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“A GATHERING OF SUFIS ON A TERRACE”

IRAN, ISFAHAN; 1584-85

Members of a Sufi order gather for prayer, Koran readings, theological study, recitations, and in some orders also for dance. Dance puts the participants in a trance in which they forget themselves and come closer to God. Accompanied by song or various instruments, it is reserved for experienced Sufis, since novices are not considered skilled enough to appreciate its spiritual dimension.

This page is part of a double leaf, showing Sufis occupied in various ways. The double leaf was the frontispiece painting for an unidentified manuscript on ethical behavior. The content of the book has no direct link with the frontispiece's motif, which was, however, quite popular in Iran as an introduction to various types of texts right up to the 18th century.