

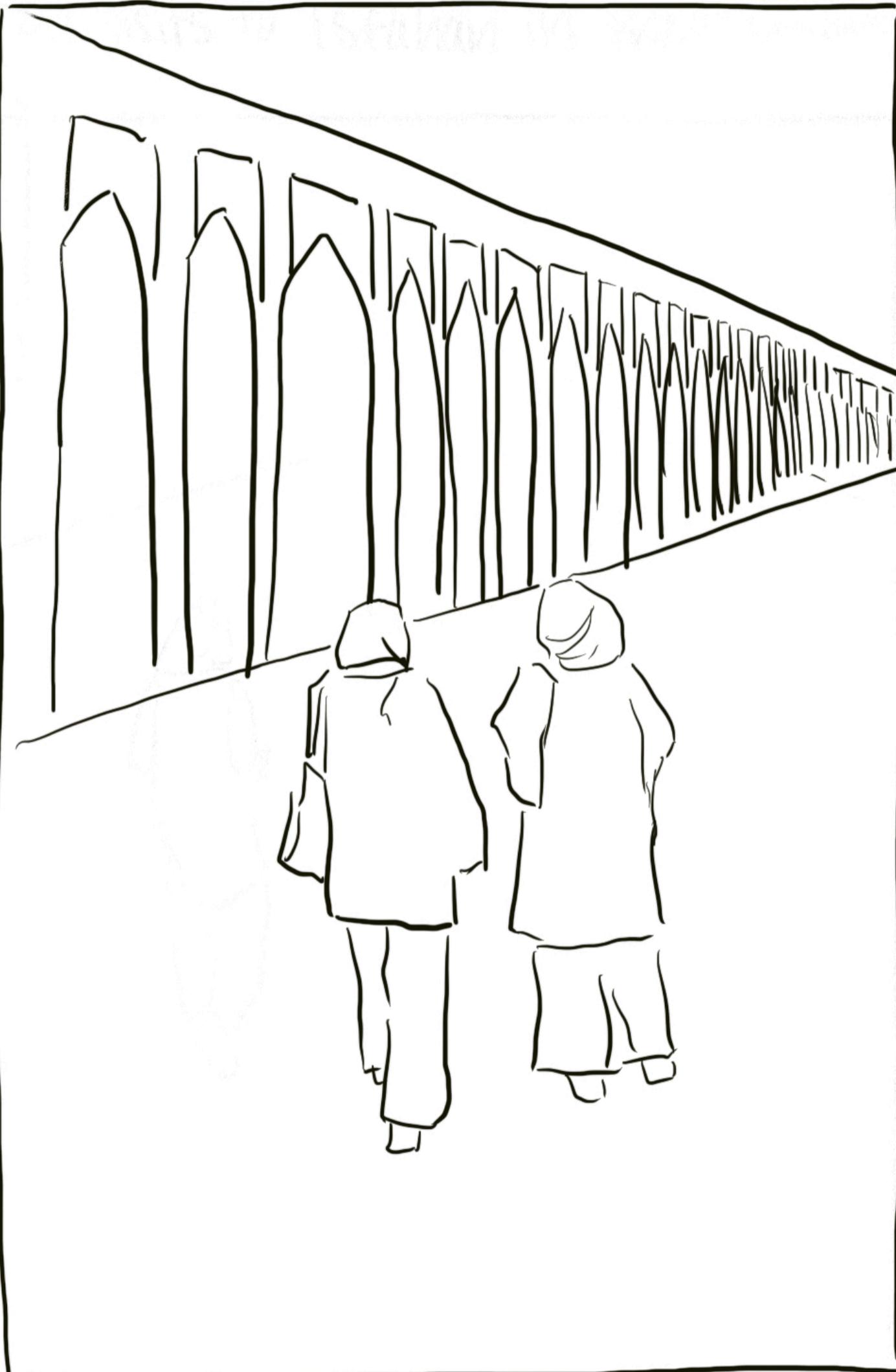
An evening walk along

پل خواجو

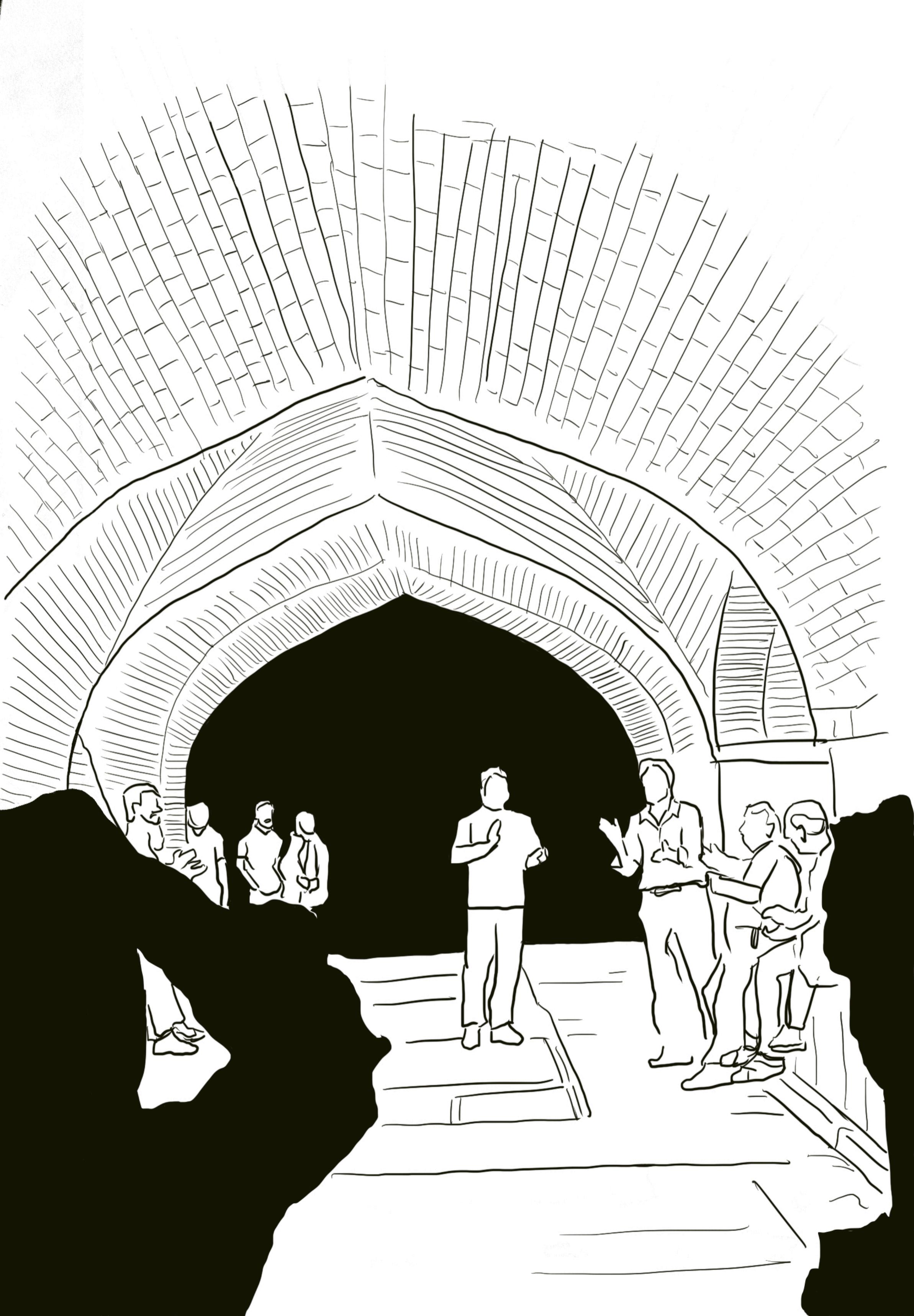
Khaju bridge in Isfahan



