



*A shepherd boy with his flock
of sheep between Avat and
Qizil bulaq.*

road is good, though very sandy. We pitched our camp in the courtyard of a big sarai in the village or bazaar of Jam, about 9 paotai from the town. All day a high wind blowing in our faces had stirred up clouds of sand and dust that forced their way into everything.

At Jam we left the main route and its fairly comfortable night quarters. Our road took us in a NNE, almost in a N direction, until, after riding about 8 paotai, we reached a chain of mountains running in a NW-SE direction and forming the southern extremity of the Tian Shan mountains. After crossing the modest field area of Jam we entered a large, barren sandy plain rising to the north towards the chain of mountains that was dimly outlined in the cold grey morning light. The wonderful range of mountains enveloped in snow, with its summits rising towards the clouds, which were so clearly visible from Aqsu, was hidden entirely by heavy leaden clouds. The wind, considerably lower than yesterday, came in gusts from the east. The weather was cold and penetrating. At about 11 we encountered a heavy hailstorm with a NE wind and half-an-hour later it began to snow and still continued at 5 p.m. Visibility was extremely restricted and mapping difficult.

*March 27th.
Avat.*

Immediately to the N of the Jam fields we crossed a dry channel of the Djigitche üstang which seemed to bring a little water from the mountains. After a couple of hours' ride the plain was slightly overgrown with grass growing in low tufts, called »chakande» by the population. The rise grew steeper, the ground was covered with rough gravel and stones and all vegetation ceased. Just before reaching this slope of gravel we passed an abandoned mud hut, close to which there were signs of an attempt at conducting water from the mountains along an ariq, evidently also abandoned. The horses kept stumbling on the rounded stones.