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Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḡawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

Šahṣ: Its Origin and Development as a Logical Term

Amir Hossein Pournamdar*

Abstract

Abundantly used as a technical term in the Arabic classical texts of logic and philosophy, the word *šahṣ* will be studied in detail as a preamble to a thorough analysis of a turning point which occurred in its meaning, during the Graeco-Arabic translation movement (starting from the 8th century). Through discovering the genuine meaning of *šahṣ* in the context of the Arabic language at the time of the emergence of Islam and its following two or three centuries, it will be ascertained that this term, in its common usage in the intellectual tradition of Islam, i.e. 'a thing or a person belonging to a species', has imposed itself upon the non-specialized, ordinary language of the Arabs as the result of the dominance of the logico-philosophical literature. *Šahṣ* was never used to serve such a meaning before the transmission of the philosophical works to the Arab world, and it was the attempts of the translators that made this word signifying 'a specific entity or individual', in contrast to its real meaning, viz. 'body', 'material appearance'. In the second part, by taking into account one of the oldest extant logical works in the Islamic tradition, i.e. *al-Mantiq* attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffa', it is suggested that this change of meaning could be regarded as a case of Arabic borrowings from Persian.

1. The Meaning of Šahṣ

As a crucial step, the Arabic classical dictionaries¹ will be examined in order to find those meanings of the root *šḥṣ* which might be the closest to the meaning which is under scrutiny, viz. 'an individual or a person', or according to the contemporary Arabic-English dictionary *al-Mawrid* in the entry *šahṣ*, 'person, individual'.² Since there is hardly any resemblance between the definition set forth in classical lexicons and what is understood by *šahṣ* in the sense of 'individual', we will have to find among all the derivatives of *šḥṣ* those that have some kind of reference to or similarity with 'person, individual, or man' so that we can succeed in establishing a link.

One of the most commonplace derivatives of the mentioned root is the verb *šahaṣa*, 'to stare, raising the eyes while gazing', which also means 'to go up, to lift' and 'to depart from a place'; this derivative can hardly have any correspondence to what we are searching for. However, there is another word derived from the root in question which itself enjoys numerous other derivatives and is the subject of this study: the word *šahṣ*, from which we have *šahṣiṣ*, *šāḥiṣ*, *mušahḥaṣ*, *tašahḥuṣ*, *šahṣiyya*, and so on. This is expectedly the nearest to the meaning which is being sought among all the derivatives of the above-mentioned root; we will have to find any references to 'a thing, person or individual'. Even the smallest of the similarities will be of great importance because, as will be seen,

* I would like to thank the anonymous referee of the initial version of this article who helped, by some judicious and thoughtful notes, to make my discussion on Ibn al-Muqaffa' less controversial and more coherent. Also, the comments by Prof. Babak Alikhani on the idiosyncrasies of the Iranian languages saved me from a couple of errors.

¹ Throughout this article, 'Arabic' is used to refer to classical Arabic, unless otherwise mentioned.

² R. Baalbaki, *Al-Mawrid: A Modern Arabic-English Dictionary*, Dar el-Ilm Lilmalayin, Beirut 1415/1995, p. 664.

there is barely any relation between the signification of the word *šahṣ* as presented in Arabic classical dictionaries and its logico-philosophical sense as ‘a person or an individual’.

In the *Kitāb al-ʿAyn* of al-Farāhīdī (d. 786 or 791), the word *šahṣ* is defined as follows:

Al-šahṣ: the bodily appearance³ of man when you see it from afar, and everything that you see as its body, you see its *šahṣ*. Its plural: *al-šuhūṣ* and *al-ašhāṣ*.⁴

Interestingly enough, among its meanings there is no mention of anything like ‘essence, self, person, and entity’ and, in general, no reference to a determined thing, *nafs* or *dāt*. In other dictionaries, we find exactly the same meaning, with some occasional adjustments. In the *Kitāb al-Ġīm*, Abū ʿAmr al-Šaybānī (d. 828) provides no definition for *šahṣ*,⁵ but in defining *sadaḥ*, which means ‘darkness’ and also ‘the body of man’ and his ‘apparition from distance’, he mentions *šahṣ* as its equivalent.⁶ In the 10th century we have the dictionary called *al-Ġamhara fī l-Luġa* by Ibn Durayd (d. 933), where *šahṣ* is defined in a different way, although the meaning is the same.

Šahṣ of everything is that which is encountered by the eye and it is nothing other than the body (*ġuṭṭa*), and you saw the *šahṣ* of the thing. And a *šahīṣ* man has a huge *šahṣ* and everything with huge *šahṣ*, including every living creature (*dābba*) and the like, is *šahīṣ*...⁷

Al-Azharī (d. 981), again in the 10th century, following the conventional definition, attributes the same meaning to *šahṣ*.

Šahṣ: al-Layṭ said: *al-šahṣ* is the bodily appearance of man when you see it from afar, and whatever part of its body you saw, you have seen its *šahṣ*. And its plural: *al-šuhūṣ* and *al-ašhāṣ*.⁸

Then, he goes on to explain the other derivatives of this root in the form of verbs and adjectives. Again, there is no mention of the meaning in question, and we can only find references to body or corporeity. In other lexicons more or less contemporary to al-Azharī’s *al-Tabḏīb fī l-Luġa*, Šāhib ibn ʿAbbād (d. 995) in *al-Muḥīṭ fī l-Luġa*⁹ and al-Ġawharī (d. 1002) in *Tāġ al-Luġa* repeat their predecessors.

Al-Šahṣ: the bodily appearance of man and the like which you see from afar. It is said ‘three *ašhuṣ*’, and ‘many *šuhūṣ* and *ašhāṣ*’. The man *šahuṣa*, so he is *šahīṣ*, that is, he is corpulent, and the woman is *šahīṣa*.

³ ‘Bodily appearance’ is a translation of *sawād*, which primarily means ‘blackness’ or ‘darkness’. In the entry on *šahṣ*, dictionaries normally mention the ‘*sawād* of the man’ as its equivalent; in this sense, *sawād* has a mixed meaning including unidentifiable appearance, vague and distant image, and blackness due to a distance. Overall, in relation to *šahṣ*, it should be taken to mean ‘bodily appearance’, and not ‘individual’ as Fred Leemhuis does inaccurately. Moreover, if *sawād* means ‘individual’, as Leemhuis suggests, how can it be said in such a way as to say ‘*sawād al-insān*’? In this case, it would be rendered as ‘a man’s individual’. See F. Leemhuis, “Can You Marry a Djinni?”, in H.G. Kippenberg et al. (eds.), *Concepts of Person in Religion and Thought*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin 1990 (Religion and Reason, 37), pp. 217–28, here p. 224.

⁴ Al-Ḥalil ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī, *Kitāb al-ʿAyn*, ed. M. Maḥzūmī et al., Dār al-Ḥiġra, Qum 1409/1988, vol. 4, p. 165.

