

## A Musician from Elsewhere in Quest of Knowledge: Past and Present in Armas Launis' Ideas on the North African Musical Traditions<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** In 1910, composer, musicologist and writer Armas Launis (Hämeenlinna, Finland 1884–Nice 1959) was the first Finn to have defended a doctoral dissertation within the discipline of Musicology. Already quite experienced in field work among rural populations when he settled in Algiers in the 1920s, he enhanced his knowledge about local music traditions not only through personal observation and by interviewing local musicians (Yafil, Mahieddine) and other residents, but also from scholarly writings and other literary sources. I investigate how impulses from earlier thought and Launis's practical experiences shaped his ideas on Maghrebi music. As my source, I use his travel book from 1927, *Murjaanien maassa* (In the land of the Moors), his first extensive interpretation of the cultures of the Maghreb, as well as his university lecture from 1928, *Piirteitä maurilais-arabialaisesta musiikista* (Traits of the Arabo-Moorish music). The idea of the ongoing presence of ancientness in modern times holds a central place in Launis's thinking about North African music. When claiming that the evolution of the North African musical traditions had ended, he did not necessarily lean on western ideas only. Launis never proposed a scientific interpretation of the music traditions of the Maghreb area. However, his position extends to his subsequent output as an opera composer.

**KEYWORDS:** Global Music History, Finland–Algeria, Armas Launis, Mahieddine Bachetarzi, Jules Rouanet

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on the paper 'A musician from elsewhere in quest of knowledge – Past and present in Armas Launis's ideas on the North-African musical traditions' that I gave on 21 March 2017 in Tokyo in the 20th Quinquennial Congress of the International Musicological Society, 'Musicology: Theory and Practice, East and West', and partly on my article in Finnish 'Armas Launis pohjoisafrikkalaisen orientin kuvaajana: uran ja yhteenkuuluvuuden kysymyksiä' (Armas Launis as a portrayer of the North-African Orient: Questions of career and affinity, Tyrväinen 2014). The English translations from Finnish are mine. I am very grateful to Dr. Maya Saïdani and Professor Slimane Hachi for having put me in contact with scholars of North African music during several conferences of the Centre National de Recherches Préhistoriques, Anthropologiques et Historiques, Algiers, to which they kindly invited me. I wish to thank Youssef Touaïbia, Dr. Jean Lambert and Professor Heikki Laitinen for a valuable exchange of information and Dr. Jean-Marie Jacono for helping me get hold of research literature on North African music. I am also grateful to the members of Dr. Matthew Machin-Autenrieth's Middle East – North-Africa reading group and especially to Dr. Vanessa Paloma Elbaz for their comments in 2015 during my stay as Visiting Scholar in the Department of Music at the University of Cambridge.

## Un musicien venu d'ailleurs en quête de savoir : Passé et présent dans les idées d'Armas Launis sur les traditions musicales nord-africaines

**RÉSUMÉ :** En 1910, le compositeur, musicologue et écrivain Armas Launis (Hämeenlinna, Finlande 1884 – Nice 1959) fut le premier Finlandais à avoir soutenu une thèse de doctorat dans la discipline de la musicologie. Déjà expérimenté dans le travail de terrain auprès des populations rurales lors de son installation à Alger dans les années 1920, il approfondit ses connaissances sur les traditions musicales locales non seulement par l'observation personnelle et en interrogeant des musiciens locaux (Yafil, Mahieddine) et d'autres habitants, mais aussi à travers les travaux scientifiques et d'autres sources littéraires. Dans cet article, J'essaye d'analyser comment les impulsions de la pensée antérieure et les expériences pratiques de Launis ont façonné ses idées sur la musique maghrébine, en me basant sur son livre de voyage de 1927, *Murjaanien maassa* (Au pays des Maures) comme source et sa première interprétation approfondie des cultures du Maghreb, ainsi que sa conférence universitaire de 1928, *Piirteitä maurilais-arabialaisesta musiikista* (Traits de la musique arabo-mauresque). L'idée de la présence continue de l'Antiquité dans les temps modernes occupe une place centrale dans la réflexion de Launis sur la musique nord-africaine, car en affirmant que l'évolution des traditions musicales nord-africaines était terminée, il ne s'appuyait pas uniquement sur les idées occidentales. Launis n'a jamais proposé une interprétation scientifique des traditions musicales du Maghreb. Cependant, sa position s'étend à sa production ultérieure en tant que compositeur d'opéra.

**MOTS-CLÉS :** Histoire mondiale de la musique, Finlande-Algérie, Armas Launis, Mahieddine Bachetarzi, Jules Rouanet.

### موسيقى من مكان آخر في سعيه للمعرفة: الماضي والحاضر في أفكار أرماس لونيس حول

### التقاليد الموسيقية في شمال إفريقيا

**المخلص :** في عام 1910، كان الملحن وعالم الموسيقى والكاتب أرماس لونيس (هامينلينا، فنلندا 1884 - نيس 1959) أول فنلندي يدافع عن أطروحة دكتوراه في تخصص علم الموسيقى. كان يتمتع بالفعل بخبرة كبيرة في العمل الميداني بين سكان الريف عندما استقر في الجزائر العاصمة في عشرينيات القرن الماضي، وقد عزز معرفته حول تقاليد الموسيقى المحلية ليس فقط من خلال الملاحظة الشخصية وإجراء المقابلات مع الموسيقيين المحليين (يافيل ومحي الدين) وغيرهم من السكان، ولكن أيضًا من خلال الكتابات العلمية. وغيرها من المصادر الأدبية.

