

Folk Beliefs in Baghdad as Reflected in the Writings of Ibn al-Sa'i al-Baghdadi (d. 674 AH / 1275 AD) (Taking Belief in Dreams and Astrology as an Example)

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Abstract:

Popular beliefs are a social phenomenon resulting from the interaction of individuals in their social relationships and their perceptions of life, existence, and the fearsome forces of nature that dominate or control the course of the universe. For many reasons, the most important of which is the social accumulation of customs, traditions and ideas, belief becomes a compelling, overarching force; it commands in positive instances and subdues in negative ones. Consequently, this, we also see that belief takes on a sacred, spiritual and even religious character, as it is a product of the lives of previous generations, with the ideas they held, the struggles they waged against the forces of nature and other powers, and the teachings and ethics instilled in their souls by their sages, messengers and spiritual leaders

Folk beliefs, with their inherited customs and traditions, are common to all peoples across the ages; Yet they differ from one nation to another and from one country to another, depending on the nature of society and the influence of the natural environment upon it, as noted by Ibn Khaldun, who observed the influence of the climate on the character of peoples and many of their conditions, such as their morals, religions and temperament, and the influence of the nature of work and people whether live in urban or nomadic settings on human dispositions and customs as well (2).

The city of Baghdad is one of the Arab cities that has preserved for itself many popular beliefs passed down by its people from generation to generation, which reflects the cultural nature of this society through the ideas and visions it has held onto throughout the ages, and how these have influenced its decisions and the affairs of daily life. Folk beliefs in the city of Baghdad have formed part of the folk heritage that has shaped the collective consciousness of society throughout the ages; They are not merely transient, inherited beliefs, but have held profound significance for people, who have found in them a means of filling the void left by the harsh realities of life, or as a substitute for what science could not provide. Thus, people turned to exorcists and astrologers instead of doctors, and viewed omens, jinn and astrology as means of foretelling the future, as they served as warnings to avoid the unknown or to seek it out. The impact of these beliefs was not limited to the social sphere; They also contributed to the development of the urban landscape, as dreams often became a direct cause for construction and building. They also contributed to intellectual development; Through these beliefs, the movement of translation and authorship flourished in the scientific fields in which they specialized.

Keywords: (The Holy Qur'an – Beliefs – Society – Baghdad – Ibn al-Sa'i – The Caliph)

First topic: Belief in dreams:

Dream: It is the relaxation of the brain's nerves by the rising moisture of vapors, and it has been said that it is when God takes the soul without death.⁽¹⁾ God Almighty says: "God takes the souls at the time of their death, and those that do not die [He takes] during their sleep. Then He withholds those for whom He has decreed death and releases the others until a specified term. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought."⁽²⁾ Sleep is the precursor to vision.⁽³⁾ Dreams, because the human soul leaves the human body during sleep in stages, and it is this soul that controls the truth or falsehood of the vision during sleep.⁽⁴⁾

A vision is a perception that God Almighty places in the heart of His servant through an angel or a demon, either by name (i.e., its true nature), by metaphor (i.e., its expression), or by confusion. Its counterpart in wakefulness is fleeting thoughts, which may come in a coherent narrative or flow continuously. It has also been said that they are beliefs because the seer sees himself as an animal or a bird, for example, and this is not perception; therefore, it must be a belief, since a belief can be contrary to what is held.⁽⁵⁾ Dreams and visions are mentioned in several verses of the Holy Quran, including God's words in the story of the Prophet Ishmael. □ ((And when he reached the age of working with him, he said, "O my son, indeed I have seen in a dream that I am sacrificing you, so see what you think." He said, "O my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me, if Allah wills, among the patient ones."))⁽⁶⁾ And God Almighty said in the story of the Prophet Joseph, peace be upon him: "When Joseph said to his father, 'O my father, indeed I have seen [in a dream] eleven stars and the sun and the moon; I saw them prostrating to me.'"⁽⁷⁾ And His saying, may He be exalted: "And the king said, 'Indeed, I saw [in a dream] seven fat cows being eaten by seven lean ones, and seven green ears [of grain] and others dry. O eminent ones, explain to me my vision, if you should interpret visions.'"⁽⁸⁾ And God Almighty says regarding the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family): "God has indeed fulfilled the vision for His Messenger in truth. You will surely enter the Sacred Mosque, God willing, in safety, with your heads shaved and your hair cut short, not fearing [anyone]. He knew what you did not know and has granted you, besides that, an imminent conquest."⁽⁹⁾

This vision, which is mentioned in the Holy Quran, is one of the true visions about which the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said: "The vision of the believer is one of forty-six parts of prophecy."⁽¹⁰⁾

A dream may hold many meanings for a person; it may be a warning or good tidings. Some dreams are warnings, and they are true; God shows them to the believer out of compassion so that he may prepare for what is to come before it happens.⁽¹¹⁾ And in that regard, the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) said: "O people, nothing remains of the glad tidings of prophethood except the righteous vision which a Muslim sees or which is seen for him."⁽¹²⁾ It may be a warning to avert something unpleasant, with the intended outcome of the warning being achieved. The vowed item may then revert to the meaning of a good omen, because one who is warned of something that will happen to him, even if it is unpleasant, is in a better position than one upon whom it suddenly occurs. For one who knows of its occurrence is distressed, and this serves as a relief and a mercy to him.⁽¹³⁾ Therefore, dreams (visions) have become one of the important popular beliefs that many societies have believed in. The people of Baghdad relied more on visions and made many decisions based on dreams, and some of them even considered them a means to achieve their goals and objectives, as we will see.

