

caliphate of al-Wāthiq (227-32/842-47), was evidently deduced from the reports that the latter (heir-apparent in 220/835) led the funeral prayer for him. Some Shīʿī sources accuse al-Muʿtaṣim or Umm al-Faḍl of having poisoned him, but this is expressly denied by Shaykh al-Mufid. He was buried near his grandfather Mūsā al-Kāzim in the Maḳābir Quraysh on the west bank of the Tigris, where the shrine of al-Kāzimayn came to house the tombs of the two Imāms.

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(W. MADELUNG)

MUḤAMMAD B. ʿALĪ B. ʿUMAR, Abu ʿl-Ḥasan, poet, man of letters and Shāfiʿī *fakīh* of the 5th/11th century, known as Ibn Abī ʿl-Ṣaḥr al-Wāsiṭī. Born in Dhu ʿl-Ḳaʿda 409/March-April 1019, he died on 14 Djumādā I 498/1 February 1105. A disciple, at the Niẓāmiyya [q.v.] in Baghdād, of al-Shīrāzī (393-476/1003-83 [q.v.]) whose funeral elegy he wrote, he is noted for his ardent attachment to Shāfiʿī doctrine, and he composed on this topic some poems called *shāfiʿiyya*. He himself collected his verses in a *Diwān* in one volume which may have allowed him to exercise his gifts as a calligrapher, but only part of his production survives, preserved in the *Zīnat al-dahr* of Abu ʿl-Maʿālī ʿl-Khaṭīrī, according to F. Bustānī (*Dāʿirat al-maʿārif*, ii, 314) who mentions no other reference. Nevertheless, some verses are to be found in Yāqūt (*Udabāʿ*, xviii, 257-60) and Ibn Khallikān (*Wafayāt*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās, ii, 129, iv, 450-2). The language is very simple, as are the themes, which concern the present life and great age of the poet.

Bibliography: See also Ziriklī, vii, 163-4; Kahhālā, x, 319. (Ed.)

MUḤAMMAD B. ʿALĪ AL-SHALMAGHĀNĪ, Abū Djaʿfar, also known as IBN ABĪ ʿL-ʿAZĀKĪR, a heretic of the ʿAbbāsīd period (d. 322/934), who went so far as to claim that the deity was incarnated in himself.

Initially an Imāmī committed to the study of alchemy, he devoted to this discipline several works such as *Kitāb al-Khamāʾir*, *K. al-Ḥaḍār*, *Sharḥ K. al-Rahma* of Djabīr [q.v.]. He subsequently formulated the doctrines of the ʿAzākīriyya, borrowing elements from various philosophical and religious groups: antinomians (*ibāhiyya* [see إِبَاهِيَّة]), upholders of *hulūl* [q.v.], Mazdaeans, Manichaeans, etc. He had some important disciples under the caliphate of al-Muqtadir (295-320/908-32 [q.v.]), notably Ibn al-Furāt (241-312/855-924 [q.v.]) and his son Muḥassin. Under the vizierate of al-Khāḳānī (312/924-5), he was forced to flee and took refuge at Mawṣil under the protection of Nāṣir al-Dawla [q.v.], later returning to Baghdād. He then acquired more disciples under the viziers and senior officials, who were persecuted in 322/934 under the vizierate of Ibn Mukla [q.v.]. Having hitherto taken refuge in secrecy, he emerged from it during this year and was arrested and imprisoned by the vizier. While admitting that the compromising

documents discovered in his possession were authentic, he denied the existence of his *madhhab* and disavowed the heretics who claimed to be his supporters. His disciple Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Abī ʿAwn (d. 322/934 [q.v.]), instructed by the caliph al-Rāḍī (322-9/934-40 [q.v.]) to strike al-Shalmaghānī, kissed his beard declaring that he was his god. The *fukahāʾ* then issued a *fatwā* condemning him to death, and he was executed in Dhu ʿl-Ḳaʿda 322/October-November 934; subsequently his carcass was burned. The Bāb [q.v.] Husayn b. Rawḥ b. Abī Bakr al-Nawbakhtī (d. 326/938), with whom he had been associated (*Fihrist*, ed. Cairo, 251, which quotes rather Abū Sahl Ibn Nawbakht), must have had a share in his condemnation, since he had disputed with him the title of *wakīl* of the Eleventh Imām, al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī.