⁵ Abū ʿAmr al-Šaybānī, *Kitāb al-Ġīm*, ed. I. al-Ibyārī, vol. 2, al-Hayʿa al-ʿĀmma, Cairo 1974, p. 126.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 107. This could be another piece of evidence against Leemhuis’ claim that *sawād*, which is frequently mentioned in dictionaries as an equivalent of *šahṣ*, means ‘individual’. This is not the meaning of *sawād*, whose common use is to denote ‘darkness’ or ‘blackness’. Obviously, there is an affinity between *šahṣ* and ‘darkness’ – at least, that kind of darkness which is the only visible thing when there is distance between the observer and the object of vision.

⁷ Ibn Durayd, *al-Ġamhara fī l-Luġa*, Dār Šādir, Beirut 1345/1926, vol. 2, p. 223.

⁸ al-Azharī, *Tabḏīb al-Luġa*, Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāṭ al-ʿArabī, Beirut 2001, vol. 7, p. 36.

⁹ Šāhib Ibn ʿAbbād, *al-Muḥīṭ fī l-Luġa*, ed. M.H. ʿĀl Yāsīn, ʿĀlam al-Kutub, Beirut 1994, vol. 4, p. 218.

Šahāṣa šuhūṣan, which means ‘to raise’. He šahāṣa his eye, and it was šāḥiṣ, it is the time when he opened his eye and did not blink...¹⁰

A few other meanings are provided at the end of this entry in the *Tāğ al-Luğa*, in a similar vein as the dictionaries previously discussed. No one bears any relationship to the meaning we are seeking.

Three centuries later, when the influence of the philosophical literature was predictably more perceptible in the common language, Ibn Manzūr (d. 1312) in his masterpiece *Lisān al-‘Arab*, despite the fact that his entry is much more comprehensive and detailed, hardly refers to the established meaning of this word in philosophy and logic; as a lexicographer living between the 13th and 14th century, he might well have included ‘person, specific thing, a particular, or an individual’ among the senses of this word; but, to our surprise, his definitions indicate no such meaning.¹¹ Al-Firūzābādī (d. 1414) in his *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīt*¹² and al-Zabīdī (d. 1790) in his *Tāğ al-‘Arūs*¹³ give no explicit reference to the meaning which in contemporary Arabic features as the primary meaning of this word.

The intended sense for which we have searched the seminal lexicons and which is today the primary sense of this word is simply a connotation of ‘personhood’. In Wortabet’s *Arabic-English Dictionary*, in the entry on *šahṣ*, we read “corporeal form; object; person, bodily figure in the distance”.¹⁴ From our study so far, the third meaning mentioned by Wortabet, namely ‘person’, could be recognized as a meaning which has been associated with this word only from the 8th century;¹⁵ however, as far as the lexicons are concerned, it can be found solely in the contemporary ones.¹⁶

After examination of the definitions of *šahṣ* in various lexicons, it is now clear that this word, in its original usage, had no meaning close to ‘individual or person’ which, almost on the contrary, is frequently implied by this word in philosophical texts. Although in contemporary Arabic taking *šahṣ* to mean ‘individual’ is very common, in the past it was never used to designate ‘a person or individual’: as we have seen, the prevalent meaning was ‘body and corporal appearance’. As our next step, we will be investigating some early texts in order to find if in such works the word *šahṣ* bears the meaning we could not find in classical dictionaries.

¹⁰ Ğawharī, *Al-Šiḥāb: Tāğ al-Luğa wa-Šiḥāḥ al-‘Arabīyya*, Dār el-Ilm Lilmalayin, Beirut 1990, vol. 3, p. 1042.

¹¹ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, Dār Šādir, Beirut 1994, vol. 7, pp. 45-6.

¹² Al-Firūzābādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīt*, Al-Resalah Publishers, Beirut, 2005, p. 621.

¹³ Al-Zabīdī, *Tāğ al-‘Arūs min Ğawāhir al-Qāmūs*, Dār al-Fikr, Beirut 1994, vol. 9, pp. 295-6.

¹⁴ W.T. Wortabet, *Arabic-English Dictionary*, Librairie du Liban, Beirut 1984, p. 301.

¹⁵ The definition of *šahāṣa* offered by the contemporary Arabic dictionary *al-Mu‘ğam al-Wasīt* (I. Mustafa et al., *al-Mu‘ğam al-Wasīt*, Dār al-Shurūq al-dawliyya, Egypt 1424/2004) is preceded by the explanation in parentheses: “according to philosophers”. The entry is just a definition based on modern conceptions. “Every object that has height and appearance; this became dominant for the man. (According to philosophers) The conscious entity for its independence in volition” (*ibid.*, p. 475). The authors try to define ‘an individual or person’ which is normally signified by *šahṣ*; however, under the influence of Western notions, they are referring only to human individuals. They simply say that it became dominant in exclusive reference to man, but they provide no further explanation about the basis on which this came to happen.

¹⁶ The main reason for the reluctance of these lexicographers to include *šahṣ* as connoting ‘person’ or ‘individual’ in their entries on *šḥṣ* could be attributed to their loyalty to the definitions offered by their forerunners and predecessors; they hardly alter these handed down definitions, as is clear from the reports of the books quoted above. However, the case of Ibn Manzūr is admittedly rather different, and reasonably enough, we expect him to have included the discussed meaning of *šahṣ* in his great book. There is one possible justification which will be solidified in what follows in this article: it is difficult to believe that he did not know of any such signification of this word as to mention ‘person’ or ‘individual’ in his work; on the contrary, not only was he completely aware of this usage of *šahṣ*, he also knew that it was not a genuinely Arabic usage, rather a technical, non-Arabic usage of *šahṣ*. For this reason he did not include it in his *Lisān al-‘Arab*, ‘the tongue of the Arabs’.

2. *Šahṣ* in Context

In the Quran, the root *šḥṣ* is used only twice and both of them simply mean ‘to stare’.¹⁷ In numerous books by the Muḥaddiṭīn, people who narrated the words of the Prophet Muḥammad, his companions – and, for the Shi’ites, in addition to these, his grandchildren (known as Imāms) – we can hardly find a usage of this word which might indicate ‘a person or an individual’.¹⁸ Among all the handful of occasions when this word is used in each of the *ḥadīṭ* books, normally in two or three of these cases we find *šahṣ* so close to the ‘individual’ that the reader unfamiliar with the original meaning of the word would be liable to take it wrongly to mean ‘person or individual’.

In *Šahīḥ al-Buḥārī*, there is a *ḥadīṭ* attributed to the Prophet,¹⁹ whose authenticity is much debated by later thinkers.