Due to the widespread interest in dreams, the need arose for dream interpreters and the writing of books on the subject, namely "The Interpretation of Dreams." Among those who wrote on this topic from Baghdad was Ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawari.⁽¹⁴⁾ He has a book entitled "Interpretation of Dreams".⁽¹⁵⁾ Ibn al-Sa'i also mentioned that Muhammad ibn al-Qasim ibn Muhammad ibn Bashir ibn al-Husayn, known as Ibn al-Anbari (d. 328 AH/939 CE), the grammarian, linguist, and author of numerous works on Qur'anic and Hadith sciences, came across a book on dream interpretation and memorized it. This occurred after he was asked one day about the interpretation of a dream, which he was ignorant of, so he evaded the question and decided to learn dream interpretation. He then came across a book on the subject and became an interpreter of dreams.⁽¹⁶⁾ Ali ibn Ahmad al-Amidi also wrote⁽¹⁷⁾ He who was described as a great scholar in the interpretation of dreams wrote a book on the interpretation of dreams which he called "The Jewels of Insight in the Science of Interpretation".⁽¹⁸⁾ Ibn al-Sa'i frequently mentions stories about dreams, and he always refers to them in all his books that are in our possession. This stems from the historian's own belief in dreams.

Dreams had a profound impact on the psychological well-being of the people. This can be seen in what Ibn al-Sa'i mentioned in his biography of the concubine of Caliph Musa al-Hadi (169-170 AH/785-786 CE), named Ghadir. The Caliph loved her deeply, and one day, while she was singing to him, the thought occurred to him that if he died and his brother Harun al-Rashid succeeded him as Caliph, he would marry her. So he ordered them both to be brought before him and made them swear solemn oaths that if he died, they would not marry. They swore to this. When Caliph al-Hadi died and Caliph Harun al-Rashid was proclaimed Caliph in 170 AH/786 CE, he sent for Ghadir and proposed to her. She reminded him of the oaths they had made to his brother al-Hadi, so Caliph Harun al-Rashid atoned for those oaths and married her. One day, while she was sleeping in the Caliph's lap, she woke up startled and crying. He asked her why, and she said, "I saw your brother just now." In his sleep, he says:

I lived next to the inhabitants of the cemeteries	***	I broke my promise after
Your faith is a lie, a sin.	***	And she swore to me ⁽¹⁹⁾
He who named you treacherous was right	***	And my brother was married to a treacherous woman.
And I became among the wandering maidens ⁽²⁰⁾	***	I spent the night among the afflicted.
The wheel of fortune turns against you.	***	Don't be disappointed by the new thousand
And I became where I became	***	She caught up with me before morning.

These verses had a profound impact on her, and she remained agitated and trembling with fear until she died in his arms, despite the Caliph's attempts to calm her and convince her that they were mere jumbled thoughts.⁽²¹⁾ Ahlam, and that was in the year 173 AH/790 AD⁽²²⁾ From the context of the above narrative, we see the extent of the dream's impact on society and how it led to the death of the Caliph's concubine.

Among the decisions made as a result of the dream was what was narrated about Caliph al-Mahdi (158-169 AH/ 774-785 AD) regarding the release of Imam Musa ibn Ja'far.⁽²³⁾ (□) from imprisonment following a vision. It is stated in the book Mukhtasar Akhbar al-Khulafa' that when Caliph al-Mahdi imprisoned Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (□He saw Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib in his dream. □He said: "So would you perhaps, if you turned away, cause corruption on earth and sever your family ties?" He awoke in alarm and sent for Rabi' ibn Yunus.⁽²⁴⁾ At night, he asked him to bring Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (□When he was brought to him, he embraced him and sat him down beside him, saying, "O Abu al-Hasan, I saw the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abi Talib, peace be upon him, in a dream reciting such and such. So, grant me security on the condition that you do not rebel against me or any of my children." He replied, "By God, I will not do that, nor is it my way." He said, "You have spoken the truth," and asked al-Rabi' to give him three thousand dinars and return him to his family in Medina, and he did so.⁽²⁵⁾

Dreams also played a prominent role in elevating the status of some ascetics and scholars, such as Ma'ruf al-Karkhi.⁽²⁶⁾ Ibn al-Sa'i said: ((Sari said⁽²⁷⁾ **I saw Ma'ruf in a dream as if he was standing under the Throne, and God Almighty said to His angels: Who is this? They said: You know best, O Lord. He said: This is Ma'ruf al-Karkhi, intoxicated with love for Me, and he will not recover until the day he meets Me.**⁽²⁸⁾

In another text he said: ((...and Abu Bakr al-Khayyat said⁽²⁹⁾ **I saw in a dream that I entered the cemeteries, and the people of the cemeteries were sitting among the basil, and I saw Ma'ruf al-Karkhi standing among them, going back and forth. I said, "O Abu Mahfouz, what did God do to you? Haven't you died?" He said, "Yes," and recited:**

Their people have died, beloved by the people.⁽³⁰⁾ *** Death met an endless life

Dreams also played a role in promoting Sufism. Ibn al-Sa'i mentions, in his biography of one of the Sufi sheikhs, Abu Sa'id Ahmad ibn 'Isa al-Kharraz (d. 279 AH/892 CE), one of the great imams and revered sheikhs of the Sufis, to whom is attributed the pioneering role in establishing the concepts of annihilation and subsistence, and in his symbolic narratives, al-Kharraz recounts a dream vision with Iblis (Satan) that reflects the essence of Sufi asceticism. In this vision, Satan informed him of his inability to tempt the Sufis after they had renounced the world from their hearts—the very means by which he deceives others. However, Satan warned of the only loophole through which he could infiltrate the Sufis: the company of young people. This is what al-Kharraz confirmed, stating that few of them escape the consequences and effects of such companionship.⁽³¹⁾

Such dreams may leave an impression on some people, leading them to venerate certain individuals, follow their doctrines, and belong to their religious school, because they guided the dreamer to the path of truth. Dreams also played a prominent role as part of the healing culture among certain segments of society, a fact documented by Ibn al-Sa'i when he mentioned Abu al-Ma'ali al-'Abid.⁽³²⁾ (d. 496 AH/1102 CE) His house became a destination for patients seeking healing, based on a prophetic vision he had when he suffered a severe fever. He saw the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) in his dream, who wrote him an amulet on papers, and he was cured by God's permission. From that time on, he began writing this amulet for people, and they recovered by the grace of God.⁽³³⁾