Among his other works, the following are worthy of mention: *Māhiyyat al-ʿisma*, *al-Zāhir bi ʿl-hudūd al-ʿakliyya*, *Faḍl al-nuḳḥ ʿalā ʿl-ṣamt* and *al-Bad ʿl-maṣhīʿa*. As to his doctrine, it is revealed in a letter from al-Rāḍī to the Sāmānīd Naṣr b. Aḥmad (301-31/913-43 [q.v.]) which is reproduced by Yāqūt (*Udabāʿ*, i, 239 ff.). This fairly long text, which should be approached with caution, shows first that the caliph himself was worried by the activities of Ibn al-ʿAzākīr, which had encountered a degree of success among members of a social élite of rather dubious morality; this heretic in fact endorsed all kinds of laxity and gave his support in particular to a moral libertarianism probably borrowed from Mazdeism and revealed in a treatise entitled *Kitāb al-Ḥassa al-sādisa*. Manichaeism, for its part, inspired the doctrine of divine incarnation in a human being (successively in Adam, Idrīs, Noah, Ṣāliḥ..., ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, Ibn Abī ʿl-ʿAzākīr who was necessarily the last), to whom there corresponds his opposite (*didd*), a demon. Al-Shalmaghānī accepted the notion of metempsychosis, without however making it, apparently, a principal point of doctrine. He rejected both the ʿAbbāsīds and the Ṭālibīds, but favoured ʿAlī, as might be expected on the part of an extreme Shīʿī. He denounced Moses and Muḥammad as traitors, and reckoned that ʿAlī had granted to the latter a term of 350 years, at the conclusion of which the *shariʿa* would be repealed and replaced by another system, developed, so it is to be presumed, by Ibn Abī ʿl-ʿAzākīr and the ʿAzākīriyya.

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(CH. PELLAT)

MUḤAMMAD B. ʿALĪ ZAYN AL-ʿĀBĪDĪN, Abū Djaʿfar, called AL-BĀKĪR, the fifth Imām of the Twelver Shīʿa. The epithet al-Bākīr, short for *bākīr al-ʿilm*, is explained as meaning either "the one who splits knowledge open" (i.e. brings it to light), or "the one who possesses great knowledge". The Prophet Muḥammad is quoted as declaring that al-Bākīr was already referred to by this epithet in the Torah (Ibn Bābawayh, *ʿIlal al-sharāʾiʿ*, Najaf 1385/1966, 233; idem, *Amālī*, Najaf 1389/1970, 315). Al-Bākīr was born in Medina on 3 Ṣafar or 1 Rajab 57/16 December 676 or 10 May 677 (or on the same days of the same months in 56/675-6). According to one account,

he could still recall the day on which al-Husayn had been killed (10 Muḥarram 61/October 680) and the travails which had beset his family at the time. His mother, Fāṭima Umm ʿAbd Allāh, was a daughter of al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī, making al-Bākir a grandson of both al-Ḥasan and al-Husayn. When he was still a boy, it is said, the Prophet's greetings were conveyed to him by the venerable Companion Ḍjābir b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī [q.v. in Suppl.]; this is seen by the Imāmiyya as proof of the legitimacy of his imāmate.

Al-Bākir became Imām upon the death of his father Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn (in 94/712-3 or 95/713-4). He pursued his father's quietist policy, and refused to support revolts against the Umayyads. His relations with them were nevertheless uneasy. He is reported to have been victorious in a disputation with Nāfiʿ, a *maulā* of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, who had challenged al-Bākir at the behest of Hishām b. ʿAbd al-Malik; if the story is true, this success can hardly have endeared him to the caliph (al-Kulīnī, *al-Kāfi*, viii, 120-2). Hishām summoned al-Bākir to Damascus on several occasions, and at least once had him imprisoned and then sent back to Medina, ordering his escort to give him neither food nor drink on the way. ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, in contrast, was favourably disposed towards him, and after meeting him in Medina had the Fadak [q.v.] oasis returned to the ʿAlids. In an utterance apparently propagated by anti-ʿAlid circles and recorded by Ibn Saʿd (*Ṭabaḳāt*, v, 333; cf. Crone and Hinds, *God's caliph*, Cambridge 1986, 36), al-Bākir identifies ʿUmar as the Mahdī [q.v.]. In an Imāmī text, al-Bākir prophesies that ʿUmar will become caliph, will do his best to spread justice and will be honoured by the people when he dies; upon ʿUmar's death the inhabitants of the earth will weep for him (since he was a good ruler), while the inhabitants of heaven will curse him (since he was, after all, a usurping Umayyad). Al-Bākir is said to have been particularly complimentary about a son of ʿAbd al-Malik known as Saʿd (or Saʿīd) al-Khayr, whom he described as an Umayyad belonging to the Prophet's family (*umawī minnā ahl al-bayt*). The text is preserved of two epistles which al-Bākir allegedly sent to Saʿd (al-Kulīnī, *al-Kāfi*, viii, 52-7). Al-Bākir may also have met ʿAbd al-Malik himself (though such a meeting would have had to take place before al-Bākir's assumption of the imāmate): according to a story on the authority of Hārūn al-Rashīd, ʿAbd al-Malik's decision to issue an Islamic gold coinage, replacing the Byzantine *denarius* by the Muslim *ḍīnār*, was made at the suggestion of al-Bākir (al-Bayhaḳī, *al-Maḥāsīn wa ʿl-masāwī*, ed. F. Schwally, Giessen 1902, 498-504 = ed. Beirut 1380/1960, 467-71).