Chapter on his saying: “No *šahṣ* is more jealous (*ġayūr*) than God”.²⁰

Using the word *šahṣ* to refer to God is so strange and suspicious that those who believe it to be a case of distortion in narrating the Prophet have had recourse to other versions of this saying. This *ḥadīṭ* also has variant forms; in that same book, we read, “no person (*ahād*) is more jealous than God”,²¹ or “no thing (*šay*) is more jealous than God”.²² However, it must be noted that these two other versions are more frequent than the one reported earlier which can be found only once in both al-Buḥārī’s and al-Muslim’s *Šihāḥ*.²³

Whether or not this *ḥadīṭ*, in its real and pristine form, contains the word *šahṣ* would be of secondary importance to our present study, for it is sure that this word so rarely, if ever, has been used in this sense in Arabic that when the Arabs encountered it in this usage, they tried to justify and adapt it to the context in order to avoid it meaning ‘an individual or person’. One example of this attempt is Ibn Taymīyya’s (d. 1328) criticism of Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209) in his *Bayān Talbīs al-Ġahmīyya* which is a refutation of al-Rāzī’s *Asās al-Taqdīs*. In *Asās al-Taqdīs*, al-Rāzī cites a *ḥadīṭ* similar to the one quoted above, expounding on some parts of it. When he comes to *šahṣ*, as a thinker completely familiar with philosophical and logical literature, he writes:

First, al-*šahṣ*: and its intention is the determined essence and specified reality.²⁴

This meaning is exactly the one that we are looking for and has been the dominant meaning of the word in Arabic philosophical texts. However, of utmost importance to us is the criticism of Ibn

¹⁷ *Quran*, 14:42, and 21:21.

¹⁸ The books of *ḥadīṭ* and tradition investigated include: the *Šahīḥ* by al-Buḥārī (used only once, as will be discussed below); Sulaym ibn Qays’ (d. 695) controversial book; Ṣadūq’s (d. 991) *ʿIlal al-Šarāʿī*; *al-Tawḥīd*; *al-Ḥiṣāl*, and *Man lā yahduruhu al-Faqīḥ*; Muḥammad ibn Ḥassan al-Tūsī’s (d. 1067) *al-Amālī*; *al-Istibṣār*; al-Qummī’s (d. 919) *Tafsīr al-Qummī*; Šarīf al-Rāḍī’s (d. 1015) *Nahḡ al-Balāġa*; Muslim ibn al-Ḥaġġāġ’s (d. 875) *Šahīḥ Muslim* (in this book, the cases of using *šahṣ* are the same as those of al-Buḥārī’s); Muhammad Ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī’s (d. 940) *Uṣūl al-Kāfi*.

¹⁹ al-Buḥārī’s book is the only one in which we encounter the word *šahṣ* in a sense close to ‘individual’.

²⁰ Buḥārī, *Tawḥīd*, 20. ‘Jealous’ probably is not an accurate equivalent in this statement: I borrowed this translation from M. Swartz, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism, Ibn Al-Ġawzī’s Kitāb Aḥbār Aṣ-Šifāt*, A Critical Edition of the Arabic Text with Translation, Introduction and Notes, Brill, Leiden 2002 (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, Texts and Studies), pp. 189-90; H. Ritter, *The Ocean of the Soul: Men, the World and God in The Stories of Farīd al-Dīn ʿAttār*, Translated by J. O’Kane with Editorial Assistance of B. Radtke, Brill, Leiden 2003 (Handbook of Oriental Studies. The Near and Middle East, 69), p. 349.

²¹ *Ibid.*, *Kusūf*, p. 2.

²² *Ibid.*, *Nikāḥ*, p. 107.

²³ Muslim, *Šahīḥ*, p. 17.

²⁴ Ibn Taymīyya, *Bayān Talbīs al-Ġahmīyya fī Tāʾsīs Bidāʾihim al-Kalāmīyya*, ed. R.H. Muḥammad ʿAli, Maġmaʿ al-Malik Fahad, Saudi Arabia 1426/ 2005, vol. 7, p. 391.

Taymīyya with regard to al-Rāzī's definition. After citing another *ḥadīṭ* where *šahṣ* is again attributed to God, he says that if the definition given by al-Rāzī were the real meaning of *šahṣ*, then one would have no way to the true understanding of the Prophet's words. Taking the word *šahṣ* to mean "a specified reality (*al-ḥaqīqa al-maḥṣūsa*) and a determined entity (*al-dāt al-mu'ayyana*)" is what the logicians say about this word: for instance, they say that the species of something is restricted to its *šahṣ*, i.e. this species or class has only one member, or that the species is divided into its *ašḥāṣ*, and use expressions of the same kind in which *šahṣ* means 'an individual object'. But, says Ibn Taymīyya, since at first this meaning was only for humans and people, it came to be known as *šahṣ* but, later on, its usage expanded to include every other individual so that they all came to be called *šahṣ*. This specialized usage is far from the genuine tongue of the Qurayš, which is the Prophet's tribe and through which the Quran is revealed. Now, it is upon us to learn the tongue the Prophet used to speak, as the means to understand his words and their meaning; between the tongue of Qurayš and others there are differences that unless one does not come to master them, one will misconstrue it. And if so, [i.e. if al-Rāzī's claim is true,] in the Prophet's tongue and other Arab languages there is no such a thing as to call a specified essence a *šahṣ*, as is customary among a group of people [i.e.] logicians and philosophers].²⁵

Ibn Taymīyya is aware of the fact that *šahṣ* has some non-Arabic aspect which is imposed on it through the intellectual tradition of Islam and more precisely by the logical tradition; however, his account of its origin and of how it entered Arabic is not tenable and seems to be based on mere conjecture. From the evidence gathered above, *šahṣ* was never used in Arabic to refer to 'human individual or person', and even this usage is derived from that specialized language which is denounced by Ibn Taymīyya himself as a hindrance to understanding the true meaning of the Prophet's tongue, namely the usage according to which everything belonging to a class is called a *šahṣ*. As the result of the prevalence of the philosophical terminology, this usage was transmitted partially to the common language, and thus only people came to be referred to as *šahṣ*.

In his book devoted to the study of the *ḥadīṭs* which are in one way or another controversial, Ibn Aṭīr (d. 1239) assigns an entry to *šahṣ*. Taken in itself, even regardless of the content, this is an evidence of the fact that for Arab lexicographers the mere presence of this word in a *ḥadīṭ* would render it strange. Moreover, in his definition and account of this word, Ibn Aṭīr says that he believes that *šahṣ* in the cited *ḥadīṭ* means only 'whatever that has height and appearance', but with respect to God, when we say 'no *šahṣ* other than God', this is meant to ascribe to him an essence (*dāt*), and *šahṣ* is thus being used as a metaphor: it is not its real usage.²⁶

Ibn al-Ġawzī (d. 1201), in his *Kitāb Aḥbār al-Šifāt*, quite explicitly rules out the *ḥadīṭs* containing *šahṣ* as a distortion introduced by their transmitters, who thought that, by doing this, these *ḥadīṭs* would become more understandable. Ibn al-Ġawzī believes that *šahṣ* refers to a "compound body".

Although some transmitters use the term *šahṣ* in reporting this tradition, others follow the reading: "no being (*šay'*) is more jealous than God". In the case of traditions [containing the expression *lā šahṣa*], the transmitters simply added the term *šahṣ* [in place of *šay'*] because they supposed that to be the meaning of the text, but it should be noted that the use of this expression represents a change introduced by the

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 400. In this very book, Ibn Taymīyya, before the above-quoted discussion, explores the other thinkers who are for or against counting such *ḥadīṭs* as authentic and accordingly, whether we could attribute *šahṣ* to God. However, in the end he does not give his own view. See *ibid.*, p. 392-9.