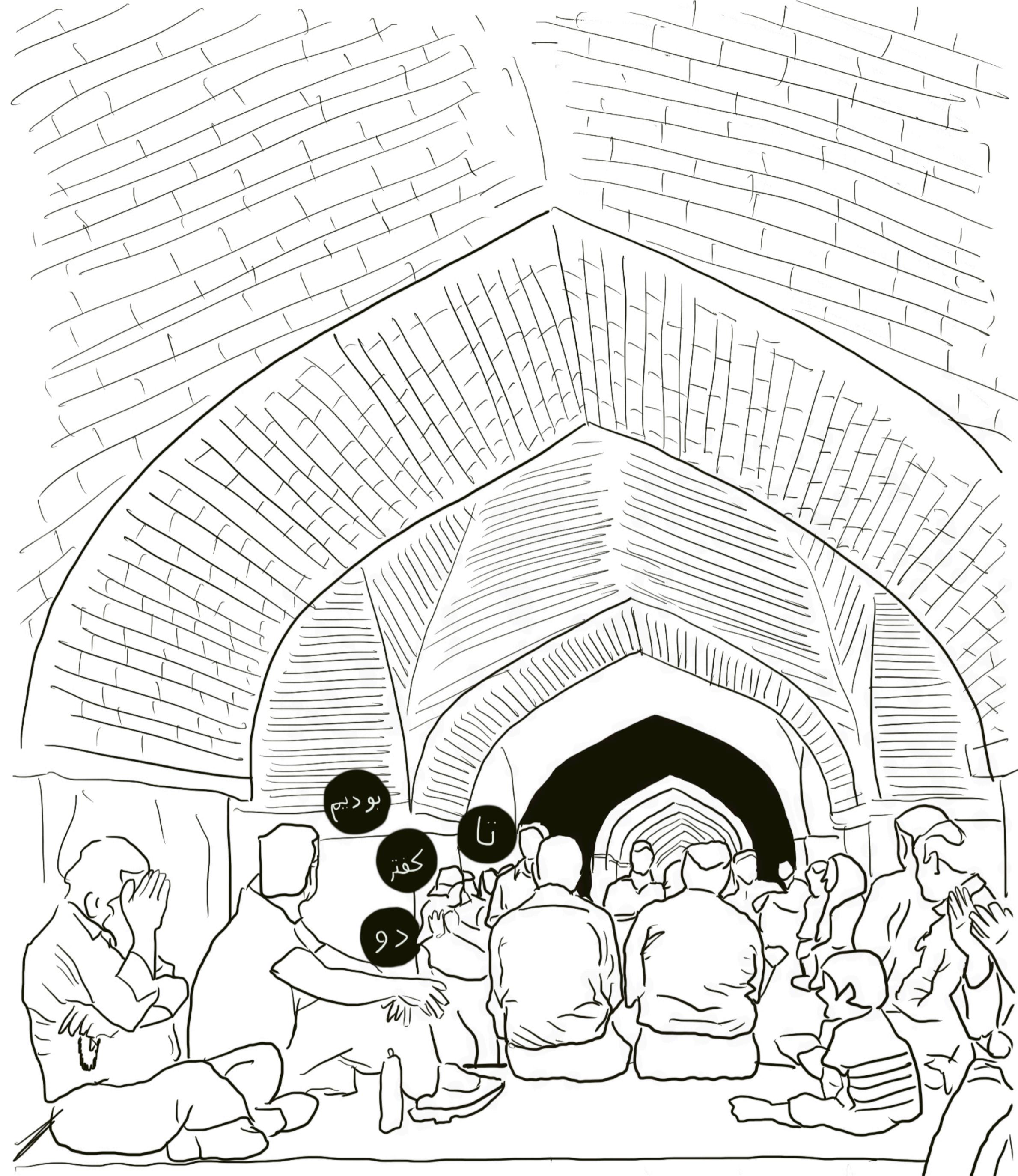
My cousin Kiana and I walked along the side of the bridge with my mom and her two closest childhood friends a little ways behind us. As I glanced up looking at the night sky I could hear them reminiscing about past visits to Isfahan when they were kids – when water still flowed under this bridge.