Al-Bākir's fame as a scholar soon spread beyond the immediate circle of his Shīʿī supporters; among his disciples are mentioned ʿAmr b. Ḍīnār (d. 125/742-2), Ibn Ḍjuraḳdī (d. 150/767 [q.v. in Suppl.] and al-Awzāʿī (d. 157/774) [q.v.]. According to one of his admirers, ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAtāʾ al-Makkī, in al-Bākir's presence all scholars felt humble. In addition, various miracles are attributed to him: he could converse with animals, make the blind see and foretell future events (for instance, the death in battle of his brother Zayd, the defeat of the Umayyads, and the accession of the ʿAbbāsīd al-Manṣūr).

The systematic, public teaching of Imāmī law appears to have been initiated by al-Bākir (al-Kulīnī, *al-Kāfi*, ii, 20). One of the distinctive Imāmī rulings that go back to him is that when entering on a state of ritual purity before prayer, to wipe the soles of one's footwear (*al-maṣḥ ʿalā ʿl-khuffayn* [q.v.]) is not acceptable as a substitute for washing one's feet;

according to the Kūfan traditionist Abū Ishāḳ al-Sabīʿī (d. 128/745-6 or 129/746-7), *al-maṣḥ ʿalā ʿl-khuffayn* had previously been universally permitted. Al-Bākir also defended *mutʿa* [q.v.] as a practice sanctioned by the Prophet.

Al-Bākir was probably the first to formulate what were to become the basic doctrines of Twelver Shīʿism. Principal among these are the belief that the imāmate passes on from one Imām to the next by virtue of a divine command which is revealed in an explicit divinely-inspired designation (*naṣṣ*) made first by the Prophet Muḥammad (who listed all the Imāms) and then by each Imām in turn designating his successor; that all Imāms are descendants of the Fāṭimid line; that they possess special knowledge of a kind denied to ordinary mortals; and that they have absolute spiritual authority and should also have absolute political authority. Any of the Imām's doctrinal or legal pronouncements is taken as coming from the Prophet via the Imām's ancestors (having been transmitted from generation to generation either by ordinary human means, e.g. speech, or by heredity). Thus it is that a Shīʿī *ḥadīth* will often end with an Imām rather than with the Prophet. Al-Bākir defended the doctrine of dissociation (*barāʿa*) [q.v.] from the enemies of the Imāms, chief among whom were the majority of the Companions and in particular the first three caliphs. It is in order to counter belief in this tenet that Sunnī authorities put it about that al-Bākir declared his loyalty to Abū Bakr and ʿUmar. Al-Bākir also maintained that under certain circumstances, self-protection through dissimulation (*taḳīyya* [q.v.]) is permissible, and that in case of danger to life or limb it is mandatory.

The Imāmī position as developed under al-Bākir was hostile to individual reasoning (*idṭīḥād*): al-Bākir describes the ideal disciple as one who unquestioningly receives, transmits, and abides by the Imām's rulings. Yet he had to contend with mavericks within his own camp. One of the best known was Zurāra b. Aʿyan (d. 150/767), who held independent views on several theological questions; he thus argued (against al-Bākir) that there is no intermediate position between believer and unbeliever (al-Kulīnī, *al-Kāfi*, ii, 402-3; al-Kishshī, *Riḍāʾ*, 128-9). Another disciple, Muḥammad b. al-Tayyār, used arguments of his own when debating with his opponents rather than relying on what the Imām had said, and for this al-Bākir rebuked him (al-Barkī, *al-Maḥāsīn*, Tehran 1370/1950-1 i, 213). At the same time, many of al-Bākir's disciples faithfully wrote down his utterances in the form of collections of traditions (*uṣūl*), and these in turn formed the basis for the later comprehensive works on Imāmī law.