أحاول في هذا المقال تحليل مساهمة دوافع لونيس الفكرية السابقة وتجاربه العملية في تشكيل أفكاره حول موسيقى المنطقة المغاربية، بالاعتماد على كتاب رحلاته الصادر عام 1927، *Murjaanien maassa* (في أرض المغاربة) كمصدر، وأول تفسير متعمق له للثقافات المغاربية، بالإضافة إلى محاضراته الأكاديمية عام 1928 بعنوان *Piirteitä maurilais-arabialaisesta musiikista* (سمات الموسيقى العربية المغاربية). حيث تحتل فكرة استمرار وجود العصور القديمة في العصر الحديث مكانا مركزيا في تفكيره حول موسيقى شمال أفريقيا، ويؤكد على أن تطور التقاليد الموسيقية في شمال إفريقيا كان كاملا ولم يستند فقط إلى الأفكار الغربية، لذا لم يقترح لونيس أبدا تفسيراً علمياً للتقاليد الموسيقية المغاربية، بل سيظهر موقفه لاحقا عبر إنتاجاته كمؤلف أوبرا.

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** تاريخ الموسيقى العالمي، فنلندا-الجزائر، أرماس لونيس، محيي الدين

Rouanet, Chottin, d'Erlanger... When thinking about musicological research on Maghrebi music as practiced during the colonial period, French scholars and writers come naturally to many minds at first. In the 1920s, research on North African and Arab music was well established among French scholars, even if it was not practiced widely (Poché & Lambert, 2000, 7, 49–51, 135–136). It is not well known that a man from Northern Europe, the Finn Armas Launis, was likewise active in this scholarly domain. Let me point out at once that his interest in the music of Maghreb distinguishes him from his native Finnish context: in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and even during Launis's time of university study, Finnish scholars tended to concentrate on the Finnish-language folk-poetry and folksongs, in keeping with the Romantic ideal of a common national past. Armas Launis, on the other hand, was a European cosmopolitan; not even French research was out of his scope. All in all, looking at Launis introduces a fresh angle to the scene under scrutiny here, not least since he entered it from outside the colonial powers.

Experiences in 1924–1926 in Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco left a mark in three domains of the professional activity of Launis (Hämeenlinna, Finland 1884 – Nice, France 1959): those of a musicologist, a writer and a composer. In the Maghreb region, in cities and in rural areas alike, he learned about local music traditions not only through personal observation and by interviewing local musicians and other residents, but most probably also from scholarly writings and other written sources. It will become clear from what follows that the eventual influence of French scholar Jules Rouanet and his famous encyclopedia article 'La musique arabe dans le Maghreb' (Rouanet, 1922) cannot be disregarded. This concerns above all Launis's trial lecture 'Traits of the Arabo-Moorish music' (in the original Finnish, 'Piiiteitä maurilais-arabialaisesta musiikista', Launis, KK Coll. 123.18) that he gave in 1928 at the University of Helsinki. Let us note already that the very notion 'Arabo-Moorish music' Launis used for referring to the classical repertoire under his observation is close to the one that Edmond Nathan Yafil and Rouanet used for their publications from 1905–1927, *Répertoire de musique arabe et maure* (Poché & Lambert, 2000, 138).<sup>2</sup> Personal observation is more obvious in Launis's Finnish-language travel book, *Murjaanien maassa* (In the land of the Moors, Launis, 1927). There, it seems, his observations merge with the training in Greek and Roman literature he had gained at the University of Helsinki, and probably also with information from printed travel guides. The Maghrebi influences on Launis's operas *Jehudith* and *Théodora*, on the other hand, do not enter into the confines of this chapter.<sup>3</sup>

I aim, in the present essay, to investigate how impulses from Launis's earlier reflection and practical experiences shaped his ideas on North African music. However, to be sure, some of the relevant background information will remain veiled for a scholar working at the distance of a century.

It is important to first understand how Launis's passage from northern Europe to North Africa took place and how his musical identity evolved. A composer, musicologist, writer, and founder of popular conservatories, Armas Launis received his practical musical training in the

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<sup>2</sup> Rouanet started in the beginning of the 20th century to make use of the notion *musique andalouse*, but he also used *musique grenadine* to refer to more or less the same phenomenon. (Poché, 1995, 13–14, 21).

<sup>3</sup> The composer tells in his explanatory text to the orchestral score of *Jehudith* (KK Ms.Mus.Launis A VIII, box 34): "had many stimuluses for his literary accomplishment from his travels to meet the The author has people of the desert and from his close personal contact with them, their daily lives and their popular habits, as well as from his familiarity with their poetry and their vocal and instrumental music." I have commented on the North African impulses in Launis's operas in Finnish in another context (Tyrväinen, 2014, 172–181).

Orchestral School of the Helsinki Philharmonic Society, where Jean Sibelius taught him music theory, and subsequently as a composer in Berlin and Weimar.<sup>4</sup> He also studied at the Imperial Alexander University, renamed University of Helsinki after Finnish independence (1917).<sup>5</sup> In 1910, he completed a German-language doctoral dissertation in Musicology entitled *Über Art, Entstehung und Verbreitung der estnisch-finnischen Runenmelodien* (On the type, origin and spread of the Estonian-Finnish *runo* tunes, Launis, 1910). After defending this work in public at the beginning of the following year, he became in 1911 the first person to obtain a doctorate in Musicology from the University of Helsinki.<sup>6</sup> His supervisor was the internationally renowned Ilmari Krohn, the first Professor of Musicology appointed by this university and an early leading figure of comparative musicology.<sup>7</sup> Already before his doctorate, alongside his teacher and with his encouragement, Launis took part in international musicological gatherings. Before the First World War, both of them had been noticed in the fora of comparative musicology and of the Internationale Musikgesellschaft (International Music Society). It is also striking that they had contacts with the Berlin representatives of comparative musicology who developed an interest in Arab music (Laitinen, 2014, 78–80).