²⁶ Ibn al-Aṭīr, *Al-Nihāya fi Ġarīb al-Ḥadīṭ wa-l-Aṭhar*, ed. M. Tanahi - T.A. Zawi, M. Esma'ilian, Qum 1367/ 1988, vol. 2, p. 450.

transmitters. The term *šahṣ* implies the existence of a body composed of parts, for one terms something a *šahṣ* because it possesses corporeality (*šuhūṣ*) and height. The truth of the matter is that the term *šahṣ* is to be taken as referring to creatures; it is not appropriate that the term be applied to the Creator. Hence, the tradition should be taken to mean: there is no jealous “person” [or *šahṣ*] among you but that God is more jealous than he.²⁷

Ibn al-Ġawzī writes unequivocally that *ḥadīṯ*s of this kind are not authentic. He nonetheless makes an attempt to justify them. Considering the fact that Ibn al-Ġawzī is undoubtedly familiar with the philosophical terminology, his effort to give grounds for this *ḥadīṯ* by saying that *šahṣ* is referring to people and not God is understandable: the crucial point of his argument is its first part, where he rejects the *ḥadīṯ*s containing the term *šahṣ* as distortions brought in by the transmitters; the second part is only an effort to account for their unorthodox version of the Prophet’s tradition.

Based on the evidence provided so far, one could in all likelihood argue that this word with connotation of ‘personhood’ has never been a genuine Arabic term.²⁸ This novel meaning must have been borrowed from other traditions of the early Islamic centuries.

There might be an objection to the claim that this sense must have been formed under the influence of some external source: one may object that there are instances, although very rare, of this usage in early texts like al-Buḥārī’s, where we can find a similarity between what the logicians understand by this word and its original Arabic sense. But first the authenticity of such *ḥadīṯ*s is suspect, as discussed by Ibn Ġawzī and Ibn Taymīyya;²⁹ second, we can simply consider the striking absence of this word from the non-logico-philosophical Arabic language and its abundant usage in the books translated in early Islamic centuries. It is telling that in other genres, i.e. outside the scope of philosophy and logic, for example in *kalām*, *ḥadīṯ* and so on this sense of *šahṣ* cannot be found.³⁰

The fact that some translators of logico-philosophical texts to Arabic choose *šahṣ* as an equivalent to the Greek *ἄτομον*³¹ and, less frequently, *καθ’ ἑκαστον*³² was so welcomed by later translators that

²⁷ Swartz, *A Medieval Critique of Anthropomorphism. Ibn Al-Ġawzī’s Kitāb Aḥbār aṣ-Ṣifāt* (above, n. 20), pp. 189-90.

²⁸ Swartz has the same stance about the real meaning of *šahṣ* in Arabic and believes that ‘person’ is never a satisfactory rendering of this word, for the lexicons point out repeatedly that it refers to “bodily or corporeal form or figure or substance of a man”, or something possessing height and visibility. “The term *šahṣ* is entirely devoid of anything comparable to the Western notion of personhood” (*ibid.*, p. 189). He is thus forced to retain the Arabic word in his translation and only use its transliteration. I have two remarks: 1) Swartz reads *sawād* as *suwād* which is unclear, and then translates it as ‘substance’, which also adds to the ambiguity; *sawād* is both the ‘body’ and ‘darkness’ which are in direct correspondence to *šahṣ*, and by this reading, he could easily avoid such complexity. 2) In referring to the usual meaning of *šahṣ*, he invokes “the Western notion of personhood” which is also far from the context; he could simply refer to “the philosophical notion of individuality” even in the earliest intellectual communities of the Islamic world.

²⁹ Both suspect that these traditions could have been formed or altered under the influence of the logico-philosophical language.

³⁰ See for example: ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥayyāt, *al-Intiṣār wa al-radd ‘alā Ibn al-Rāwandī al-mulḥid*; Abū l-Ḥassan al-Aṣṣārī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyyin wa Iḥtilāf al-Muṣallin*; al-Ġāḥiz, *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*; *Rasā’il al-Ġāḥiz*; *Kitāb al-Bayān wa al-Tibyān*; a collection of pre-Islamic poems known as *Mu’allaqāt al-Sab’*; Muḥammad Ibn Ġarīr Ṭabarī, *Tārīḥ al-Ṭabarī*.

³¹ For instance, Abū ‘Uṭmān al-Dimaṣqī in his rendering of *ἄτομον* throughout the *Isagoge* uses *šahṣ*. See *Isāgūgī* in ‘A. Badawī, *Mantiq Aristū*, Wakalat Al-Maṭbū‘āt Dār al-Qalam, vol. 3, pp. 1021-68. Also Ibn al-Muqaffā’, as one of the very early translators, uses this word several times in his *al-Mantiq* (Ibn al-Muqaffā’, *al-Mantiq li-Ibn al-Muqaffā’*, ed. M.T. Danishpazhuh, Iranian Institute of Philosophy, Tehran 1381/2002, p. 4, 5, 6, 9, 20, 21).

³² An example of this can be found in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (Ar. *Mā bā’ d al-Ṭabī’a*): see Ibn Ruṣd, *Tafsīr Mā bā’ d al-Ṭabī’a*, Hekmat, Tehran 1377, vol. 1, p. 173.

in their works, for example that of Porphyry's *Isagoge* (Īsāgū'gī), this word is frequently used in its novel meaning, namely referring to 'a person, individual, and a thing belonging to a species'. As Ibn Taymīyya pointed out above, it was exclusively used in logical and philosophical contexts, while in the then contemporary non-philosophical literature (better, in the works of those who were not so familiar with philosophical terminology) one can hardly, if one ever could, find *šahṣ* signifying 'an individual'. There is a puzzling discrepancy in the usage of a term in two apparently separate contexts in the very same Arab community – though time proved that they were convergent: the common language was to undergo a change and as a result, the philosophical literature was to dictate the primary meaning of this term to other fields of the Arabic language.

It can be inferred that *šahṣ* in the sense of 'an individual', despite its common meaning as 'body and bodily appearance', was not a familiar word to the Arabs, and it was due to the translators of the logico-philosophical works if it took this secondary meaning. This conclusion is based on the following reasons: 1) The Quranic and *ḥadīth* literature, as the main sources of the Arabic language in the early centuries, make no use of this word in the sense of 'individual or person'. Rare counterexamples are of suspect authenticity. 2) Works which were far away from the influence of philosophical literature, such as those of *kalām*, history and the like are tellingly silent about the meaning of 'individual' attributed to this term. 3) No lexicon indicates such a meaning for it. 4) Despite its absence from the Arabic non-philosophical language, it is frequently and abundantly used in logical and philosophical works. 5) Islamic scholars like Ibn Taymīyya and Ibn Aṭīr explicitly state that *šahṣ* in the sense of 'individual' is not originally Arabic and is a strange use of this word.