Al-Bākir is said to have held disputations on legal or theological issues with Muslim opponents such as the Muʿtazilī ʿAmr b. ʿUbayd (d. ca. 144/761 [q.v.]) and the Khārīdī ʿAbd Allāh b. Nāfiʿ al-Azraq, and to have won a debate with a leading Christian scholar in Damascus. Imāmī tradition describes a meeting between al-Bākir and Abū Ḥanīfa in which the latter is presented in a rather negative light. In contrast, Ḥanafī sources describe Abū Ḥanīfa as a disciple of al-Bākir's about whom the Imām was highly complimentary, prophesying that he would revive the Prophet's *sunna* (al-Muwaffāḳ b. Aḥmad, *Manāḳib Abī Ḥanīfa*, Beirut 1401/1981, 38; al-Kardārī, *Manāḳib Abī Ḥanīfa*, Beirut 1401/1981, 37-8, 79).

Various extremist Shīʿīs claimed to derive both their teachings and their authority from al-Bākir. One was the Kūfan Abū Manṣūr al-Ḍijlī, who claimed prophethood both for al-Bākir and for himself as al-

Bākīr's designated successor (*waṣī*); another was reportedly al-Mughīra b. Sa'īd al-'Idjī (d. 119/737). *Djābir* b. Yazīd al-Dju'fī (d. 127/744-5 or 128/745-6 [q.v. in Suppl.]), to whom al-Bākīr is said to have revealed some 70,000 secret traditions, appears as a central figure in Kūfan *ghulāt* circles. Al-Bākīr and *Djābir* occupy a prominent role in the composite gnostic text *Umm al-kitāb*. In the opening section (of uncertain date), the five-year old al-Bākīr appears before his teacher 'Abd Allāh b. Saba' as the incarnation of the highest divinity. In the main part (the "Apocalypse of *Djābir*"), which has been tentatively dated to the mid 2nd/8th century (Halm, *Gnosis*, 120), al-Bākīr divulges to *Djābir* al-Dju'fī secrets such as how the cosmos was created, how human souls fell into this world and how they can gain deliverance from it. The rest of the work consists of questions addressed to al-Bākīr on a variety of subjects. Imāmī tradition responded to the extremist *Shī'ī* attempt to appropriate al-Bākīr by propagating numerous anti-*ghulāt* sayings by the Imām.

In Imāmī circles, al-Bākīr's relations with his brother Zayd are described as cordial. Al-Bākīr is said, however, to have warned Zayd of the consequences of a premature uprising against the Umayyads. A number of al-Bākīr's disciples, including in particular Abu 'l-Djārūd Ziyād b. al-Mundhir, introduced some of his doctrines among the early community of Zayd's supporters (the *Djārūdiyya*). Abu 'l-Djārūd also transmitted al-Bākīr's Kur'ān exegesis (Ibn al-Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. Riḍā Tadjaddud, Tehran 1391/1971, 36), which is partially preserved in the *Tafsīr* of 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Ḳummī. Al-Bākīr appears as an authority in the works of later Zaydī writers; as a rule, however, he is not recognised as an Imām (R. Strothmann, *Das Staatsrecht der Zaiditen*, Strassburg 1912, 107; cf. Madelung, *al-Qāsim*, 172), and appears instead as acknowledging Zayd's superior knowledge and so, by implication, Zayd's claims to the imāmate (cf. van Arendonk, *Les débuts de l'Imāmat zaidite au Yémen*, tr. J. Ryckmans, Leiden 1960, 39-40). In a different polemical context, an 'Abbāsīd tradition cites al-Bākīr as saying that the Imām of the day belongs to the Prophet's family and lives in Syria—a reference to Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh b. al-'Abbās (al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-aṣhrāf*, iii, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Dūrī, Beirut 1398/1978, 116).

Al-Bākīr was noted for his asceticism, and various sayings of his on the subject of *zuhd* are recorded. He is said to have defined *taṣawwuf* as "goodness of disposition: he that has the better disposition is the better *Ṣūfī*" (al-Hudjwīrī, *Kashf al-mahdīyūb*, tr. R.A. Nicholson, London 1911, 38-9).