It may be partly a consequence of the life's work of the renowned Finnish explorer and orientalist Georg August Wallin (1811–1852), who settled in Egypt for many years, that the depiction of Arabs was already relatively positive in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Finnish travel writing (Varpio, 1997, 55–58, 232.). The well-known Finnish suffragette Adelaïde Ehrnrooth (1826–1905) had her travel book regarding experiences in Algeria published in 1886; it was based on her travels in 1876–1877 and 1884 and was compiled from articles first published in the Swedish-language Finnish daily *Nya Pressen* (Melasuo, 2008, 241–243). The social anthropologist Edward Westermarck (1862–1939) spent eight years in Morocco after 1898. Ilmari Krohn took some interest in Arab music (see e.g., Krohn, 1915), but the first Finnish music professional to have actually visited Algeria could be the concert pianist Selma Kajanus (1860–1935), sister of the famous conductor and composer Robert Kajanus. In a press article, she portrayed, with Eurocentric prejudice, the dances she and her companion Lilly Londen had witnessed in Biskra in 1914 (Selma Kajanus, 1916, 76). As for Launis, his views on what he called the “Arabo-Moorish” and the popular music traditions of the region are very positive.

When considering Armas Launis's encounters in North Africa, it must be underlined that he was quite experienced in fieldwork among rural populations when he settled there. Indeed, in 1904, 1905 and 1922, Launis crossed the Northern borders between Finland, Sweden and

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<sup>4</sup> Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra School 1901–1906; University of Helsinki 1901–1906 (Ilmari Krohn); Berlin Stern Conservatory 1906–1907 (Wilhelm Klatte); Weimar Orchestral and Musicians' School 1908–1909 (Waldemar Baussner). In his personal record sheet from 1928, Launis lists his journeys for the University of Helsinki: “Study trips: to Berlin 1907–08, Weimar 1909, Paris 1911, Berlin, Munich and Rome 1912, Moscow and Saint Petersburg 1916, Germany and Italy 1920 and 1923–24, France 1925–26. Musicological studies: Berlin 1908, Copenhagen 1909, Estonia 1909, Saint Petersburg 1910, Paris 1914.” (Armas Launis Ansioluettelo [Record] HY KA 21.5.1928.)

<sup>5</sup> Launis had the highest grade *laudatur* in research on Finnish and comparative folk poetry and in History and Theory of music, and besides, *approbatur* grades in Greek and Roman literature, Aesthetics and modern literature, and Mathematics. In 1919, he gained the *cum laude* grade in Pedagogy (Järvinen [2010]).

<sup>6</sup> Heikki Laitinen (Laitinen, 2014, 99) has specified the moment in time replacing many false claims on the matter. Launis's dissertation (Launis, 1910) was first published as a special edition in December 1910. Its public defence took place on 12 January 1911. The final official publication was released in 1913 (Launis, 1913).

<sup>7</sup> Ilmari Krohn was Docent in History and Theory of music in the Imperial Alexander University in 1900–1918 and Extraordinary Professor in the University of Helsinki in 1918–1935.



Norway, and stayed with the *Saami*, stays which resulted in several articles and his groundbreaking edited collection *Lappische Juoigos-Melodien* (Launis, 1908) with a remarkable 64-page introductory text. He deciphered the social signification of these tunes, as they were typically dedicated to specific persons, things, animals, or events, and valued their rhythmic structure (later, their metre) to the extent of taking it, extraordinarily, for the basis of his classification of them (Laitinen, 2014, 82, 89; Jouste, 2014, 32). On the Russian side of the Finnish border he worked among Ingrians in 1903 and 1906, gathering materials for his dissertation.<sup>8</sup> This work suggested a classification of Estonian-Finnish *runo* tunes according to spread, style and age. During the dissertation project he started to consider the simple, indeterminate, gradually evolving tunes as the oldest type (Kallio, 2014, 5).

Launis's excursions were considered of national interest and were financed by Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura (Society for Finnish Literature), Imperial Alexander University, and university Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Linguistics Otto Donner; for the 1906 and 1922 excursions, he was allowed to take along the phonogram of the Finnish Literature Society (Kallio, 2014, 9, 10; Jouste, 2014, 30, 32, 37; Laitinen, 2014, 95).<sup>9</sup> In 1918, Launis was appointed *Docent* of music analysis and research on folk music at the University of Helsinki, but he gave up this position only four years later. He made a short trip to Tunisia in 1924 and spent the next two winters in Algiers, from where he made journeys to various Algerian regions and to Morocco (Taival jonka vaelsin, Launis, KK Coll. 123.20).

Launis came to realise that gathering information was far more difficult for him in the Maghreb countries than it had been in Finland and its neighbouring regions. But a curiosity about the presence of the distant past in the present marked his quest for knowledge regarding the music of the region just as his interest in the past of the musical phenomena had marked his work on the North European traditions. My attention to influences of earlier thought and practical experiences on Launis's ideas on North African music requires a consideration of the epistemological background of his accounts and at the same time of their relevance as a source of scientific knowledge. Along the way, this essay might also help recover cultural phenomena that existed in the Maghreb area but might since then have changed or even disappeared.

Jules Rouanet was a major influence among music scholars who were supported by the French state (Pasler, 2012, 21–26, 56–57). It would certainly be strange had Armas Launis not learned to know his reputation. Launis's position in the Maghreb, on the other hand, allowed him to enjoy a more individual relation with the indigenous people than what the French colleague and many other Frenchmen had. When interacting with the very same indigenous Maghrebi persons who had been Rouanet's informants, the encounters were not defined by the relation of colonizer and colonized—which may have been helped by Launis's long experience with field work. But as a learned European in the Maghreb, he was a more solitary actor than his well-known French colleagues. His institutional relations were remote, and he seems not to have been well aware of the French discursive practices either politically or scientifically. While Rouanet was a prominent player and national figure in France, Launis on his side transmitted

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<sup>8</sup> Ingria is a historical area in the North-West of Russia. It is today part of the city of Saint Petersburg and the district of Leningrad. It used to host a population of Baltic-Finnish peoples and, when under Swedish rule (1607–1721), received many Finns who are today called Ingrians. Today, only a small number of them remain in the area.