In conclusion, the great importance of Ibn al-Muqaffā' (d. 756 or 759), as one of the very first translators from Greek into Arabic, most probably through Pahlavi,³³ must be taken into account. As mentioned before, *šahṣ* and the plural *ašḥās* are used noticeably in the treatise called *al-Mantiq*, which is historically attributed to al-Muqaffā' or, by some modern scholars, to his son (d. ca. 760),³⁴ whereas in other works by al-Muqaffā' we cannot find him making any use of *šahṣ* as 'individual or person'.³⁵ This is a crucial point, through a deeper study of which we might succeed in shedding some light on the origins of the dual meaning of *šahṣ*.

3. *Šahṣ* for the Persians

Inspecting Persian in order to find the meanings of the word *šahṣ* in that neighbouring language of the Arabs will help us illuminate on the likely source of the change of meaning of this Arabic term. Essential to our treatment of this discrepancy is the remark that *šahṣ* – signifying either 'body' or 'person' – is used frequently in Persian poetry and prose, while the non-philosophical Arabic texts of the early *hijrī* centuries do not use *šahṣ* as 'person'. On the contrary, the works written in Persian in the same period seem to be more acquainted with this usage.³⁶

Among all the translations into Arabic carried out in the early centuries from different languages, those attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffā' are known as the very first ones, which are often (albeit

³³ Based on Ibn al-Nadīm's account, one could hold Ibn al-Muqaffā' to be the first scholar to compose a logical work in the Islamic period. See Ibn Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, Beirut 1417/1996, p. 337.

³⁴ See for example J. van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, De Gruyter, Berlin, 1991-7, vol. 2, p. 27.

³⁵ The works by Ibn al-Muqaffā' include *al-Adab al-Kabīr*; *al-Adab al-Šaḡīr*; *al-Durra al-Yatīma*; *Kalīla wa-Dimna*.

³⁶ Compare two classic history books, viz. the *Tārīḫ al-Ṭabarī* (Ṭabarī, *Tārīḫ al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk*, ed. M. A. Ibrahim, Dār al-Turāṭ, Beirut 1387/1967) and its Persian translation *Tārīḫ Bal'amī*; in the former, which was composed some 50 years before the Persian translation, there is no mention of this word as connoting 'personhood', while the *Bal'amī* uses this term in reference to people (for example, see *Tārīḫnāmah-i Ṭabarī*, ed. M. Roushan, Soroush, Tehran 1378/1999, vol. 1, pp. 10, 82, 84, 170).

controversially) held to be made from Pahlavi; among them there is *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, a masterpiece of Arabic literary prose. However, the focus will be here on the translation into Arabic of a work of Aristotelian logic, most probably from Pahlavi or perhaps, as argued by Paul Kraus, from another language.³⁷ This translation is attributed either to Ibn al-Muqaffa' or to his son Muḥammad,³⁸ and contains a sort of free translation of the *Isagoge*, plus Aristotle's *On Interpretation* and *Prior Analytics*; its influence on later translators can hardly be exaggerated.

Analyzing the cases in which the author uses *šahṣ* and, in addition to that, taking into account his mother tongue, namely Persian, would give us a good deal of evidence for coming up with a reasonable theory on the origin of the semantic change mentioned above; we must try to relate *šahṣ* in the sense of 'body or corporeal appearance' to *šahṣ* in the sense of 'person or individual'. In his logical treatise, the Persian scholar shows the signs of a turning point, where this word came to be used in two separate senses: *šahṣ* as 'individual' is emerging and consequently, it co-occurs with *šahṣ* as 'body'.³⁹

3.1. Co-occurrence of Body and Person

After defining the genus as every name which includes the names with different forms, e.g. animal which groups the elephant and the ant while they possess different forms, Ibn al-Muqaffa' (or Ibn al-Muqaffa' junior) clarifies the meaning of 'form'⁴⁰ in this manner:

And the form is every name which occurs to names with differing *ašḥāṣ*, a single form would embrace them. Such as the utterer saying: the man, thus he embraces with that this and that [man] whose *ašḥāṣ* are different, while the form of man embraces them all.⁴¹

He clearly speaks of the *šahṣ* of a man which is different from the *šahṣ* of another man, though both fall under the same species. Despite the fact that the two senses can be derived in some way from the usage of *šahṣ* in this text, it shows more resemblance to 'body or matter' rather than 'person or individual'; how can we talk about the 'person or individual' of a man? Yet we obviously speak of his body or flesh. Additionally, considering the dominant explanation of the way two individuals are different in Peripatetic philosophy, two individuals of the same species could be different only with respect to their bodies and material appearances.⁴² However, on another occasion the Persian author

³⁷ P. Kraus, "Zu Ibn al-Muqaffa'", *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 14 (1934), pp. 1-20, especially p. 13.

³⁸ Although Daneshpazhuh believes that there is still no consensus on the source language of Ibn al-Muqaffa', it is not of much concern to us here, since for our present study the sole fact that this book is by Ibn al-Muqaffa' or his son – as maintained by Daneshpazhuh against N. Rescher, *Studies in the History of Arabic Logic*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh 1963, p. 29, n. 3 – proves that this Arabic logical work is composed by someone familiar with Persian or Pahlavi. For the ways in which Daneshpazhuh argues his point see his "Introduction," in Ibn al-Muqaffa', *al-Mantiq*, pp. 64-9.

³⁹ One must not forget that the evolution in the usage of *šahṣ* started as a local convention in the philosophical circles in the Islamic world. Obviously, it was never a large-scale awareness in the common language of the Arabs, but only a local change among the specialists of the transmitted Greek intellectual tradition. It is thus reasonable to attribute such an alteration and, one might say, ingenuity to a specific person or group.

⁴⁰ Both 'form' and 'species' are renderings of the same Greek term εἶδος. Thus, Ibn al-Muqaffa', instead of *al-naw'*, which came to be the common term for 'species' in the Islamic world, uses *al-šūra*, which was to be the Arabic equivalent for 'form'. Therefore, in this context, when he uses *al-šūra* (the form), he means *al-naw'* (the species).

⁴¹ Ibn al-Muqaffa', *al-Mantiq*, p. 4.

⁴² Having the same specific form (*al-šūra al-naw'īyya*) and, therefore, being different by virtue of matter has been the prevalent view regarding the Aristotelian account of individuation, due to Aristotle's rather explicit reference to this issue (*Metaph.*, VII, 1034 a 5-8; V, 1016 b 31-35; XII, 1074 a 33) and, in general, the possibilities set forth by his system to explain the individual differences – at least, as understood by his early commentators.

makes use of *šahṣ* meaning ‘an individual or a member of a class’, which was, as far as we have found, without precedent in the Arabic language until then.