This dream may be a true vision that brings good tidings to the believer, as previously mentioned, or the psychological factor may have an effect on it, as this factor may play a major role in people's souls and bring comfort, reassurance, and certainty of their healing through the blessing of the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) supplication. If the human soul improves, the body improves with it. Other dreams similar to the dream of Ma'ali al-'Abid include what Ibn al-Sa'i mentioned in his account of the al-Burma shrine in the al-Ja'fariya neighborhood.⁽³⁴⁾ This scene was a bond for women⁽³⁵⁾ It was ruined, and there was a palm tree and a tamarisk tree in it.⁽³⁶⁾ He said that a woman from Wasit lived near this place and was suffering from a blood disorder.⁽³⁷⁾ Her illness worsened, her feet and knees swelled, and she was unable to move. Then she saw in her dream that a man came riding, wearing green clothes, a green turban, green slippers, a saddle, and a mace.⁽³⁸⁾ Khadrawan, whose eyes shone brightly around his temple, dismounted from his mount and entered that place. He prayed by the tree, and when he came out, he commanded her to stand up. She told him she was unable to do so, so he taught her a supplication and then gestured to her knee with his staff. When she awoke, she was cured of her ailment. When the people heard of this, they rushed to visit that place, taking water from the well where it was and visiting the woman. They built a beautiful shrine there, and people began to come to it with alms and vows. A supervisor was appointed to oversee what the people brought.⁽³⁹⁾

We see what resulted from this vision, such as people flocking to visit this place and even carrying vows and alms, and how this vision was reflected on the doctrinal aspect until that place became a holy site, in addition to the architectural aspect that was specific to that place. Among the scenes that were documented as a result of the vision is what Ibn al-Sa'i mentioned in an event in the year 568 AH/1172 AD when a boy saw in a dream as if a grave had appeared in the al-Harbiyya neighborhood.⁽⁴⁰⁾ When he spoke of this dream, he searched for the grave and found it, and it was said that he was a descendant of Imam Ali (□So he built a dome over it and placed a brick on the grave.⁽⁴¹⁾ Wood and a beautiful scene around it⁽⁴²⁾ The same applies to the scene of the palm.⁽⁴³⁾ The shrine was built following a vision in which someone saw in a dream that Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) touched the wall of the site of the shrine, leaving the imprint of his hand. The shrine was then built and became a place of pilgrimage where people seek blessings.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Dreams also became a means of livelihood for some people, as Ibn al-Sa'i mentioned that Abu Abdullah Hammad ibn Muslim al-Dabbas⁽⁴⁵⁾ (d. 525 AH/ 1130 AD) He used to earn his living and live off dreams, so he said: ((...then he started to eat from dreams, and there were people who saw in a dream someone saying to him, "Carry such and such to Hammad," so he would carry it for him and he would eat from that.)⁽⁴⁶⁾

The vision had an influence on the choice of the burial place, as Ibn al-Sa'i mentioned one of the Mamluks who used to visit him during his illness while he was lying in the Adudi Hospital.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Before his death, this Mamluk stipulated that he be buried in the same hospital cemetery. When Ibn al-Sa'i inquired about the reason for his insistence on this place, the Mamluk replied that he had seen in his dream a companion who had preceded him in death in the same hospital. He asked him about his condition, and the companion told him that God had forgiven him because of his burial in that cemetery, affirming that the dead there are encompassed by God's mercy.⁽⁴⁸⁾

These are some of the accounts of dreams that Ibn al-Sa'i included in his writings, and there are many other narrations on this subject related to dreams.⁽⁴⁹⁾

The phenomenon of dreams continued after the era of Ibn al-Sa'i. It is worth mentioning here an incident narrated by the author of al-Hawadith al-Jami'ah that occurred three years after the death of Ibn al-Sa'i. He mentioned in the events of the year 677 AH/1278 AD that people saw on the ninth night of Ramadan in the outskirts of Baghdad a light connected to the sky, and on the morning of that day some of them said: that they saw a grave in which was one of the sons of al-Hasan (□In the Al-Harawiyya neighborhood⁽⁵⁰⁾ People flocked to visit him, then they began to rebuild it. After that, news spread among the common people of seeing dreams and numerous phenomena. They spoke of the rise of the chronically ill and the sick, and some people transmitted things from others that had no basis other than the whims of the common people. People were prevented from their livelihoods and work because of this. Then the head of the Diwan, Ala' al-Din al-Juwayni, stepped forward.⁽⁵¹⁾ By transferring everyone who has a grave to the shrine of Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (□So they did that, and the common people calmed down. Then a person came claiming to be an Alawite and claimed that he saw in his dream something indicating the appearance of the grave of some of the sons of the Imams. □Tel al-Zubaybiya⁽⁵²⁾ The world rushed to him, and when they uncovered the earth, they found a murdered boy wearing a shirt, with marbles in his pocket that he had been playing with. Some people recognized him, and one of them said, "This is my son, and I have lost him for days," mentioning certain signs. When he was seen, his story became clear, and they found a rock at his head on which was written: "This is the grave of Umar ibn Abdullah."⁽⁵³⁾ When the head of the court was informed of this, he resolved to kill the Alawite who had told him. The prominent people asked him to pardon the man, and he agreed. The man in question was then publicly disgraced.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Section Two: Belief in Astrology: An astrologer is someone who studies the stars according to their timings and movements.⁽⁵⁵⁾ He looked at the stars, meaning he pondered a matter, considering how to manage it; it was also said to mean what opinion arose within him.⁽⁵⁶⁾ It has been said that it is the observation of the planets in order to gain insight, as they claim, into the conditions of the world or unseen events.⁽⁵⁷⁾