Sunni authors generally regard al-Bākīr as a reliable traditionist (*thika*), although he is occasionally faulted for transmitting directly from Companions whom he did not meet (*mursal* [q.v.]). He was an authority of Ibn Ishāq for some *Sīra* material (e.g., al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh*, i, 1569-60, 1831), and is also cited by al-Ṭabarī for a version of the Karbalā' story (ii, 227-32, 281-3).

There is considerable disagreement as to when al-Bākīr died. The dates most commonly given are 117/735 and Rabī' I, Rabī' II, *Dhu 'l-Hijja* 114/May, June 732, January-February 733; other dates are 115/733-4, 7 *Dhu 'l-Hijja* 116/7 January 735, and 118/736. According to one story, al-Bākīr's cousin Zayd b. al-Hasan (d. ca. 120/738), having unsuccessfully attempted to wrest control of the Prophet's inheritance from him, placed poison (in a manner not further explained) in a saddle on which al-

Bākīr sat while returning home from a meeting in Damascus with the caliph Hishām (reigned 105-25/724-43); al-Bākīr later died of the effects of the poison. Other accounts say that it was Hishām himself who had him poisoned. Three reports place al-Bākīr's death even later. According to the first, Hishām passed away before managing to have al-Bākīr poisoned. In the second report (al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūdj*, vi, 17-18 = § 2252), al-Bākīr is said to have died during the caliphate of al-Walīd b. Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik (125-6/734-4). The third report (cited by Ibn Bābawayh) has al-Bākīr poisoned by order of the Umayyad Ibrāhīm b. al-Walīd during his brief reign (126-7/744) (*Risāla fi 'l-i'tikādāt*, Tehran 1317, 105 = *A Shī'ite creed*, tr. Asaf A.A. Fyzee, Oxford 1942, 102). This latter claim is reproduced without comment by some later *Shī'ī* writers, including Ibn Shahrāshūb (d. 588/1192) (*Manāḳib*, iii, 340) and Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1266) (*al-Iḳbāl*, Tehran 1390, 335). A possible explanation for these later death dates is that they originally referred to al-Bākīr's namesake Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās (d. between 124/741-2 and 126/743-4; for the date see J. Lassner, *Islamic revolution and historical memory*, New Haven 1986, 82-90), and were then mistakenly applied to al-Bākīr. Such a conflation might also explain the report (al-Ṣafādī, *al-Wāfi*, iv, 102) that al-Bākīr died in al-Humayma [q.v.]; this place was closely associated with the 'Abbāsīd revolution, since it was there that the dying Abū Ḥāshim [q.v.] transferred his rights to the imāmate to the 'Abbāsīd Muḥammad b. 'Alī, and it was probably there, too, that the latter died.

Al-Bākīr was buried in the Baḳī' al-Ḥarḳad cemetery in Medina, and was succeeded by his son *Dja'far* al-Ṣādiq. According to some Sunni heresiologists, the *Shī'ī* sect of al-Bākiriyya refused to accept his death and awaited his return as Mahdī (al-Baḡhdādī, *al-Farḳ bayn al-firaḳ*, Cairo 1367/1948, 38; cf. al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa 'l-nihāl*, ed. al-Wakīl, Cairo 1387/1968, i, 165).

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MUḤAMMAD B. AṢBAGH, the name of several Muslim scholars: (1) Muḥammad b. Aṣbagh b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. Nāsiḥ b. 'Aṭā' from Cordova (born 4 Rabī' I 255/20 February 869, died 306/918-19 during the raid of Badr b. Aḥmad). A *ḥadīth* scholar who had as teachers Bakī b. Maḥlād [q.v.], Muḥammad b. Waḍḍāh, Aṣbagh b. Khālīl, al-Khushanī [q.v.] and Ibn al-Qazzāz. He is said to have been proficient in grammar and uncommon language (*gharīb*) and followed individual judgment (*ra'y*). If we may believe his biographer Ibn al-Farādī, he was versed in different kinds of knowledge. Possible, but still to be proven, is his identity with the philologist Muḥammad b. Aṣbagh al-Azdī, of whom in two Berlin mss. (Ahlwardt 7063/1.2) a *kaṣida* is preserved on 66 different meanings of 'aḍjūz (with commentary by Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī [q.v.]). However, this person may be identical with Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aṣbagh b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Aṣbagh al-Azdī who is mentioned as a pupil and colleague of the judge Ibn Rushd [q.v.] in Cordova (d. 536/1141-2); see on him Ibn Baṣṣakwāl, *K. al-Ṣila*, i, Cairo 1966, no. 1288, and al-Dabbī, *Bughyat al-muṭtamis*, Madrid 1885, no. 66.