<sup>9</sup> Launis's phonogram recordings are conserved in the archive of the Finnish Literature Society (Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura), Helsinki. Laitinen, 2014, 95, has concluded that the Society bought, in 1905, a phonogram upon Launis's suggestion.

his observations in the Finnish language to the Finnish public to whom nearly all information regarding Maghreb music was new, as it was for him.

### **Differing views on the past of music**

Launis's interest in the past of the musical phenomena was nourished both by the Finnish scientific practice and the international musicological cooperation in which he took part. At the 1906 congress of the International Music Society (Internationale Musikgesellschaft, IMG), in Basel, Launis's teacher Ilmari Krohn gave several lectures. One of his topics was 'Über das lexikalische Ordnen von Volksmelodien' (On the lexical organisation of folk melodies). In that paper, he referred extensively to the master's thesis of his gifted 22-year-old pupil Armas Launis who was not present, and more particularly to its solutions for organising Lappish (*Saami*) and Ingrian folk tunes. The organisation of folk tunes, indeed, was a central target of the early comparative branch of musicology. Erich von Hornbostel, a pioneer of the orientation, heard Krohn's presentation and asked him whether a comparison of the tunes helped to make conclusions about their evolution. Krohn answered that since the Finnish tunes had, for the great part, only been collected after 1880, it was not possible to make any genetic conclusions about them. The Finnish scholar Heikki Laitinen has asked whether that exchange of ideas, which no doubt was brought to Launis's knowledge, motivated Launis to include conclusions on an evolution covering hundreds or even two thousand years in the melody analysis of his doctoral dissertation on Estonian-Finnish *runo* tunes (Laitinen, 2014, 78, 79).

Krohn's and Hornbostel's views on the aims of comparative musicology soon diverged. Hornbostel wanted its scope to be worldwide, with a focus on the origins and evolution of music and the essence of musical beauty. In the 1909 IMG congress in Vienna, Hornbostel and Krohn co-chaired a session entitled 'Exotische Musik und Folklore' (Exotic music and folklore) in which Launis gave a paper of his own entitled 'Die Pentatonik in den Melodien der Lappen' (Pentatonicism in the tunes of the Lapps) (Laitinen, 2014, 79).

Regarding these early contacts, it is likely that Launis was aware of Hornbostel's work in Tunisia. Launis's interest in the past also had many incidental angles; not all concerned tunes and their comparison, as will be shown below. Remarkably, already in the reports of his youthful collection journeys to Lapland and Ingria, drawing from conversations with local people, Launis included multifaceted information on folkways and various topics related to music (e.g., Kallio, 2014, 12; Jousté, 2014, 31; Laitinen, 2014, 94). This even included mysterious mythological accounts, such as a *koltta Saami* belief according to which some of their ancient tunes originated from remote times 'when light was made' (Launis, 1922, 32; Jousté, 2014, 39). Such observation was far from being common at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Launis's insight proved useful for scholars working on the same repertoires a century later (see e.g., Kallio, 2014, 11; Jousté, 2014, 33).

Launis's early reports also indicate that, as often happened with collectors of folk heritage, he sometimes met with mistrust among rural populations, at least at the beginning of an encounter. On his arrival in Ingria, he was obviously aware of the circumstance that the collectors' interest in pre-Christian repertoires could make them appear as "pagans" and "anti-Christ," and thus unwelcome, in the eyes of the locals. Therefore, in Ingria, Launis was clever enough to associate with clergymen, to sing together with the people and to help them in their work. He normally gained the confidence of his informants easily and even when he did not speak their language (Kallio, 2014, 9, 11). Such was not always the case in the Maghreb.

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## In the Land of the Moors

Launis's travel book on his experiences in the Maghreb area contains many allusions to the presence of the past in the present. One could maintain that "In the Land of the Moors" should be discussed in the context of travel narratives rather than in the context of the history of musicology; accounts on music occupy a relatively small place in it. The book has been compiled, at least in part, of separate press articles written for a general readership. Unlike Béla Bartók's article based on his visit to the Algerian Biskra region (Bartók, 1920), the information, in Launis's travel book, about the geographical location of his musical experiences are often as good as non-existent. That state of affairs, it should be added, in no way implies a doubt regarding the experiential background of the travel book's accounts on popular traditions.

While his view of the North African society is often Eurocentric, probably following the image of his Finnish readers to some extent, he does not measure the value of the rural music of the area using European styles as his yardstick. One of the most extensive accounts in Launis's travel book concerns the music at a wedding that took place "in an oasis of the Sahara" – Launis leaves the specific location unspecified. His guide, Rabah ben Omar, took him to the wedding of his cousin, a young cultivator of dates who was marrying the daughter of a date wholesaler. Launis was impressed, among other things, by a musical parlour game demanding "a great instrumental intelligence." The game started with his guide Rabah leaving the room. Those who remained negotiated and designated a task Rabah would have to perform. The task was to use one candle to light another hidden candle that he would in turn have to place in an inset in the wall. Rabah, on his return, was given no instructions except for two motifs executed on the *kuitra*: one affirmative, the other one prohibitive. The playing contained changes of volume and tempi, as well as hesitations and sudden turns. (Launis, 1927, 164–165.) Launis writes:

The Arabs, as far as can be judged by this group gathered in the wedding party, proved to be an instrumentally gifted people. Their ancient music too, which until now has been very little noted on the music paper, stands up to a comparison with similar Western music. (Launis, 1927, 166.)