Astrology differs from astronomy. The latter is a science that examines the movements of fixed and moving planets and infers the shapes and positions of celestial bodies from the nature of these movements.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Or it is a science that investigates the phenomena of celestial bodies, the laws of their visible and real motion, their magnitudes, dimensions, and natural properties.⁽⁵⁹⁾ Astronomy is permissible according to Islamic law; in fact, it is essential. Knowing prayer times, the direction of the Qibla, eclipses, and other matters related to Islamic teachings and obligations requires knowledge of astronomy.⁽⁶⁰⁾ However, astrology is difficult to consider a science because it is not based on firm and established principles and laws, but rather on conjecture and guesswork.⁽⁶¹⁾ It has no basis in Islamic law, and therefore it is rejected according to Islamic law.⁽⁶²⁾

Astrology is not mentioned at all in the Holy Quran. Rather, God Almighty clarified in His Holy Book the purpose of creating the stars in several verses, including His saying: "And We have certainly beautified the nearest heaven with lamps and have made them missiles for the devils, and We have prepared for them the punishment of the Blaze."⁽⁶³⁾ **And in His Almighty saying: {And landmarks. And by the stars they are guided.}**⁽⁶⁴⁾.

The books of interpretation have clarified the purpose of the creation of stars and planets according to the Qur'anic verses, saying: "God created the stars for three purposes: as adornment for the lowest heaven, as missiles against the devils, and as signs by which to be guided. Whoever interprets them otherwise has spoken according to his own opinion, missed his opportunity, lost his share, and burdened himself with what he has no knowledge of."⁽⁶⁵⁾ The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him and his family) also forbade astrology in several hadiths. It was narrated that he said: "Whoever acquires knowledge of astrology acquires a branch of magic, and the more he acquires, the more he increases in magic."⁽⁶⁶⁾ In another hadith, he said: "Whoever goes to a fortune-teller and asks him about something, his prayer will not be accepted for forty nights."⁽⁶⁷⁾ He also said: "I fear two things for my nation: denying predestination and believing in astrology."⁽⁶⁸⁾.

Belief in astrology is a phenomenon that has been widespread in various societies and eras, especially among the Arabs, who believed in the influence of the stars on the affairs of the underworld and considered it a type of divination.⁽⁶⁹⁾ They called the astrologer a priest, and they attributed weather phenomena related to rain and wind to the rising or setting of the planets. Therefore, meteorology was a branch of astrology. They resorted to astrologers to study celestial bodies to learn about hidden matters of the present and future by inferring them from the phenomena of the planets and stars. The astrologers would predict for them what would happen. The Arabs before Islam greatly exaggerated this and believed in astrology and the influence of the horoscope on a person's life.⁽⁷⁰⁾.

Arab interest in astrology persisted throughout history, increasing during the Abbasid era. This surge in interest stemmed from the Abbasid caliphs' focus on astrology, driven by the political instability at the beginning of the Abbasid period. The caliphs, particularly amidst escalating battles between the early Abbasids and their adversaries, sought reassurance from astrologers, hoping to gain confidence in the course and outcomes of these battles. Furthermore, the Abbasid caliphate's anxieties about the unknown and its hesitation in important matters led them to rely on astrologers to determine auspicious and inauspicious times.⁽⁷¹⁾ Indeed, the city of Baghdad itself was built after consulting astrologers. It is reported that when Caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur (136-158 AH/754-775 AD) decided to build the city of Baghdad, he consulted astrologers about it, and they informed him of what the stars indicated regarding its long lifespan, its extensive development, the people's need for its resources, and that no caliph would die a natural death there.⁽⁷²⁾.

Astrology also received great attention from the general public in the Abbasid era, who followed the example of the Abbasid caliphs who were interested in astrology, as Al-Yaqubi said: "As for the caliphs and kings of Islam, the Muslims in every era are followers of the caliph, following his path, adopting his doctrines, and acting according to what they see from him, and they do not deviate from his morals, actions, and words."⁽⁷³⁾ Interaction with other nations, especially the Persians, and exposure to their knowledge and sciences, particularly astrology, also had an impact on this.⁽⁷⁴⁾.

Among the accounts that point to the extent of the astrologers' falsehood and fabrication, and demonstrate the invalidity of astrology, is what was mentioned in the book "Abridged History of the Caliphs," that the astrologers in Baghdad had predicted in one year that the city of Baghdad and many other cities would be flooded as a result of heavy rains that would lead to a rise in the water levels of the seas and springs. As a result, the springs dried up that year, the rivers diminished, and the rains ceased, to the point that the people of Baghdad repeatedly prayed for rain.⁽⁷⁵⁾ Astrology here went beyond personal predictions, extending to the prediction of astronomical phenomena such as floods, droughts, famines, and others, considering them to be phenomena related to celestial bodies. The historian likened this incident to what happened to Caliph al-Wathiq (227-232 AH/842-847 CE), when astrologers predicted he would live another fifty years, but he lived only ten days after that.⁽⁷⁶⁾.

Similarly, in his biography of Abu al-Faraj Abd al-Rahman ibn Ali ibn Muhammad, known as Jamal al-Din (d. 597 AH/1200 CE), he wrote: "A sheikh and jurist, the foremost of his time, author of beneficial works in every field, including jurisprudence, exegesis, hadith, preaching, history, anecdotes, and others. He narrated hadith from many people, and people listened to him and benefited from him... He was eloquent, articulate, persuasive, quick-witted, and quick to respond. Among his finest words in preaching is his saying: ... O you who are preoccupied with looking at the horoscope, look at what has befallen you, as if you have already seen death, and your mind has not considered the consequences. Listen to my account truly and what I translate, and leave aside the words of the delirious."⁽⁷⁷⁾ **The astrologer said: If regret for negligence is combined with a determination to repent, then it is a moment of good fortune. But if love of this world is combined with a preference for laziness, then it is a period of misfortune.**⁽⁷⁸⁾.

In this narrative, the preacher urges people to stop being preoccupied with the words of astrologers, reminding them that death is the true destiny of man, not astrology. This explains the abundance of astrologers and the reliance on and belief in them in Baghdad at that time.

