the bays where they can be more siliceous.

The percentage distribution of Molluscs (Pelecypods and Gastropods) and of Foraminifera in the sediment shows accumulations near the coast in the channel zone. Numerous Foraminifera are present in the external lagoon, and Pelecypods in the bays.