Following a happy coincidence, Launis comes to observe the rituals of fire eaters in his own words "deep in Sahara", but he does not indicate the actual place. These are likely to have been *sufi* rituals of the *Issawa* brotherhood. The historical origin of the 'Issawa movement dates back to the Moroccan city of Meknes five centuries ago, but it had spread out to Algeria. These rituals were also practiced in the Bou Saâda oasis, a popular recreation center two hundred and fifty kilometres south of Algiers.<sup>10</sup> Launis relates how, during a popular festival, surrounded by a crowd of people and accompanied by two drums beaten by hand and a delicate-sounding pipe, one "sorcerer" after another jumps, makes strange gestures and finally, collapses. Launis, owing to his work in Lapland, is familiar with similar states of trance. Here, an old sorcerer, a saint, beats himself with a burning branch, the musicians stand up, the drummers beat their instruments with all their might, and the flute attains its highest volume. A dancing female witch draws near the players and pushes her ear against the instruments. The

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<sup>10</sup> I am grateful to Youssef Touaïbia and to Mohammed Khaled for this information. Jules Rouanet writes: "On connaît, au moins du nom, les *Aïssaouas*, adeptes d'une confrérie musulmane répandue dans tout le Maghreb, dont les pratiques religieuses ont souvent été présentées, dans les expositions, par d'habiles prestidigitateurs." (Cf. Rouanet, 1922, 2830–2831.)

sorcerer and the witch swallow burning wads of yarn and glowing charcoal (Launis, 1927, 139–144).

Launis explains that the Islamic faith has absorbed traits from earlier religions. He believes he has witnessed remnants dating from times of the great power of Carthage, or from even more remote Phoenician times and worship of Moloch, the god of fire. Similarly, he writes, the Catholic church has accepted, partly out of necessity, pagan ceremonies of the ancient Romans or has, at least, tolerated them. He exclaims: “[In comparison to the lifeless objects in the museums of the great cities,] is it not much more wonderful to see the living action of antiquity, petrified and immutable in its isolation: to see with our eyes and hear with our ears samples from the lives of peoples of historical interest to us who lived thousands of years ago.” (Launis, 1927, 139, 144.)

In Morocco, Launis observed the events of the Marrakech Jamaa el-Fnaa, the square of the storytellers. There, he felt as if he were contemporaneous to “Homeric times” or to “the pharaohs of Egypt.” What was new to him in particular was the dance of ten young *chleuch* Berber boys, all of feminine beauty; their faces were partly covered by fringes. Accompanied by a drum, a flute, and, as Launis puts it, a kind of “negro violin,” they danced serenely with two middle-aged men; the serene dance was punctuated by vivid and even wild climaxes accompanied by drumming. The leading senior dancer, who also played the violin, proceeded along a curve-like pattern, occasionally throwing his red bow in the air and skilfully catching it again. The boys wore white robes. Red ribbons were wrapped around their heads and supported their small handbags. They hopped in place, advanced and backed off in two or three rows and turned serenely. Little silvery plates clanged in their hands, Launis said; in reality, they were probably made of brass.<sup>11</sup> One boy at a time came hopping before a spectator so as to collect a fee for the performance. Launis heard a French tourist mockingly call the boys the wives of the older men. (Launis, 1927, 328–329.)<sup>12</sup>

Launis found that the distinguished, stylised forms of the dance as well as the streamlined robes suggested a temple in some civilised country, maybe ancient Egypt. They brought to his mind petroglyphs in the Nile valley. Or else, the dance could stem from the times of Roman rule. It is true, he added, that the southern tribes never entered into peaceful contacts with the Romans. (Launis, 1927, 329.)

Launis gets an opportunity to familiarise himself with many kinds of popular music making. In a Tunisian Qur’an school, the boys perform for him “a religious tune” at his request, a tune that is hardly more songlike than Qur’an reading but despite its melodic simplicity is nevertheless memorable (Launis, 1927, 14). The work of a snake charmer in a nearby café is accompanied by a hollow drumbeat; the beggars play so as to gain a living; “a negro” plays a kind of a violin; the café orchestra gives a performance (Launis, 1927, 25–31). In Algiers, it is apparently a blind beggar who sings his sorrowful song with the accompaniment of a delicate flute (Launis, 1927, 47), and accompanied by the nagharat drum the “ghaita blower drops – his wild tunes” (Launis, 1927, 71). When observing an Arab funeral (without indicating its location), Launis hears singing in which two alternating groups participate and which he finds

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<sup>11</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Jean Lambert for this remark.

<sup>12</sup> Abdelkader Mana, Moroccan sociologist and ethnograph, writes to me (email from 5 January 2016): “C’est que dans toutes les formes du pré-théâtre marocain, ce sont les hommes qui « jouent » les rôles de femmes, dans une société traditionnelle où les femmes étaient bannies de l’espace public.” I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Mana for this information.



the most impressive funeral song he has ever heard. The listener marvels at the song's precision, the solemn monophonic quality and the sonorous voices. In his mind, "the artistic means are too profound and at the same time too artificially imaginative to come from the people." The attitude and the spirit make Egyptian tomb images come to his mind (Launis, 1927, 295–296). The listener is sure of one thing:

The origin of those songs and festivities dates further back in time from the times of the prophet of the wilderness. Just as little as the learning that he had put together from various religions he knew was new, its religious songs and rituals were not new either. (Launis, 1927, 286)

The melancholy idea of a supposed decadence that the Oriental music has suffered with time does not appear in these portrayals of rural music. This marks a difference from Launis's tone in the 1928 trial lecture regarding his portrayal of the Arabo-Moorish music, as will be shown.

### **On the lookout for trust and the qanun, 'the Arab kantele'**

Let us stop for a while at Launis's portrayals of his encounters with the practitioners of Andalusí music. While the examples above contain no indication of any interviews carried out by Launis with the indigenous population of the Maghreb area, other accounts in his travel book contain many such things. An interview with Edmon Nathan Yafil (1877–1928) concerning the historical Algerian masters of Arab music Menemesh and Sfindja, published separately in this volume, is of extraordinary value (Launis, 1927, 77–83). It is very probable that another interview in the travel book concerning the musicians' fees was also made with Yafil. Namely, Launis relates in his autobiographical sketch that getting acquainted in Algiers with Yafil, "that time's best connoisseur of Oriental music" and the director of the Arab department of Algiers' conservatory, gave him an opportunity to penetrate "the mysterious labyrinths of the Oriental music" with which he was "already provisionally acquainted." That familiarization happened through mutual intercourse with Yafil and through hearing his "instrumental and vocal Arab concerts". The famous tenor mentioned in this interview would be Mahieddine Bachetarzi (1897–1986) whom Launis also mentions in his autobiographical sketch; he would remain in contact with this "Caruso of the desert," as he was widely called, for years to come. (Launis, KK Coll. 123.20 p. 18.)<sup>13</sup>

"An old acquaintance of mine, and old Moorish musician, told [me] about a couple of incidents that can give a hint of how high an Arab player values his art in money and how high his income can be.