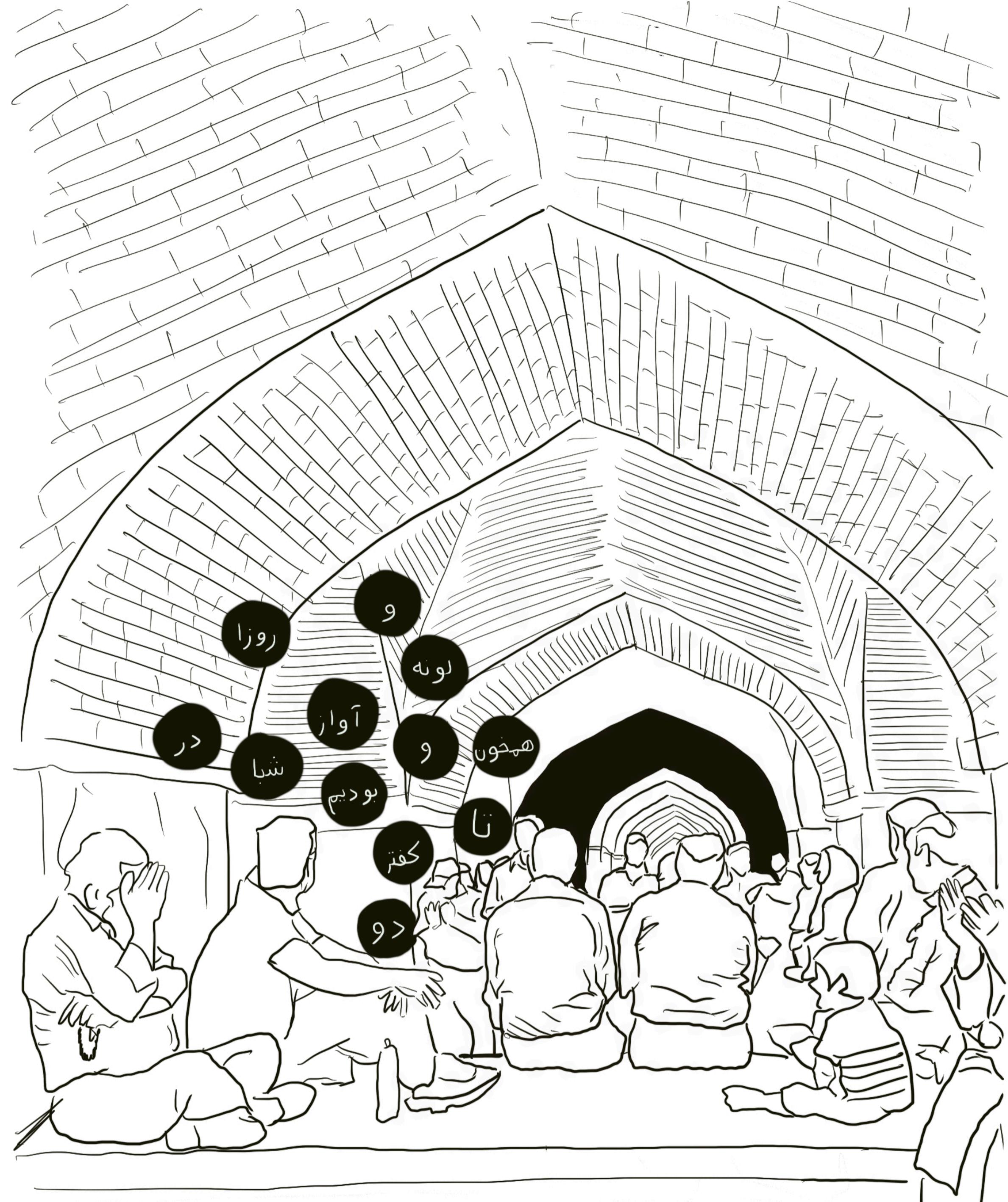
Khaju bridge was a well known destination in Isfahan, especially on warm summer nights like these where people (especially older men from the local area) would gather to sing traditional Iranian songs. As we walked closer to the middle of the bridge I began to hear claps, ululations, and melodies emerging from the lit pathway through the bottom of the bridge.