Ibn al-Sa'i mentioned in the biography of Abu al-Thana' Mahmud ibn Hibat Allah ibn Abi al-Qasim al-Hilli al-Bazzaz (d. 604 AH/1207 AD), who was a sheikh who had memorized the Glorious Qur'an, was knowledgeable in grammar and the Arabic language, and was one of the narrators of the noble Prophetic hadith, that he was sitting one day in his father's gathering at the Palace Mosque when a young man came and asked him about two lines of poetry. The sheikh said to him: Recite them, so he recited them:

**And his abandonment of the fire will burn me with it.
If he doesn't visit me, and by Gemini if he does visit me**

The sun in Sagittarius was setting.

The beloved has arrived in the Gardens of Eternity, may he dwell therein.

When the sheikh heard the two verses, he did not understand their meaning. He said, "My son, this is the work of astrologers and those who study the movement of the celestial bodies, not the work of literary figures and scholars of Arabic." The young man left without understanding anything. The sheikh was too embarrassed to ask about something he did not know, so he vowed not to sit down until he had studied astrology. He studied it until he understood what was meant by it. The meaning of the poem was that the night is longest when the sun is in Sagittarius and shortest when it is in Gemini, which is at the end of the day. It was as if the poet said: "The night is long for me when it does not visit me, and short when it does."⁽⁷⁹⁾.

Although the verses were far from astrology and especially from astronomy, learning the science of the stars became a necessity so that the scholar would be familiar with all the sciences, knowledge and phenomena that were common at that time and be able to distinguish between them.

Ibn al-Sa'i mentioned in his works some books related to the science of stars in general or specifically to astrology, including the book "Knowledge of the Rising Points of the Zodiac" by Abu Abdullah al-Battani.⁽⁸⁰⁾ Astrologer and astrologer⁽⁸¹⁾.

And the book "What was collected from what astrologers tried and proved true" by Ahmad ibn Ja'far Jahza al-Barmaki⁽⁸²⁾ ⁽⁸³⁾ The book "The Discourse on the Science of Stars" by Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi (d. 463 AH/1070 AD)⁽⁸⁴⁾. It seems that society's interest in astrology stemmed from psychological constraints imposed by the harsh reality of the political turmoil and perhaps the severe economic conditions some were experiencing. People turned to astrologers to solve their problems, which the ruling authority was unable to address. They hoped these astrologers would bring them relief from their predicament or warn them of some unknown danger they feared, so they could take precautions.⁽⁸⁵⁾ Therefore, Al-Jahiz said: "People are not amazed by the abundance of astrologers' lies, mistakes, and deceptions... Rather, the astrologer is to the common people like the doctor who, if his treatment kills the patient, they believe that fate killed him, and if he recovers, he is the one who cured him, although their correctness is greater and their evidence is clearer. People have become not limited to astrologers to what they hear from them without them giving birth to them and putting wonders on their tongues."⁽⁸⁶⁾.

Conclusion:

The most important findings of this research can be summarized as follows:

1. The popular beliefs prevalent in Baghdad society were not merely a coincidence, but rather an extension of inherited beliefs dating back to the pre-Islamic era.
2. These beliefs have become an integral part of the collective consciousness, so deeply ingrained that they have replaced fields of knowledge and applied sciences for a large segment of its members.
3. Society relied on these beliefs as an important means of anticipating the future and as a refuge to overcome crises and problems for which, in their view, scientific knowledge was unable to provide appropriate solutions.
4. These beliefs were not limited to one social class over another; they were adopted by the general public as well as by the elite (the upper class), who found in them a means to deal with the challenges surrounding them, especially challenges of a political nature.
5. Islam, through the Holy Quran and the Prophetic Sunnah, took a critical stance towards some of these beliefs, as it fought against practices that contradict the faith, such as astrology, and called for abandoning them, while it approved some other practices, such as true dreams.
6. In conclusion, this study does not aim to legitimize these beliefs, but rather seeks to provide an analytical study of the cultural reality experienced by Baghdad society. It represents a link between the heritage of previous nations and the generations that followed, which helps us to understand the roots and origins of the beliefs prevalent in our contemporary society.

Research footnotes:

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⁽¹⁾ Al-Raghib Al-Isfahani, Mufradat Alfaz Al-Qur'an, p. 830; Al-Mufradat fi Ghariib Al-Qur'an, p. 510; Al-Baydawi, Tafsir Al-Baydawi, Vol. 1, p. 553.

⁽²⁾ Surah Az-Zumar, verse 42.

⁽³⁾ A dream (ru'ya) is what a person sees in their sleep. It is said, "He saw a dream," and it is also said, "I saw a good dream." The word "ru'ya" is not pluralized. (Al-Farahidi, Al-'Ayn, vol. 8, p. 307; Al-Zubaidi, Taj al-'Arus, vol. 19, p. 436).

⁽⁴⁾ Al-Ziyadi, Dreams and their impact on Islamic heritage, p. 16.

⁽⁵⁾ Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Visions and Dreams, p. 5.

⁽⁶⁾ Surah As-Saffat, verse 102.

⁽⁷⁾ Surah Yusuf, verse 4.

⁽⁸⁾ Surah Yusuf, verse 43.

⁽⁹⁾ Surah Al-Fath, verse 27.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Ibn Hanbal, Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Vol. 2, p. 233; Al-Bukhari, Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol. 8, p. 69; Al-Nisaburi, Sahih Muslim, Vol. 7, p. 52.

⁽¹¹⁾ Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Visions and Dreams, p. 48, p. 59.

⁽¹²⁾ Ibn Hanbal, Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Vol. 1, p. 219; Al-Nisaburi, Sahih Muslim, Vol. 2, p. 48; Al-Nasa'i, Sunan Al-Nasa'i, Vol. 2, p. 189.