It happened that the old musician himself was once invited to organize wedding music on the premises of an immensely rich Arab, the event taking place in a different city from where he [the musician] lived. It was agreed that he would bring along a certain well-known tenor and a couple of other musicians. The conditions were: travel reimbursement, two thousand francs, and the right to put a plate before the wedding-guests for collecting money. The most profitable requirement among these was, of course, the last mentioned. That is, none of the guests is allowed to put a smaller sum on the plate than what the mistress of the house gives to start with. Her investment

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<sup>13</sup> Nadya Bouzar-Kasbadji writes: "S'il est une figure qui domine la vie artistique du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle en Algérie, c'est bien celle de Mahieddine Bachetarzi, dont la destinée est édifiante." (Bouzar-Kasbadji, 1988, 27).

crucially determines the musicians' earnings. When these [musicians], having counted beforehand the number of guests, see the basic sum that was put on the plate, they already know the size of their share. In the occasion mentioned here, the starting point was fifty francs. The tour thus generated something like eight thousand [francs]. The musicians had been welcomed with much contentment. The conditions remaining the same, they were asked to repeat their performance the morning thereafter. The same outcome again. Thus their earnings equaled those of a European celebrity's concert fee. Is it a wonder then that an Arab musician holds his skills veiled." (Launis, 1927, 301–302)

A letter from Mahieddine to Launis dated 24 Octobre 1933 in Algiers testifies for these old relations. In this letter, the tenor transmits to Launis the greetings of Yafil's widow.<sup>14</sup>

It was an obvious handicap for Launis that he only had an elementary knowledge of Arabic, but on the other hand, he did become fluent in French. Guides or occasional aides helped him with interpretation when needed. He managed to have sustained dialogues with the locals even in this way. (Cf. Launis, 1927, *e.g.*, 83, 85–94, 163, 240, 304.)

Observing the practices of music groups in the North African cafés was normally unproblematic for Launis, but sometimes his investigations were disrupted. This is true in particular concerning his efforts to hear the *qanun*. In fact, his eagerness was further nourished by the idea that he heard according to which the *qanun* was about to disappear in favour of more modern instruments.<sup>15</sup> Launis knew by reputation an elderly Algerian singer who was a skilled *qanun* player, but she was constantly on tour and Launis never got around to hearing and interviewing her (Launis, 1927, 300). I shall say a few more words about this illustrious musician later.

To hear the *qanun*, Launis writes, he needed to travel back and forth between three cities where the old Moorish music had reputedly remained unchanged, but the names of which he neglects to mention. In two of the cities, he learned about a local orchestra that included a *qanun*, but the orchestras were on tour or, mysteriously, did not show up in their performance venues during Launis's visit. He asked for advice and made appointments orally and by telegram, but meetings were strangely cancelled and the informants disappeared without leaving a trace. In the third city, he met amateur musicians one of whom was said to have a *qanun* at his home. But Launis's interest evoked mistrust. The man said: "You seem to like the *qanun*, you want to learn to play it." That, obviously, was not Launis's intention. He still did not get to see the instrument. Having learned that for reasons of income and professional jealousy, the players of the Arab repertoire tended to hide their skills from others, he concluded that he was being perceived as a rival (Launis, 1927, 299–301).

Following the advice he received, after many failures, Launis finally met an old Jewish cobbler who played the *qanun*. He invited Launis to his home and played a lively, rhythmical

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<sup>14</sup> National library of Finland, Armas Launis's archive, received letters (Coll.123.2), El Moutribia to Armas Launis. Three letters from Mahieddine remain in Armas Launis's archive in the National library of Finland. The other two letters are dated 13 August 1935 in Paris and 20 May 1936 in Fez.

<sup>15</sup> Christian Poché writes: "Quant à la cithare sur table (*qânûn*), le *canon* medieval, bien qu'un modèle différent figure déjà dans les enluminures des *Cantigas*, elle semble avoir été une spécificité algérienne et plus particulièrement celle de la ville de Tlemcen. On ne possède pas de traces antérieures du *qânûn*, tombé en désuétude ailleurs, bien qu'il ait été décrit avec attention au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle par Ibn Khaldûn dans ses *Prolégomènes*" (Poché, 1995, 115).

piece for him. As we learn from Launis's travel book, that experience – the musician's way of handling his instrument, its sound, and the piece he played – reminded the Finn of an earlier one: this is how the famous Finnish *kantele* player Jehkin Iivana had played for him some twenty years ago in the Suistamo region, now part of Russia. Interestingly, Launis here called the *qanun* 'the Arab *kantele*', thus referring to an ancient Finnish instrument used to accompany archaic *runo* songs (Launis, 1927, 304).