And the related (*al-mudāf*) separates from existence and nonexistence, in that the relative is found in differing *ašhāṣ* like the father and the son, and the owner and the owned. And sometimes the existence and nonexistence gather in a single *šahṣ* as the vision and its absence gather in a single eye...⁴³

It is clear that *šahṣ* is being used in the sense, new at that time, of ‘a person or individual’. Obviously, Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ uses *šahṣ* as an equivalent of the Greek *ἄτομον*, although in all likelihood he was not really familiar with Greek.⁴⁴

And therewith, that above which there is no genus is called *summum genus*, and that below which there is no species⁴⁵ of differing *ašhāṣ*, which are subsumed under a single species, is called *infima species*. And that which is indivisible and uncut is called *al-šahṣ*.⁴⁶

He is calling *šahṣ* the indivisible, i.e. the equivalent of the Greek *ἄτομον*. In the *Īsāgūḡī* translated by al-Dimašqī (d. after 914), whenever Porphyry uses *ἄτομον*, in the Arabic translation we find *šahṣ*. Therefore, considering the fact that *šahṣ* was never used in Arabic in that sense, it could be inferred that the terminology of the *Īsāgūḡī* is undoubtedly under the influence of this early translation of that precis or paraphrase of *Isagoge* rendered into Arabic either by Ibn al-Muqaffa‘, a Persian scholar who had mastery of both Pahlavi and Arabic, or maybe by his son. Although *ἄτομον*, which literally means ‘indivisible’, was also used to refer to ‘individual’, designating a thing or person belonging to a class – more or less as in contemporary usage – the important point is the reason why this term refers to two somewhat different concepts.⁴⁷

The understanding of individuality as some kind of indivisibility has been perhaps the most widespread view of individuality in the history of philosophy (...). Those who uphold this view find support for it in the very etymology of the term ‘individuality’, which suggests that the intention of individuality has to do with indivisibility. (...) For the medievals, who took a long time to clarify this issue, the indivisibility which characterizes individuals is that feature which prevents them from being divided into individuals belonging to the same species or kind as the individual in question.⁴⁸

Hence, there is a close relation between these two seemingly different concepts. However, the translators into Arabic were familiar with the two meanings of this term, and as a result, in the Arabic

⁴³ Ibn al-Muqaffa‘, *al-Manṭiq*, p. 20. There seems to be a mistake in Daneshpazhuh’s edition. He has included ‘existence and nonexistence’ in the rest of the sentence along with ‘the owner and the owned’; however, ‘existence and nonexistence’ is clearly the subject of the next sentence.

⁴⁴ “Notwithstanding the attribution to Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ of the translation of some Greek works, along with the Persian ones, there is no mention of his knowing Greek in ancient sources, and moreover, we do not know that the translator in question knew any languages other than Arabic and Persian” (Abbas Iqbal, *Šarḥ-i Hāl-i ‘Abdullāh Ibn al-Muqaffā‘*, Asātir, Tehran 1382/2003, p. 57).

⁴⁵ As mentioned above, n. 41, in the Arabic text, instead of ‘species’ there is the other translation of *εἶδος* as ‘form’. Here, I use ‘species’ for *al-šūra*.

⁴⁶ Ibn al-Muqaffa‘, *al-Manṭiq*, p. 5.

⁴⁷ In Aristotle, *ἄτομον* refers to both ‘atom’, that which does not divide, and ‘individual’, a member of a species (*Metaph.*, III, 995 b 29-30; 998 b 14-15; 998 b 28-29).

⁴⁸ J. Gracia, *Introduction to the Problem of Individuation in the Early Middle Ages*, Philosophia Verlag, München 1984, pp. 22-3.

translated texts one finds, depending on the context, either ‘indivisible’ or ‘individual’.⁴⁹ It is clear why in showing that this Greek term means ‘indivisible’ it is translated as ‘that which does not divide’ (*allatī lā-tataġazza*), yet the reason why it was translated as *šabṣ* in order to refer to ‘individual or entity’ is still obscure.

The Arabic word *šabṣ*, as seen above, was never taken to convey such a concept, and it is unclear why these early translators choose a word which designates ‘body, matter, or corporeity’, namely *šabṣ*, to carry the sense of ‘individual and person’. Let me stress again that *šabṣ* and its derivatives bear no relation to either ‘individual’ or ‘indivisible’, a point which leaves us with even not the smallest clue in order to relate this word to its novel semantic function in Arabic.

In concluding this section, I would like to outline a plausible explanation. In the Greek texts translated into Arabic, there is a word which sometimes signifies ‘that which does not divide’, and on other occasions ‘that which belongs, as a member, to a kind or class’, and these two concepts are very likely to be held interrelated.⁵⁰ According to the extant early Arabic translations, two expressions were adopted to convey these notions: 1) expressions like *lā-munqasim* or *lā-mutaġazzi*, which refer to its ‘indivisibility’; 2) *šabṣ*, which refers to its ‘individuality’. The former is well understandable; however, the basis for the latter is far from clear. The question why a word which means ‘body, corporeity, and corporal appearance’ should be chosen to refer to ‘individual or person’ remains unanswered. Here, the role of a Persian mediator becomes prominent, and whether this mediator is al-Muqaffa’ or his son is hardly of primary importance to our question.

3.2. A Similar Term in Iranian Languages?

Pahlavi or Persian could probably shed some light on the obscurity resulting from the weird change undergone by the Arabic word *šabṣ*,⁵¹ the change as the result of which it came to signify both ‘body’ and ‘individual’. In Middle Persian,⁵² the word *tan* always had the semantic function which is in close accordance with the Arabic *šabṣ*. The Pahlavi *tan* is derived from a much older term used both in Avestan and Old Persian: *tanū*. Not only does it refer to ‘body, corporeity’ but it also signifies ‘self’ or, more precisely, ‘physical self’ as opposed to ‘immaterial self, namely *urvan* (soul), which later became *ruwān* in Pahlavi. The Avestan *tanū* does not necessarily mean ‘body’, because it is also widely used in the pronominal sense “self-, oneself”.⁵³

R. Kent, in his lexicon in *Old Persian*, contributes an entry for *tanū* and mentions “body, self” as the equivalents of this word.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ For some of the instances in Aristotle of this term being translated as indivisible (like the Arabic *lā-munqasim* or *lā-mutaġazzi*), see S.M. Afnan, *A Philosophical Lexicon*, Hekmat, Tehran 1385/2006, p. 50. There are also other examples such as the translations of Arist., *Metaph.*, II 2, 994 b 21; X 8, 1058 a 20; X 9, 1058 b 10; *Phys.* VII 5, 257 b 4.

⁵⁰ As discussed by Gracia, quoted above n. 49.

⁵¹ The present study does not intend to raise the controversial question of the translation of Greek literature into Pahlavi, since it is not directly involved in the present question. In comparison to Arabic, Pahlavi is about to be held as an earlier target language of Greek literature, as some scholars are trying to establish.

⁵² The same as contemporary Persian.

⁵³ W. Skalmowski, “Avestan *tanu.pərəθa-*”, in L. Isebaert (ed.), *Studia Etymologica Indoeuropaea memoriae A.J. Van Windekens (1915-1989) dicata*, Peeters, Louvain 1991, pp. 273-80, here p. 273.

⁵⁴ R. Kent, *Old Persian. Grammar, Texts, Lexicon*, American Oriental Society, New Haven(CT) 1950, p. 186.

