196: Saul, abandoned by Jehovah, is defeated by the Philistines and falls on his sword

From Jami’ al-Tawarih by Rashid al-Din
From: Tabriz, dated 714 AH (1315-15 AD)
Isk, transparent and opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper
13 x 25.5 cm (iron painting)
MMA 57.9.93 Rev(Note)
Published: Rail 1945, fig. 5:434

197: Jonah and the whale

From Jami’ al-Tawarih by Rashid al-Din
From: Tabriz, dated 719 AH (1319-20 AD)
Isk, transparent and opaque watercolour, gold and silver on paper
13 x 25.5 cm (painting)
MMA 57.9.93 rev
Published: Rail 1945, fig. 5:435
s defeated  
and  

197. Jonah and the whale

From Jami' al-Tawarikh by Rashid al-Din

Irans. Tabriz, dated 744 AH (1344-15 April)

ink, translucent and opaque watercolour,
gold and silver on paper

22 x 25.5 cm (painting)

85F: 717 in no. 789

Published: Sin 1991, fig 52: 425
The 10th-century Persian geographer al-Istakhri was one of the most important figures in the evolution of Arab cartography. He travelled widely, but his account of Arabia (Hijaz, Yemen and the Gulf) is curiously sketchy, particularly given the importance of the Pilgrimage. This is partly because, as the title of this treatise suggests, it is based on lists of stations on the postal routes of the Abnadān heartlands and in Iran, which were not available for Arabia and Egypt. It has some picturesque details, mostly lakes, rivers and oases, coloured according to the system of a younger follower, al-Muqaddasi: red for familiar routes; yellow, for sandy desertic given, for the sea, blue, for the larger rivers; and dark brown, for mountains. Such decorative details parallel medieval Byzantine world maps and may derive from them. In this case, however, seas and rivers are blue, mountains are either bright red or greyish-black, and towns are in purple, gold or red, without any attempt to distinguish them in size.

In its present state the manuscript is incomplete. It opens with a splendid page of illuminations (top) in gold and silver with lavers and rhombi radiating from a central painted star, and on the penultimate page (folio 128v) is a colophon with the date 510 AH, possibly a later addition. It contains the following maps (folios 1-35) of Arabia (Hijaz, Yemen and the Gulf); (folio 29v) Egypt; (folio 29v) the Mediterranean (Bahār-i Rūm); (folio 35v) Iraq (central and upper Mesopotamia); (folio 37v) Khuzistan; (folio 40v) Fars; (folio 48v) Kirmān; (folio 60v) Sīnā; (folio 68v) Ṭabārī; (folio 70v) Iran; (folio 77v) the Caspian; (folio 79v) the central Iranian desert between Fars and Khurasan; (folios 87v-88v) Khurasan; (folio 97v-98v) Central Asia, from Transcaucasia to beyond Balkhā; (folio 120v) Ceylon (Sarandaḥ), with Adam's Peak and the west coast of India. The map of Sīnā is a later replacement, and a number of maps announced in the text are now missing. They were obviously lost when the original manuscript was rebound, perhaps for repair, and the remaining folios rebound in the wrong order.

The maps formed the basis of Istakhri's descriptive geography of Iran and the central Islamic lands: their purpose was not to help travellers find their way but to enable them to commit the lists to memory. Istakhri had no interest in a consistent projection, and although he included a world map, the regional maps had no relation to it. It goes without saying that these early regional postal routes bear no relation to modern roads, so they are quite difficult for us to read.