His remarks permit us to conclude that he was, at least to some extent, inspired by a wish to know about the evolution and transformation of musical instruments in time and place, and maybe even by Hornbostel's and Curt Sachs's 1914 classification of musical instruments (Hornbostel & Sachs, 1914). It seems strange that, in his travel book, Launis mentioned vast numbers of names of places he had visited but omitted extraordinarily interesting musical experiences from his map. This is how he concludes his account of the *qanun* player he heard: "I note the man's address for another eventual future purpose and I leave" (Launis, 1927, 304). But he may have deliberately hidden the precise facts from his colleagues and rivals, intending to publish them later in a scientific form. We only learn from a later piece of writing by Launis that the place where he heard the *qanun* was the Algerian city of Tlemcen, according to Christian Poché a stronghold of this instrument (Poché, 1995, 115). In his interview from 1933 with the famous Algerian musician and theatrical figure Mahieddine Bachetarzi, the successor of Edmond Nathan Yafil as head of the Arabic department of the Algiers Conservatoire, Launis wrote in the Finnish journal *Suomen Kuvalehti*:

The Algiers Conservatoire also provides tuition in *kantele* playing, for this instrument is also part of the Oriental orchestra and indeed, a very important part of it. However, not even one *kantele* student exists at present. This instrument, once so prominent, is about to disappear from Northern Africa altogether. According to the estimate of Mahieddine, there is at present maybe only ten or so *kantele* players in the area consisting of Tunis[ia], Algeria and Morocco. The lady who was Algiers' most prominent master of this instrument died a couple of months ago. The Tlemcen *kantele* player, whose virtuosity I had myself the opportunity of getting acquainted with – and besides, the playing of whom resembled surprisingly that of Iivana of Jehki which I had heard in Suistamo earlier – has too passed away recently from among the living. (Launis, 1933, 1239)

In 1933, Launis was no longer active as a musicologist and would not have worried about rival scholars.

When the Arab musicians shunned his curiosity about the *qanun*, we might ask, unlike Launis himself, if part of their problem was not his being a European. Finland was not a colonising country and had only recently gained its national independence after having been part of the Russian Empire since 1809, and before that, of the kingdom of Sweden. But European he was, while on the other hand, son of a Finnish carpenter, his social position, appearance and manners were probably different from those of the wealthy French-British nobleman Rodolphe d'Erlanger, the influential patron of research on Arab music who was based in Sidi Bou Saïd, Tunisia. Or else, maybe the explanation is the Arab musicians' pride in their skills acquired during a long apprenticeship under the guidance of a master musician. But it is striking that it was an Algerian Jew, thus a French citizen, and not a Muslim Algerian, thus a subject of France, who helped him.

Launis relates in the 1933 interview that being asked whether the majority of his sixty or so students, one third of whom were Jews, were female or male, Mahieddine was close to indignation. "Of course, all of them are men," he answered. "Whatever for would I take women

to my school who have dragged in the street for ten years or so.” Launis explains that in an Islamic country, a decent woman is not supposed to practice singing or to play an instrument. Therefore, when eventually entering the honorable passage of a performing singer, she would at first have gained her skills during a less honorable phase of life and then left that phase behind her (Launis, 1933, 1239).

### **The trial lecture**

It is when looking at Launis's more academic endeavour following his Maghreb stay that Rouanet's influence on him becomes obvious. The post of music teacher at the University of Helsinki, occupied since 1897 by composer and conductor Robert Kajanus (1856–1933), was vacated in 1926. In February 1928, as one among four aspirants for the post, Armas Launis submitted his application to the university. The topic of his trial lecture, 'Traits of the Arabo-Moorish music', was highly unusual for the contemporary Finnish context. The committee consisted of Kajanus and Ilmari Krohn. The trailblazer of Romantic nationalism of Finnish music since the 1870s, 72-year-old Kajanus assessed Launis severely, assigning him the modest third rank. As for Launis's "exploration" to Northern Africa, he saw no relevance in it regarding the evolution of the art of music: it should be considered "an ethnographic music curiosity." Kajanus also depreciated Launis's operatic work. He assigned the first rank to Leevi Madetoja and the second to Selim Palmgren, both of them notable Finnish composers. Thus Kajanus's conceptualization of the music teacher's post was artistic, national, and romantic. Ilmari Krohn, on the other hand, 'Extraordinary Professor' of Musicology at the University of Helsinki, mentioned the topic of Launis's trial lecture appreciatively: "The lecture of Dr Launis, 'Traits of the Arabo-Moorish music' was very interesting where its topic is concerned, all the more so since it was based on personal observations of the lecturer on the spot." (HY KA 21 May 1928; Tyrväinen, 2014, 162–164.)

It must be asked to what extent Launis's trial lecture was indeed based on personal observation. It is possible to get a relatively reliable idea of his lecture based on preserved papers, but it is impossible to know precisely how Launis presented his topic orally in April 1928. Manuscripts and fragments bearing the title "Traits of the Arabo-Moorish music" which obviously belong to the trial lecture, are conserved in the Armas Launis collection of the National Library of Finland. Typed, incomplete versions of the lecture are also included. (Launis, KK Coll. 123.18.) Their contents differ very little.

In these texts, Launis only evokes one informant, "an Algerian acquaintance", "an old Algerian musician" whose name is not mentioned, but in this case too, Launis is apparently referring to Yafil, then 54 years of age. More generally, he neglects to specify the material that serves his presentation. Let us stop at this question for a while.

Launis opens his trial lecture by stating that "Arab music, and also Arabo-Moorish music has been relatively little studied." As reasons for the paucity of research, he cites that "until recently", Arab music has not existed in notated form. He attributes that scarcity of written Arab music to the socio-economic situation of its practitioners. Similarly to his travel book, he even introduces the esteem and the material success that eminent musicians have enjoyed "among Arabs" for long. It was economically advantageous for the musicians not to transmit their skills and their repertoire. The same conception is to be found in Rouanet's encyclopedia article "La musique arabe dans le Maghreb." (Launis, KK Coll. 123.18; Rouanet, 1922, 2912–2913)

The lecturer goes through the three periods of the early history of Arab music: the first period, from year 600 to year 900, was marked by Persian influences and by the rise of a new centre of

Arab music in Cordova, Spain, next to the Oriental capital Baghdad; the second period (900–1200) was marked by the fall of Baghdad, the isolation of Persian music, the continuing heyday and the scientific inquest on music theory in Spain; the third period (from 1200 to 1500) saw the rise of Arab music “to a high flowering in Spain in particular”, a vivid interest in music theory, the downfall of Granada in 1492 followed by the withdrawal of Arab music from Europe and “the beautiful late bloom” of that music “during several centuries” in the centres of rule of Western North Africa. Launis introduces the new centres of the Arabo-Moorish music culture in the Maghreb area: Fez, Tlemcen, Alger, Bougie, Constantine and Tunis – the same as Rouanet in his article (Launis, KK Coll. 123.18; Rouanet, 1922, 2844).