⁽¹³⁾ Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Visions and Dreams, p. 59.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Abu Muhammad Abdullah ibn Muslim ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawari, or it is said al-Marwazi, was a grammarian and linguist who lived in Baghdad and narrated hadith there. He authored a number of works on the rare words of the Qur'an, the rare words of hadith, the classes of poets, and others. He died in the year 270 AH/883 AD, or it is said 271 AH/884 AD, or it is said 276 AH/889 AD. Ibn Khallikan, Wafayat al-A'yan, vol. 3, pp. 42-43; al-Dhahabi, al-Ibar, vol. 2, p. 62; Tadhkirat al-Huffaz, vol. 2, p. 631; al-Safadi, al-Wafi bi'l-Wafayat, vol. 17, p. 326.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Ibn al-Nadim, Al-Fihrist, p. 378.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Ibn al-Sa'i, Al-Durr al-Thamin, pp. 118-119. See also: Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad, Vol. 3, pp. 399-402.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Umar Yusuf ibn al-Khidr, known as Zayn al-Din Abu al-Hasan al-Hanbali, was a highly esteemed scholar with great expertise in dream interpretation. He spoke several languages, including Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and Greek. He died in 712 AH/1312 CE. (Al-Safadi, Al-Wafi bi'l-Wafayat, vol. 20, pp. 126-127; Nukat al-Umyan, p. 189).

¹⁸Al-Safadi, A'yan al-Asr, Vol. 3, p. 174; Al-Wafi bi'l-Wafayat, Vol. 20, p. 127; Nukat al-'Umyan, p. 190.

¹⁹The word is missing from the original version.

²⁰The word "عائرة" ('ā'irah) is the plural of "عائر" ('awā'ir), referring to someone who goes here and there, and is used metaphorically to describe a hypocrite in their wavering and inability to stick to one position. (Al-Baghdadi, Khizanat al-Adab, vol. 7, p. 545).

²¹Al-Adghath: A vision that has no interpretation. Al-Azdi, Jamharat al-Lughah, Vol. 1, p. 425; Al-Azhari, Tahdhib al-Lughah, Vol. 8, p. 49; Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-Arab, Vol. 2, p. 163.

²²The wives of the Caliphs, pp. 45-46.

²³Musa ibn Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon them), also known as Abu al-Hasan and Abu Ibrahim, and nicknamed al-Kadhim, was born in Medina in 128 AH/746 CE, or according to another account, 129 AH/745 CE. His mother was a concubine named Hamida. Imam Musa al-Kadhim (peace be upon him) was renowned for his generosity, munificence, and devotion. Throughout his life, he faced constant persecution from the Abbasid state. Caliph al-Mahdi summoned him to Baghdad, imprisoned him, and then sent him back to Medina, where he remained until the caliphate of Harun al-Rashid. When Caliph Harun performed the Hajj in 179 AH/795 CE, he took Imam Musa ibn Ja'far with him to Baghdad and imprisoned him. He remained imprisoned until his death in 183 AH/799 CE, poisoned on the orders of Caliph Harun al-Rashid. He was buried in the Quraish cemetery in Baghdad. (Al-Ya'qubi, Tarikh al-Ya'qubi, vol. 2, p. 414; Al-Tabari, Dalail al-Nubala') Al-Imamah, pp. 307-315; Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad, Vol. 13, pp. 28-29; Ibn Al-Jawzi, Al-Muntazam, Vol. 9, p. 87; Ibn Al-Sa'i, Mukhtasar Akhbar Al-Khulafa' (attributed), pp. 28-30.

²⁴Abu al-Fadl al-Rabi' ibn Yunus was a chamberlain and minister to Caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur. He was credited with securing the oath of allegiance for Caliph al-Mahdi after he removed Isa ibn Musa from the line of succession, and he became his chamberlain. He died in 170 AH/786 AD. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad, vol. 8, p. 413; Ibn Khallikan, Wafayat al-A'yan 2, pp. 294-299.

²⁵Ibn al-Sa'i (attributed), pp. 29-30.

²⁶Ma'ruf ibn al-Firzan Abu Mahfuz, known as al-Karkhi, was from Karkh, Baghdad. He was a Christian who converted to Islam at the hands of Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Rida (peace be upon him). He was renowned for his asceticism and detachment from worldly life. He was described as having his prayers answered and possessing well-known miracles. He died in 200 AH/815 CE, and his tomb is still visited and blessed to this day. See: al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad, vol. 1, pp. 201-209; Ibn al-Sa'i, Akhbar al-Zuhhad, pp. 320-326.

²⁷He is Abu al-Hasan Sari ibn al-Mughallis al-Saqati, one of the Sufi men, known for his knowledge and piety. He was the imam and sheikh of the people of Baghdad in his time. He was the maternal uncle and teacher of al-Junayd and one of those who accompanied Sheikh Ma'ruf al-Karkhi. He died in 251 AH/865 CE, or it was said in 256 AH/869 CE, or it was said in 257 AH/870 CE. (Al-Sulami, Tabaqat al-Sufiyya, p. 48; Ibn Khallikan, Wafayat al-A'yan, vol. 2, pp. 357-359; Al-Safadi, Al-Wafi bi'l-Wafayat, vol. 15, p. 85).

²⁸News of the Ascetics, p. 321.

²⁹The sources mention more than one person with this nickname and title, and the narrative does not specify which one is meant. See: Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad, Vol. 3, p. 117; Ibn Al-Jawzi, Al-Muntazam, Vol. 16, p. 170; Ibn Al-Dubaythi, Dhayl Tarikh Madinat Al-Salam, Vol. 1, pp. 507, 516; Vol. 2, p. 256; Ibn Al-Najjar, Dhayl Tarikh Baghdad, Vol. 4, p. 9; Al-Dhahabi, Al-Mukhtasar min Tarikh Ibn Al-Dubaythi, p. 106.

³⁰News of the Ascetics, p. 324.

³¹The same source, p. 99.