In Pahlavi, *tan* is used to serve the same purpose. In his entry for *tan*, Mackenzie cites both ‘body’ and ‘person’.⁵⁵ *Tan*, primarily, refers to ‘body and physical appearance’; moreover, it is used to talk about ‘a person or individual’.⁵⁶ Besides its common and well-known application in Pahlavi as ‘body’, *tan*, together with *hwēš*,⁵⁷ constitutes a very frequent compound as *hwēštān* meaning ‘self’.⁵⁸ Now that we have shown that in pre-Islamic Iranian languages (also in New Persian, as it started to emerge from the very early Islamic centuries) there was a word which had the same semantic role as the Arabic *šahṣ*, a few centuries before the translation movement during which this Arabic term accepted a novel signification, we must seek to establish a channel through which the Iranian word could be linked to the Arabic one.

So far, we have seen that there is a turning point in *al-Mantiq* through which *šahṣ* denoting ‘individual’ becomes introduced into logico-philosophical literature; on the other hand, in Iranian languages there is a term (*tan*) which had been used to signify both ‘corporeity or body’ (the original meaning of *šahṣ*) and ‘individual’. In what follows, it should be shown that Ibn al-Muqaffa’ or his son without falling into the complexities caused by the modern scholarship in discussing the authorship of Ibn al-Muqaffa’ could be held as the innovator of this tweak.

4. The Earliest Source

In our quest to trace *šahṣ* in Arabic language, the oldest source we have managed to find where *šahṣ* is used to mean ‘individual’ is the well-known logical text attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffa’.⁵⁹ Considering the meaning of this word for the native Persians, among whom we have ‘Abd Allah ibn al-Muqaffa’ (and maybe also Ibn al-Muqaffa’ junior, namely Muḥammad ibn al-Muqaffa’) who is a prominent scholar well versed not only in Arabic but also in Persian,⁶⁰ it could be justifiable to attribute to the author of *al-Mantiq* the ingenuity in virtue of which the Arabic *šahṣ* underwent the change discussed here. Ibn al-Muqaffa’, or his son Muḥammad, with a Persian-structured mind, had the Persian and Pahlavi word *tan* at his disposal, a word which would help him to convey two meanings: ‘body’ and ‘individual’. As noted above, the question as to whether the original text out of which the Arabic *al-Mantiq* was created was in Pahlavi, Syriac or Greek is secondary to the present purpose. The mere fact that Ibn al-Muqaffa’, or his son, knew Persian or Pahlavi supports this reconstruction of the origins of *šahṣ* as ‘individual or person’.⁶¹

⁵⁵ D.N. Mackenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 1971, p. 81.

⁵⁶ In his *Persian-Pahlavi Dictionary*, Farahvashi mentions *tan* in both entries of ‘*šahṣ*’ (‘individual’) and *badan* (‘body’). See the entries of ‘*badan*’, and ‘*šahṣ*’ in B. Farahvashi, *Farhang-i Fārsi bi Pahlavi*, Tehran, Danišgāh-i Tehrān, 1381, p. 68, 327.

⁵⁷ *Hwēš*: ‘(one’s) own’ (Mackenzie, *Dictionary*, quoted above n. 56, p. 96).

⁵⁸ Being a descendant of Old Persian *tanū*, the Pahlavi *tan* cannot be held to be influenced by Syriac or Greek texts translated into Pahlavi before the rise of Islam.

⁵⁹ Without providing any evidence, M. Cooperson speculates on the basis of Kraus’ controversial article (above, n. 37) that this translation could not have been done by any of the Persian Ibn al-Muqaffa’*s*. According to Cooperson, the translator was a Christian convert named Moḥammad ibn al-Muqaffa’. This claim is hardly defensible. See M. Cooperson, “Ibn al-Muqaffa’,” in O. Leaman (ed.), *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Islamic Philosophy*, Routledge, London 2006, pp. 280-6; see also M. Cooperson, “Ibn al-Muqaffa’,” in J.W. Meri, *Medieval Islamic Civilization*, vol. 1, Routledge, London 2006, p. 346.

⁶⁰ On the fact that Ibn al-Muqaffa’ junior did most probably know not only Persian but also Pahlavi, a fact that is hard to contradict, see the most recent study on Ibn al-Muqaffa’ and *al-Mantiq* which is about to be published: E. Hermans, “A Persian Origin of the Arabic Aristotle? The Debate on the Circumstantial Evidence of the *Mantiq* revisited”, *Journal of Persianate Studies*, forthcoming.

⁶¹ Furthermore, if one is sceptical enough to doubt the authorship of any of these two Ibn al-Muqaffa’*s* and only hold them as the editors, again we could envisage that any of them could have imposed this dual signification upon *šahṣ* in editorial stages.

Having the task of conveying the concept of ‘personhood and individuality’ into Arabic, the Persian author of *al-Mantiq*, inspired by the Persian and Pahlavi *tan*, could be supposed to have appealed to the Arabic *šahš*, which is the term with the closest meaning to the Persian and Pahlavi *tan* to translate the Greek, logico-philosophical concept frequently mentioned for example in the *Isagoge*.

5. Pahlavi as the Source Language?

On this ground, and in the light of recent research on the author of *al-Mantiq*,⁶² it is likely to assume that the source language of this translation was an Iranian language, more precisely Pahlavi. Accordingly, one of the Ibn al-Muqaffa’s, either the father or son, could have had as the equivalent of the Greek ἄτομον in his Pahlavi version of the text either *tan*, or some other similar word, each of which would not cast doubt on our argument: on the one hand, if the term in the Pahlavi *Isagoge* had been *tan* (which would be a proper assumption and is also more probable), he then just needed to turn to the Arabic *šahš*, which corresponded to *tan* in one important respect, i.e. in referring to a kind of ‘body’ which involves movement and roughly can be held as living, rather than to ‘matter’ (*mādda*) which is a very general term including non-organic entities.⁶³ On the other hand, if in the Pahlavi translation of the *Isagoge* ἄτομον had been rendered by a term other than *tan*, but synonymous with it, then Ibn al-Muqaffa’ could have been inspired by the notions denoted by *tan*, viz. ‘body’ and ‘person’, thus inventing a new usage for *šahš* which was potentially a good candidate to serve this purpose. According to each scenario, it would seem reasonable enough to think that the Persian translator could have modified his Arabic choice,⁶⁴ namely *šahš*, according to the Pahlavi *tan*.⁶⁵

⁶² Although D. Gutas agrees that considering Ibn al-Muqaffa’ as the translator of this logical compendium is not far-fetched (see D. Gutas, “Origins in Baghdad,” in R. Pasnau, *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge U.P., Cambridge 2014, pp. 11-25), with regard to the source language he leaves the matter undecided (D. Gutas, “Die Wiedergeburt der Philosophie und die Übersetzung ins Arabische”, in U. Rudolph [ed.], *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Philosophie in der Islamischen Welt. 8.-10. Jahrhundert*, Schwabe, Basel, 2012, pp. 55-91, here pp. 72-3). G. Troupeau, “La logique d’Ibn al-Muqaffa’ et les origines de la grammaire arabe”, *Arabica* 28 (1981), pp. 242-50, on the basis of some linguistic evidence, I. Kristó-Nagy, *La pensée d’Ibn al-Muqaffa’*, Éditions de Paris, Paris 2013, pp. 175-9, on the basis of the fact that Ibn al-Muqaffa’ applies logical rules in his other works and remarking that he did not know Greek or Syriac, and E. Hermans, “A Persian Origin” (quoted above, n. 60), with a comprehensive inspection of the studies on Ibn al-Muqaffa’ and *al-Mantiq*, as well as of “the circumstantial evidence” that all the arguments against the existence of a Pahlavi medium are insufficient, maintain that Ibn al-Muqaffa’’s work was in all likelihood translated from a Pahlavi original.

