

Re: Question

Source: <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.archaeology/2004-07/1227.html>

From: Martyn Harrison (*nospam_at_spammers.of.the.world.unite*)

Date: 07/14/04

Date: Wed, 14 Jul 2004 21:57:57 GMT

<http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/sa/SAIRC/1997/50.html>

Apparently on date Wed, 14 Jul 2004 08:34:57 GMT, "David B"
<tronospamchos@tesco.net> said:

>George wrote in message <9b937279.0407131655.673d380@posting.google.com>...

>>

>>[A link to Mercator's 1569 World map would be nice here, but I

>>couldn't find one on the web.]

>

>You mean you haven't checked the Primesauce site recently?

><http://www.trochos.plus.com/primesauce/latr.htm#84>

On this subject, I'm under the impression that in 1500, Europeans had access to fairly sophisticated geometric understanding and that a number of ways of representing a curved geography on a flat map would have been possible, available for discussion, and some level of choosing a preferred projection could have been achieved.

This assumes they understood the earth to be rotund, maps flat, and so forth, plus some were intelligent enough to realise how the various projections worked in practice.

What I'm getting at is the question of whether Mercator projection was actually a new idea as such, or just an existing idea popularised via that name. I reckon the conical projection does have some real advantages in estimating distance within a northern hemisphere ocean voyage such as an Atlantic crossing. In that sense, I'm wondering whether Mercator was something nobody had thought of (I find this rather unlikely, although obviously it may be the way of it), or whether it was adopted for some reason (and what reasons those might be.)

The obvious thing is it reflects an entire globe moderately well and is extremely easy to map lat and long into a rectangular space.