³²Al-Ma'ali Al-Zahid's name appears in this form in some sources and in others as Abu Al-Ma'ali. Even Ibn Al-Sa'i himself mentioned him in both forms in more than one place in his biography of him. Ma'ali was one of the ascetics who devoted himself to God, and miracles and struggles are narrated about him. It is said that he would only sleep sitting up and would wear one garment in summer and winter, and if it was cold, he would tie the loincloth over his shoulders. He died in the year 496 AH/1103. Ibn Al-Jawzi, Sifat Al-Safwa, vol. 2, p. 320; Ibn Al-Sa'i, Akhbar al-Zuhhad, p. 317; Al-Dhahabi, Tarikh Al-Islam, vol. 34, p. 241.

³³News of the Ascetic, p. 318.

³⁴Al-Ja'fariyah neighborhood: A large and famous neighborhood on the eastern side of Baghdad. Yaqu' al-Hamawi, Mu'jam al-Buldan, vol. 2, p. 144.

³⁵During the Abbasid era, Baghdad witnessed the establishment of several Sufi monasteries (ribats) for women, such as the Ribat of Fatima al-Raziyya, the Ribat of Banafsha, and the Ribat of Dar al-Shatt, among others. The purpose of these monasteries was to serve as centers for worship, asceticism, and detachment from worldly life, as well as to be endowed for the benefit of the poor and needy. (Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Muntazam, vol. 17, p. 247; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya, vol. 12, p. 245; Anonymous, al-Hawadith al-Jami'a, p. 211). For further information, see: Abdullah, Women's Contributions to the Construction of Ribats, p. 376 and following.

³⁶The word "barm" is the plural of "burmah," which refers to the fruit of the acacia tree. Its first stage is a "wahlah," then a "fatlah," then a "ballah," and finally a "burmah." It may also refer to the fruit of the acacia tree, which has the most pleasant aroma and is yellow and sweet, or to the fruit of the arak tree, or the fruit of the tahl tree. (Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-Arab, vol. 12, p. 43)

³⁷Bloody diarrhea: This refers to dysentery, a disease that causes problems in the intestines and liver, leading to bloody diarrhea. See Al-Razi, Al-Hawi fi al-Tibb, vol. 3, p. 26; Al-Samarqandi, Sharh al-Asbab, vol. 2, p. 30; Ibn al-Nafis, Al-Mujaz fi al-Tibb, vol. 1, p. 123.

³⁸The whip: that with which an animal is beaten, and it is said that it is a piece of wood with which mules and donkeys are beaten, and everything that is beaten with is a whip. Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-Arab, vol. 8, p. 264; Al-Zubaidi, Taj al-Arus, vol. 11, p. 365.

³⁹The cemeteries, pp. 47-49.

⁴⁰Al-Harbiyya Quarter: A large and well-known quarter in Baghdad, located at Bab Harb near the tomb of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, named after Harb ibn Abdullah al-Balkhi al-Rawandi, one of the commanders of Caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur. (Yaqu' al-Hamawi, Vol. 2, p. 237)

⁴¹The "Malban" is the mesh cage that is placed on the grave, and it is meshed in a geometric way so that the grave can be seen through its openings. It is made of fine wood or precious metals. Ibn Al-Sa'i, Al-Maqabir, p. 36, footnote (1).

⁴²The cemeteries, p. 38.

⁴³The Shrine of the Hand: A shrine located in the Al-Ajam quarter of Bab Al-Azaj in Baghdad. It was originally a mosque, then it became a shrine following a vision in which Imam Ali bin Abi Talib (peace be upon him) was seen, and it was said that Abbas bin Abdul-Muttalib touched the wall of that mosque, so the imprint of his hand became in it. Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad, Vol. 1, p. 124; Ibn Al-Sa'i, Al-Maqabir, p. 47.

⁴⁴Ibn al-Sa'i, Al-Maqabir, p. 47.

⁴⁵Abu Abdullah Hammad ibn Muslim ibn Daddah al-Dabbas was born and raised in Baghdad. He owned a date-date shop (karka) where he would sit in its rooms. Many people associated with him, and when the sheikhs came to him, they would sit before him, show him great respect, and write down the wisdom he spoke. He died in 525 AH/1130 CE. (Ibn al-Sa'i, Akhbar al-Zuhhad, pp. 186-190; Al-Dhahabi, Siyar A'lam al-Nubala', vol. 19, p. 594; Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali, Shadharat al-Dhahab, vol. 4, p. 73).

⁴⁶News of the Ascetics, p. 189.

⁴⁷The Auditi Hospital: Located on the western side of Baghdad, it is attributed to the Buyid prince Adud al-Dawla (d. 372 AH/982 AD). He opened it in 371 AH/981 AD and spent vast sums of money on its construction. It was described as one of the greatest hospitals of its time. He appointed doctors, treasurers, doormen, agents, and supervisors for it, in addition to providing it with the necessary medicines, equipment, furnishings, and syrups. The number of doctors working in it reached sixty. (Ibn al-Athir, Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh, vol. 9, p. 16; Al-Dhahabi, Tarikh al-Islam, vol. 26, p. 523; Benjamin of Tudela, Rihlat Benjamin of Tudela, p. 298).

⁴⁸The cemeteries, p. 15.

⁴⁹For more information, see: The Graveyards, p. 6, p. 24, p. 29; The News of Al-Hallaj, p. 86; The News of the Ascetics, p. 143, p. 144, p. 323; The Women of the Caliphs, pp. 95-96.

⁵⁰The Harawiyya Quarter: It is not mentioned in geographical or historical sources, and it is likely that it was corrupted during copying, or that it is a newly established quarter in the historian's time, or a new name for a previous quarter. The term "Harawiyya" in the language refers to a type of cloth, and its seller is called "Harā'." (Al-Azhari, Tahdhib al-Lughah, vol. 6, p. 212; Al-Sahib ibn Abbad, Al-Muhit fi al-Lughah, vol. 4, p. 56; Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-Arab, vol. 15, p. 361).