⁶³ One may wonder why did Ibn al-Muqaffa’ not use the term *ǧism* to translate the Pahlavi *tan* in relationship to matter and body. In fact, *ǧism* has always been more frequent and widely used than *šahš* in Arabic. However, there is a subtle difference between these two words: *ǧism* is used to talk about any kind of matter, including the nonorganic, and is very general and inclusive besides its being to some extent stationary; instead, *šahš* was mostly used to refer to the body of man and animal, i.e. things which are alive and moving. This nuance shows that it is in complete concord with *tan*, which mainly refers to the body of living creatures, especially people.

⁶⁴ Whether *šahš* was his only choice, or he could have had other options but was looking for a fresh term to convey this new concept is the subject of an independent study.

⁶⁵ There were other words like *aḥad*, *raǧul*, *insān*, *šay*, etc. which could have appeared as candidates to carry the concept of ‘individuality’, but they are assuredly insufficient. One might mention *fard* as a more acceptable alternative, but this word, in spite of its recent, common meaning, which is in complete agreement with the concept of “individuality”, was never used to refer to an ‘individual’ for many centuries. Its two meanings found in early texts are adjectival. In one sense (viz. ‘unique, one’), it was an attribute of God, and in the other (viz. ‘odd’), it served to indicate a set of numbers, as opposed to even numbers. The word *fard* in its usage as referring to ‘individual and person’ is a rather recent one and quite strange to early Arabs. There might be instances of the plural *afrād* in some texts of early Arab literature, but when inspected in detail, it appears

By taking into account this innovation by the author of *al-Manṭiq* into account, it becomes clear why in his logical texts *šahṣ* is used at times so equivocally that the reader would be likely to have difficulty in discerning what his real intention is; is he speaking of ‘body’, or ‘person’? This could also explain why Persian authors of the early centuries of the Islamic tradition who were also the first writers of the early New Persian,⁶⁶ were more accustomed to using *šahṣ* in both senses rather than the native Arabs themselves.⁶⁷

To sum up, it is evident that *šahṣ* in its meaning as ‘individual and person’ was not genuine Arabic, and it generally designated ‘body and bodily appearance’. Tracking the change that occurred to *šahṣ* in terms of its meaning it became clear that *šahṣ* in its then new usage had entered Arabic through the path of the translation movement, because this word was very common in logico-philosophical literature, while, exactly at the same time, it was intriguingly absent from other fields of the Arabic language. Among the translations of that period that are extant, the logical work attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffa’ is of great importance for us due to two reasons: 1) This text being one of the very early, if not the first, work translated into Arabic; 2) Ibn al-Muqaffa’ himself being a distinguished scholar of Arabic who has proven to be an influential figure with regard to his non-native language, viz. Arabic.⁶⁸

The Pahlavi *tan* signifies both ‘body’ and ‘individual, self, or person’, when no single clue was found in order to justify why *šahṣ*, and not some other word, or even a neologism, was chosen to carry the concept of ‘individual or person’ to Arabic.

This suggests to relate the two Persian and Arabic words, and advance that *tan* might have been most likely the cause of this change undergone by *šahṣ*. More precisely, *tan* could have inspired the author (or perhaps the editor) of *al-Manṭiq* to use an Arabic term which, before then, only meant ‘body and corporeality’ in order to designate also the ‘individual and person’.

As a supplementary evidence, the case of early Iranian writers of Persian prose and poetry shows that these authors, being familiar with both languages, were more accustomed to the secondary meaning of *šahṣ*. There are occasions when they use one of these terms instead of the other or even they make use of them simultaneously – an evidence that attests to the deep affinity of these two seemingly different terms.

6. Conclusion

I have tried to show that the word *šahṣ*, despite its meaning as ‘body, bodily figure, and corporeality’ in classical Arabic, in the sense of ‘person, individual, and member of a class’ was never recognized as true Arabic, rather as a technical term in the logico-philosophical circles which date back to the Graeco-Arabic translation movement. Finding no plausible relation between other meanings derived from this root, namely *šḥṣ*, and its then new meaning as ‘individual’ or ‘person’, I have had recourse to the terminology used in the Arabic precis or paraphrase of the *Isagoge* known as *al-Manṭiq*: the

that it is in all probability a plural of *farid*, not *fard*. I am planning to devote and independent research to the word *fard*.

⁶⁶ New Persian is the language that came to be used in Iran about two centuries after the conquest by the Arabs.

⁶⁷ Interestingly, Nāšir Ḥusraw (d. 1088) and Bal‘amī (d. 992 or 997) use both *tan* and *šahṣ*, together or alone, in the same context, a fact which indicates the similarity of the two terms. It is telling that these Persian writers are aware of the similitude of these two words and use them interchangeably. For example, see Nāšir Ḥusraw, *Zād al-Musāfir*, ed. E. Haeri, *Mīrāt-i Maktūb*, Tehran 1384 /2005, pp. 187, 193.

⁶⁸ Even if the work was done by his son, what matters is the fact that all the ancient sources attribute it to ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Muqaffa’, not to his son, and authority was granted to it as the work of the renowned ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Muqaffa’.

earliest extant logical text in Arabic using the term *šabṣ*, where this word is used with the meaning in question on several occasions. As the next step, in my attempt to explain why Ibn al-Muqaffa' or, as some scholars like P. Kraus believe, his son should have given this sense to this word, I have suggested the Pahlavi word *tan* and its dual meaning, viz. 'body' and 'person', as a possible source of inspiration for the author of *al-Mantiq*. On the one hand, he had the Arabic word *šabṣ* in its original meaning of 'body and bodily appearance', and on the other, he had at his disposal the Pahlavi *tan*, which was used to refer to both 'body' and 'person'. On this ground, I have suggested that the change undergone by *šabṣ* – a change that rendered it non-Arabic in meaning, as Ibn Taymīyya and Ibn al-Ġawzī claim – can be explained through the influence that the Middle Persian, or the early New Persian, could have had on Arabic. In supporting this explanation, I have mentioned the case of early Persian writers of the Islamic tradition like Nāṣir Ḥusraw and Bal'amī: on the one hand, they prove to be completely familiar with the secondary meaning of *šabṣ* as 'person' or 'individual', while in the works of their Arab peers, e.g. historical and literary works, this term does not have such meaning; on the other hand, they show their complete awareness of the deep similarity of *šabṣ* and *tan* by using them in similar contexts interchangeably.