(2) Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Aṣbagh b. Labīb, from the village of Istidja (Ecija) near Cordova: died 327/938-9. He was skilled in religious duties, arithmetic, grammar, language and poetry and discussed "esoteric" opinions (perhaps of the Bāṭiniyya [q.v.]). He seems to have been a pious man who kept to religious observances and asceticism.

(3) Muḥammad b. al-Aṣbagh, from the village of Bayyāna [q.v.] (Baena, near Cordova); died 303/915-16 or 300/912-13. No further details are mentioned. Apparently he belonged to the family of Muḥammad b. Aṣbagh b. Muḥammad b. Yūsuf b. Nāsiḥ b. 'Aṭā', whose brother Kāsim b. Aṣbagh [q.v.] lived in the same village and partially had the same teachers (see Yāqūt).

The entry on "Muḥammad b. Aṣbagh b. al-Farādī al-Miṣrī al-Mālikī, Abū 'Abd Allāh", in Ismā'īl Paṣha Baghdādī, *Hadīyat al-'arīfin*, ii, Istanbul 1955, col. 18 (= Kaḥḥāla, *Mu'djam al-mu'allifin*, ix, Damas-

cus 1960, 64) is evidently based on a confusion with Abū 'Abd Allāh Aṣbagh b. al-Farādī b. Sa'īd b. Nāfi' al-fakīh al-mālikī al-miṣrī, on whom cf. Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yan*, ed. I. 'Abbās, i, Beirut 1968, 240 and references given there.

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MUḤAMMAD B. AL-ASH'ATH B. KAYS AL-KINDI, Arab chieftain, was a leader of the Banū Kinda in Kūfa following the death of his father [see AL-ASH'ATH B. KAYS] in about 41/661. Little is known about his birth and early years, but his mother was Umm Farwa, a sister of the first caliph Abū Bakr. He was known by the *kunya* Abū Maythā' as well as Abū 'l-Kāsim.

In 51/671, at the time of the revolt of Ḥudjir b. 'Adī al-Kindī [q.v.], the governor of 'Irāk, Ziyād b. Abīhi [q.v.], is said to have threatened retribution from Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath unless Ḥudjir surrendered. His role in securing the submission of Ḥudjir to Ziyād is not really clear, but he was subsequently attacked by a Kindī poet for failing to protect his kinsman. There is even a tradition that he was one of the witnesses against Ḥudjir (al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, iv a, 221), but the lists of these witnesses vary and the poet does not refer to his taking this role. A similarly inglorious, albeit reluctant, part is attributed to Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath in the reports about Muslim b. 'Aqīl's attempt to arouse support for al-Husayn b. 'Alī in Kūfa before Karbalā' in 60/680, and traditions give him some responsibility for the arrests both of Muslim and of Hānī' b. 'Urwa. Whatever his precise role, his involvement in these two episodes incurred the hostility of the supporters of the 'Alids, already aroused by the conduct of his father at Siffin.

At a date which is not specified, the governor of 'Irāk, 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād [q.v.], to whom he gave a daughter in marriage, is reported to have made Muḥammad b. al-Ash'ath *wālī* of Ṭabaristān, but he was unable to make good his authority in the region (al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, 325). In Kūfa, following the death of the caliph Yazīd and the flight of 'Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād from 'Irāk (64/683-4), he along with the other *ashraf* eventually accepted the authority of Ibn al-Zubayr, and at some stage, the latter made him governor of Mawṣil. He plays no role in the accounts of the fighting in Kūfa associated with the revolt of al-Mukhtār [q.v.] in 66/685-6, but, when the latter sent out his governors following his seizure of Kūfa, Muḥammad had to fall back from Mawṣil to Takrīt before the man whom al-Mukhtār had sent as governor of Mawṣil. The sources report Ibn al-Zubayr's condemnation of him for this. After a brief period of waiting to see which way things were going, he recognised the authority of al-Mukhtār, but in the same year fled to Baṣra. Ibn A'ṭham associates this with al-Mukhtār's taking vengeance against those regarded as the killers of al-Husayn b. 'Alī, among whom he counted Ibn al-Ash'ath, while other sources link it with the revolt of those Kūfian *ashraf* who found al-Mukhtār's rule intolerable. In 67/686-7 he took part in the attack launched from Baṣra by Muṣ'ab b. al-Zubayr which ended al-Mukhtār's domination. He is reported to have led a band of the Kūfian "refugees" who were particularly ardent in fighting,