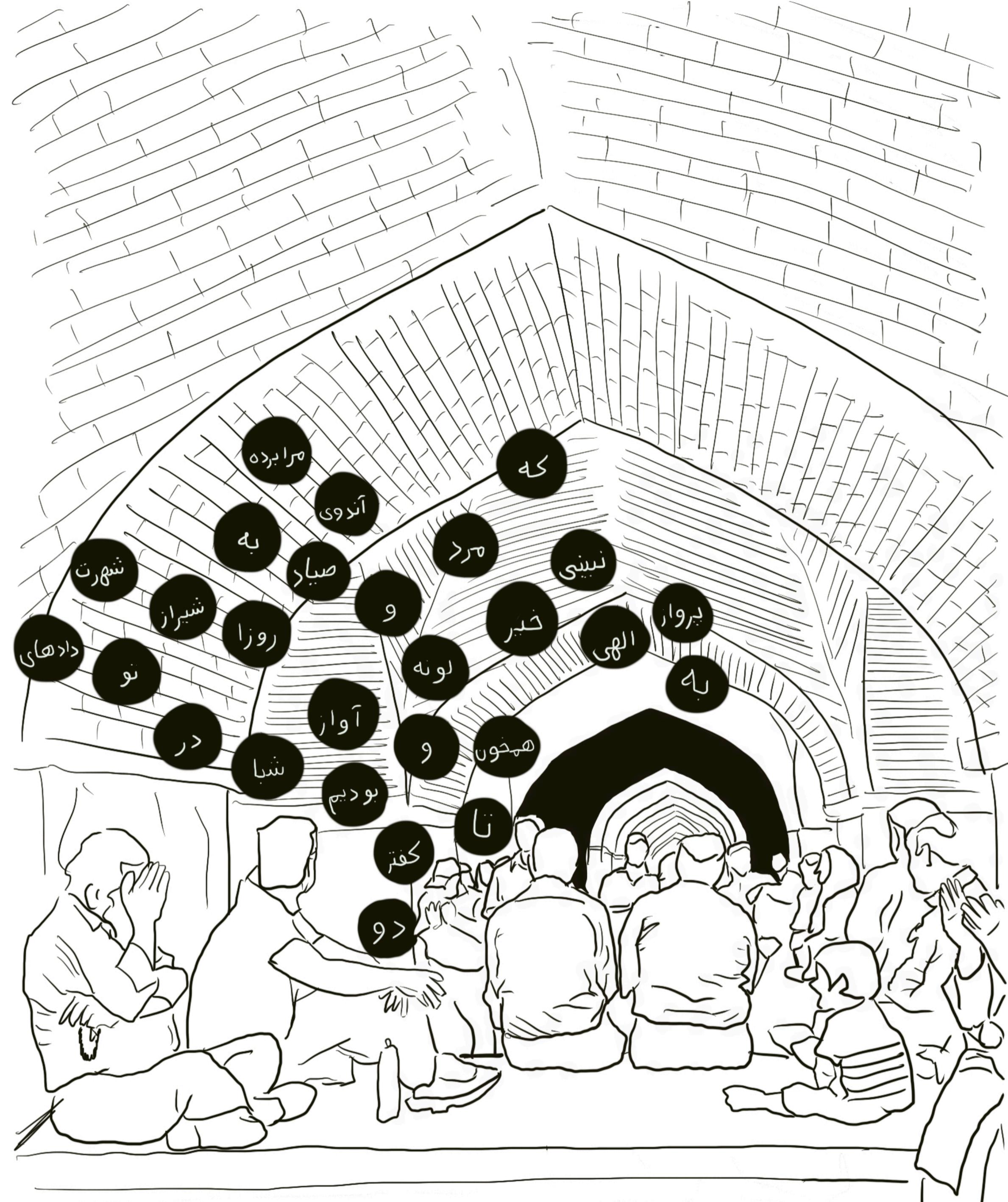




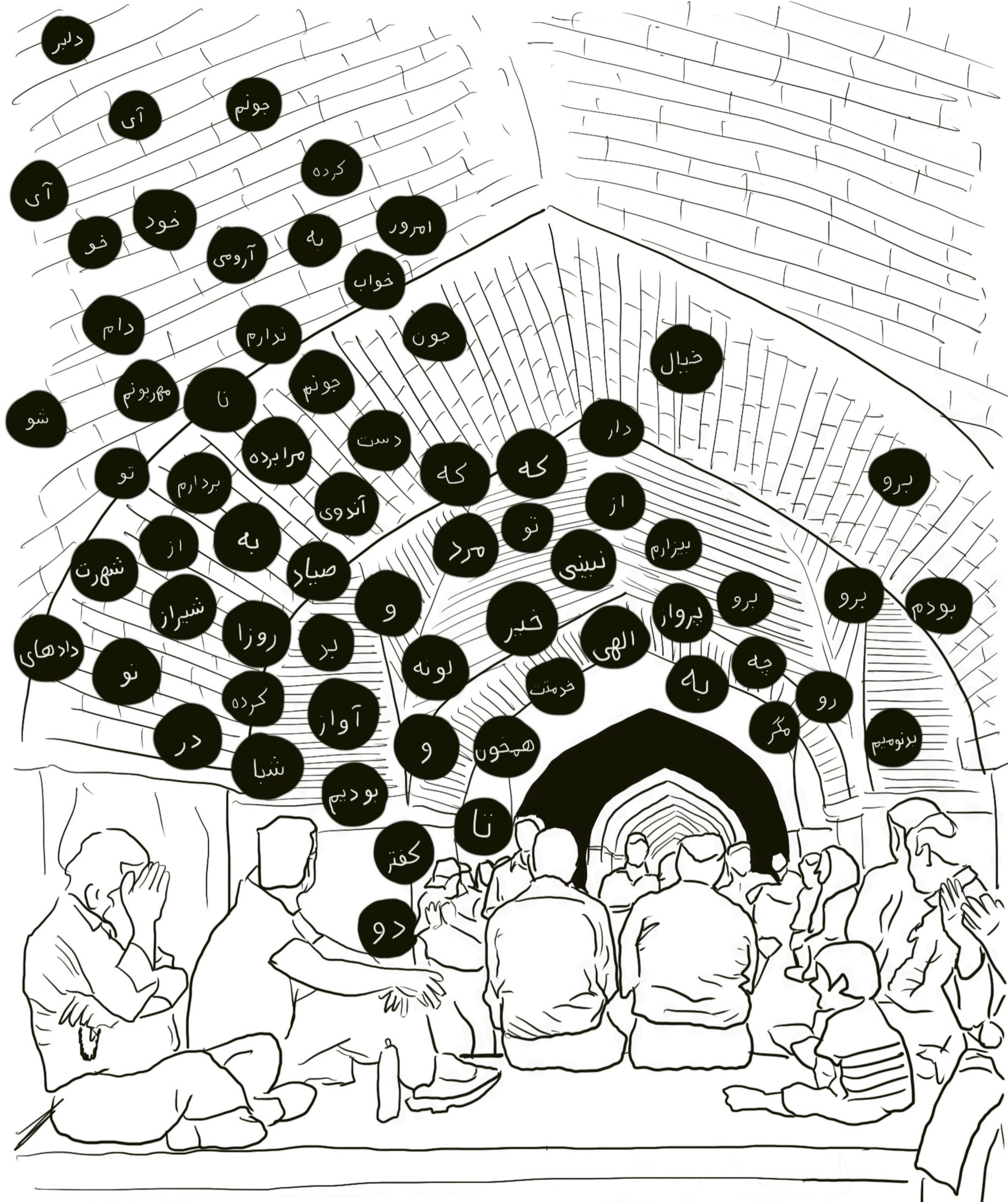
We sat down on a ledge to watch the performance behind a crowd that had already gathered.



In front of us, a man listening had his head down, fingers twirling a tasbih (prayer beads) between his fingers. He looked like he was in a moment of prayer, as though the beautiful melody had transformed the words of the love song being into something more, into something spiritual.



Next to him a young man tapped his feet with the cadence of the song. Further over a little boy and his mom clapped along. People old and young had gathered in the warmly lit tunnel transfixed by the sound that echoed against the curved walls.



The sound expanded, grew more emotional, more urgent.
Then it began to sound more familiar.

آی جونم آی دلبر

on my dear, on the one that takes my heart away.



I had heard this song before, and many times too. I turned my head to the side to ask my mom what it was. I looked to my left and was met with her tearful face. In that instant, through the sound of her soft sobs I remembered exactly why I knew the song so well.



It had been my grandmother's favorite song.

Dashestani by Hayedeh.