

### 5.1.5 *Withdrawal of Rulership and Limitation of Rulership*

Experiencing tyranny also ensured, in fact, that the allegedly ignorant mob ascribed a different position to the caliph after the *mihna*: he was no longer the educator, but subject to the divine law like them, and the law was not administered by the caliph but by the scholars whom one could ask for advice in everyday life. This does not mean people wished to influence his election; rulership was accepted. Even a Zaydite like Qāsim b. Ibrāhīm agreed: that authorities are needed is made clear by the Quran.<sup>1</sup> Even so, it was occasionally imagined that it might become necessary to depose the caliph or even that the state was not needed because humans could govern themselves. After all, the population of Baghdad had governed itself during the troubles after Amīn's death, even raising an army under the command of Sahl b. Salāma.<sup>2</sup>

Sahl b. Salāma appears to have had ties to the Mu'tazila. Models of this kind had indeed been evolved by Mu'tazilite theologians. A 'community without authorities'<sup>3</sup> could always be imagined as Utopia. A treaty first had to be entered into, and the civil wars had shown that treaties can be terminated, too. The necessity of rulership could also be used to legitimise an unlawful regime, as could be learnt – independently of how one regarded the present – from the fall of the Umayyads. They had invoked this necessity<sup>4</sup> but had been ousted all the same. From the point of view of the pious opposition of the time they had not been *imāms* but merely 'kings'.<sup>5</sup> Kingship, however, had negative connotations, presumably because the Umayyads had imposed the 'state' on the Arabs, a freedom-loving – or possibly anarchic – people.<sup>6</sup> And whether circumstances had improved under the Abbasids was doubtful. They themselves, of course, believed so;<sup>7</sup> but tradition does not mention anywhere that 'kingship' would give way to a more ideal form of government. The Ḥanbalite Ibn Kathīr would later use the phrase *mulk Banī 'Abbās* throughout his history.<sup>8</sup> Independently of whether one argued in an 'enlightened'–rationalistic fashion or based on the conception of history (and the two did not have to be mutually exclusive),

1 Madelung, *Qāsim* 141f.

2 Vol. III 186f. above.

3 Thus the well-known title of a study by Wellhausen who uses it to characterise circumstances in pre-Islamic tribal society.

4 Kumayt, *Hāshimīyyāt* II v. 38; also Nagel, *Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des abbasidischen Kalifats* 86.

5 HT 183; vol. I 173 above. Goldziher, *Muh. Stud.* II 29ff. provides fundamental information.

6 It would be worth researching whether the Byzantine βασιλεύς was also taken into consideration.

7 Goldziher, *Muh. Stud.* II 53ff.

8 Cf. Arazi/El'ad in: IOS 8/1978/236, with further material. The two authors correctly point out that *mulk* is often used quite neutrally, e.g. in Ṭabarī's *Ta'riḫ al-rusul wal-mulūk*.