⁵¹Al-Sahib Ala' al-Din Ata' Malik ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Juwayni, the head of the Diwan in Baghdad, brother of the minister Shams al-Din al-Juwayni, the minister of Hulagu, was a virtuous man, a poet and a historian. He has the famous history book Jahangushi (Conqueror of the World). He died in 680 AH/1281 AD. Al-Nuwayri, Nihayat al-Arab, vol. 27, p. 400; Ibn al-Wardi, Tarikh Ibn al-Wardi, vol. 2, p. 222; Al-Safadi, Al-Wafi bi'l-Wafayat, vol. 20, p. 84.

⁵²Tell al-Zubaybiya: A neighborhood on the eastern side of Baghdad, on the Al-Mualla River. Yaqu' al-Hamawi, Mu'jam al-Buldan, Vol. 2, p. 42.

⁵³The narrative did not clarify who was meant by Omar bin Abdullah.

⁵⁴Anonymous, p. 283.

⁵⁵Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-Arab, Vol. 12, p. 570; Al-Fayruzabadi, Al-Qamus al-Muhit, Vol. 4, p. 180.

⁵⁶Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-Arab, Vol. 12, p. 571.

⁵⁷Shreim, Astronomy and Astrology, p. 86.

⁵⁸Ibn Khaldun, The History of Ibn Khaldun, Vol. 1, p. 487.

⁵⁹Al-Jarrah, and others, History of Science among the Arabs, p. 110.

⁶⁰For more information, see: Al-Khafaji, The Phenomenon of Astrology in Iraq, p. 12.

⁶¹See: Ibn Sina, Nine Treatises on Wisdom and Natural Sciences, p. 110.

⁶²Haji Khalifa, Kashf al-Zunun, Vol. 2, p. 1930.

⁶³Surah Al-Mulk, verse 5.

⁶⁴Surah An-Nahl, verse 16.

⁶⁵Al-Tabari, Jami' al-Bayan, Vol. 29, p. 6; Ibn Abi Hatim al-Razi, Tafsir Ibn Abi Hatim, Vol. 9, p. 2914; Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim, Vol. 4, p. 423; Al-Suyuti, Al-Durr al-Manthur, Vol. 3, p. 34.

⁶⁶Ibn Abi Shaybah al-Kufi, Al-Musannaf, Vol. 6, p. 129; Al-Bayhaqi, Al-Sunan al-Kubra, Vol. 8, p. 138; Al-Sha'rani, Lawaqih al-Anwar, p. 878.

⁶⁷Muslim, Al-Jami' Al-Sahih, Vol. 7, p. 37; Ibn Hazm, Al-Muhalla, Vol. 4, p. 51.

⁶⁸Al-Suyuti, Al-Durr al-Manthur, Vol. 3, p. 35; Al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 55, p. 277.

⁶⁹Divination: To practice divination is to predict the future and to claim knowledge of secrets. Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-Arab, Vol. 13, p. 362; Muhanna, Lisan al-Lisan, Vol. 2, p. 483.

⁷⁰Al-Khafaji, The Phenomenon of Astrology in Iraq, p. 46 and beyond.

⁷¹Al-Ghazi, The Phenomenon of Astrology, pp. 208-209.

⁷²Yaqu' al-Hamawi, Mu'jam al-Buldan, Vol. 1, p. 460; Ibn Khatib al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad, Vol. 1, p. 88; Ibn Kathir, al-Bidaya wa al-Nihaya, Vol. 10, p. 104.

⁷³People's problems with their time, p. 195.

⁷⁴Nallino, Astronomy, p. 143; Al-Khafaji, The Phenomenon of Astrology in Iraq, p. 117.

⁷⁵Ibn al-Sa'i (attributed), p. 16.

⁷⁶The same source, p. 60

⁷⁷The one who is delirious: He is delirious and incoherent, and his speech is unreasonable and incomprehensible, like the speech of a madman and an insane person. Al-Farahidi, Al-Ain, Vol. 4, p. 81; Ibn Abbad, Al-Muhit fi al-Lughah, Vol. 4, p. 52; Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-Arab, Vol. 14, p. 290; Vol. 15, p. 360.

⁷⁸Ibn Al-Sa'i's History, Vol. 9, pp. 71-72.

⁷⁹Ibn Al-Sa'i's History, Vol. 9, p. 252.

⁸⁰Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Jabir ibn Sinan al-Harrani al-Battani was an astronomer and astrologer. He had works and observations and was known for the breadth of his knowledge, to the point that it was said that he was unique in his time in that regard. He was a Sabian, and it seems that he converted to Islam and took the name Muhammad. Al-Battani came to Baghdad with the Banu al-Zayyat and resided there. When he left it, he died on his way in the gypsum palace near Samarra in the year 317 AH/929 AD. Ibn al-Nadim, Al-Fihrist, p. 338; Ibn Khallikan, Wafayat al-A'yan, vol. 5, p. 164; Al-Dhahabi, Siyar A'lam al-Nubala', vol. 14, p. 518.

⁸¹The Precious Pearl, p. 114.

⁸²Ahmad ibn Ja'far ibn Musa ibn Yahya ibn Khalid ibn Barmak, known as Jahza, was a man of letters, a linguist, a poet, a narrator of historical accounts, and knowledgeable in several sciences, including astrology. He was born in 224 AH/838 CE and died in 324 AH/935 CE. (Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad, vol. 4, pp. 285-288; Al-Sam'ani, Al-Ansab, vol. 1, p. 330; Yaqu' al-Hamawi, Mu'jam al-Udaba', vol. 2, p. 241; Ibn al-Sa'i, Al-Durr al-Thamin, pp. 253-254).

⁸³The Precious Pearl, p. 253.

⁸⁴The same source, p. 273.

⁸⁵Al-Khafaji, The Phenomenon of Astrology in Iraq, pp. 117-118.

⁸⁶Al-Jahiz's Letters, p. 148.