



## AŞAMM, ABU BAKR

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**AŞAMM, ABU BAKR** ‘Abd-al-Raḥmān b. Kaysān (d. 200/815-6 or 201/816-7), Mu‘tazilite of Baṣra. All of his writings are lost and, despite his prominence in his day, they have left less of a residue in later literature than those of other leading Mu‘tazilites of the period. Ebn al-Nadim’s *Fehrest* (ed. Tajaddod, p. 214.11 ff.) attributes 26 separate works to Aşamm.

Aşamm distinguished himself as a scholar of the Qur’ān (Ebn al-Nadim, ed. Tajaddod, p. 214.11-12; van Ess, 1979, pp. 54 ff.). In other respects his work resembled that of his predecessor Ḍerār b. ‘Amr (Ebn al-Nadim, ed. Tajaddod, p. 215.2 ff.; van Ess, 1968, pp. 16-21). He is most often remembered for his “denial of accidents” (e.g. Baḡdādi, pp. 36.17-37.2), and for maintaining that Muslims were under no obligation to appoint rulers. He was singled out for holding this view by later writers on constitutional law. But in the early ninth century, since it was still so alive among Mu‘tazilites, a contemporary source omits to mention Aşamm in connection with it (Ps.-Nāše’, par. 82 ff.).

Aşamm subscribed to the elective principle jointly championed by Mu‘tazilites and Kharijites. He accepted the need for government on the grounds that, without its restraining hand, people would engage in mutual oppression (Aš‘ari, p. 460.10). His prime consideration was the good of the community. He abhorred the prospect of civil strife (*fetna*) and for this reason made the unanimous support of the community the condition of legality for both insurrection (Aš‘ari, p. 451.12ff) and government: ‘Ali’s appointment had failed to gain unanimous support and with it legality according to Aşamm (Ps.-Nāše’, par. 101; Aš‘ari, p. 456.9ff.).



Goldziher notes that there is a Kharijite background to Aşamm's constitutional thought; and as van Ess points out ("Aşamm," *EI2* S,p. 90a), this renders the assumption of foreign influence unnecessary. What Goldziher did not know is that Aşamm was distinctly hostile to foreign ideas, and that he wrote in the 8th, rather than the 9th century. The availability to Aşamm of Ps.-Aristotle's epistle remains a remote possibility.

Even though Aşamm's assessment of the first civil war was unacceptable to Shi'ites, it was clearly designed to appeal to moderates of a broad spectrum of factions. Yet what seemed conciliatory in 8th-century Başra was to seem inflammatory in 9th-century Baghdad. 'Ali was finally accepted as the fourth canonical caliph of Sunnism (Madelung, 1965, pp. 225-28), while Aşamm was disowned by his school ('Abd-al-Jabbār, p. 267.17-9; cf. Ebn al-Nadim, ed. Tajaddod, p. 214.10 ff.).

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Idem, “AsĀamm” in *EI2* Supplement. Idem, “Biobibliographische Notizen zur islamischen Theologie (4),” *Die Welt des Orients* 10, 1979, pp. 54 ff.

Ignaz Goldziher, “Hellenistischer Einfluß auf mu‘tazilitische Chalifats-Theorien,” *Der Islam* 6, 1916, pp. 173-77. (Goldziher observed a striking similarity between Aşamm’s theory of the imamate and a passage from the R. Arestāṭāles lel-Eskandar fi‘l-siāsa (ed. J. Lippert, *De epistula pseudaristotelica peri basileias commentatio*, Berlin, 1891, par. 2); this parallel no longer seems close, but there is a striking parallel at par. 3.) Wilferd Madelung, *Der Imam al-Qāsim ibn Ibrāhīm und die Glaubenslehre der Zaiditen*, Berlin, 1965. (The assessment of Aşamm at pp. 42 ff. needs to be revised in the light of Ps.-Nāṣe’, *OsĀul*.)