Launis states that the evolution of that music came to a halt as if petrified in its isolated position, immune to any renewal; correspondingly, Rouanet emphasizes that it was rooted in the past and excluded any bold regeneration (Launis, KK Coll. 123.18; Rouanet, 1922, 2842, 2914–2915, 2937). To be sure, that music had remained alive – Rouanet highlights its lasting social significance –, but it was sentenced to death under the pressure of Western civilization (Launis, KK Coll. 123.18; cf. Rouanet, 1922, 2814, 2911–2912). Such a development appeared in a particular manner in the domain of the tonal system: originally, it would have encompassed 24 “keys” (i.e., modes), of which only about ten remained; these “keys” had merged in part and lost some of their original character (Launis, KK Coll. 123.18; cf. Rouanet, 1922, 2911, 2915). Launis remarks that that change had occurred a long time ago. Both scholars quote an Arab theoretician who had lived centuries before: “There are keys that we know and others that we do not know. Among the last named is the isphahan key, the most beautiful of all. It is so beautiful that it is only known by Allah” (Launis, KK Coll. 123.18; cf. Rouanet, 1922, 2919). The tonal system of the Arabo-Moorish music, according to Launis, had been borrowed from the Western countries; Rouanet relates its modes, in particular, with the Greek modes (Launis, KK Coll. 123.18; cf. e.g., Rouanet, 1922, 2916–2919, 2939). Launis writes about the *nouba*, the most distinguished genre of the musical tradition in question:

According to an ancient lore, the Moorish music of Granada and Seville comprised 24 *noubas* which corresponded with the 24 keys of the Moorish music of the time. However, having merely abided in the musician’s memory, only one part of them has survived to our day. Even these have not been preserved in their entirety, a movement is missing from most of them. But so many excerpts of the various *noubas* remain known that it is possible with no difficulty to get a complete idea of the ancient Moorish *nouba* in its entirety. (Launis, KK Coll. 123.18)

Rouanet announces the same: “– The old music of the Maghreb comprised 24 modes or scales: each of the 24 classical *noubas* of the Andalusian music was constituted on one of them” (Rouanet, 1922, 2915).<sup>16</sup> Launis presents the composition of the various orchestras as well as the structures of the *nouba grenadine* and the *nouba neqlabat* very similarly to Rouanet (1922, 2845–2861, 2861–2865). Like the Frenchman (1922, 2868–2873), he states that the *qadria çenaa* and *qadria zendani* are music destined for female Muslim performers and listeners while the great classical *noubas* were the men’s domain. He tells his compatriots who had given the

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<sup>16</sup> Rouanet writes in French: “Ainsi qu’on l’a vu précédemment, la musique ancienne du Maghreb possédait 24 modes ou échelles tonales : chacune des vingt-quatre *noubes* classiques de la musique andalouse était construite sur l’une de ces vingt-quatre échelles.”



voting right to the Finnish women already in 1906: “Confined to living inside the narrow domestic walls, the Arab female community is mentally less developed [than men].”<sup>17</sup>

Launis’s observations are close to those of Rouanet regarding both general and specific matters. Both know that Arab music is monophonic or proceeds in octaves and sometimes makes use of pedal points (*cf.* Rouanet, 1922, 2914), its basic melodic structure is simple but becomes richly ornamented by virtuoso musicians (*cf.* Rouanet, 1922, 2894) and – just like Western music – is governed by “a rhythmic and melodic tone motif” (*cf.* Rouanet, 1922, 2895–2896). An oriental musician aspires to movement; it is as if he were afraid of a sustained tone “or of the slightest pause in the middle of his playing”; according to Rouanet, the music of the Maghreb is marked by a ‘horror vacui’ and the fear of silence (in Rouanet in French, ‘horreur du vide’, *cf.* Rouanet, 1922, 2910), and the rhythm plays a central role in it (*cf.* Rouanet, 1922, 2939). “It once happened that the leader of a Moorish orchestra interrupted a musical performance and left the scene in furore for the reason that the player of the *tar* had absent-mindedly spoiled the performance by adding one, just one excessive stroke”, Launis writes. Rouanet tells the same story and mentions the witness of the incident: himself (Rouanet, 1922, 2910–2911).

It will not be necessary to read Launis’s trial lecture and Rouanet’s encyclopedia article side by side any further in order to be convinced of the similarities. It is quite obvious that Launis prepared his trial lecture by reading Rouanet’s article. This is revealed clearly by a marking in his concept concerning the embellishment of the simple basic motifs of instrumental Arabo-Moorish music: “example tune 2895.” Indeed, Launis’s concept in fact includes a partial notation of a tune published on the very page 2895 of Rouanet’s article. Thus it must be concluded, Ilmari Krohn’s assumption notwithstanding, that Launis’s trial lecture was not based to any essential degree “on personal observations of the lecturer on the spot.”

To conclude on the trial lecture, let us notice that next to data evidently borrowed from Rouanet, the lecture contains information that does not derive from the Frenchman. The points where Launis diverges from Rouanet are interesting and instructive in another sense. He introduces the detail, probably coming from Yafil, that Menemesh charged 300 to 500 gold francs for one day’s performance, but received in addition to that the same amount as tips from his enchanted listeners. What is more, the lecturer notes that the tonal system of Arab music has been borrowed from Western countries, but he does not follow Rouanet in bringing the Oriental *maqams* back to the Greek modes. When introducing the tonal system of Arab music, Launis does not use the notions *mode* or *ecclesiastical mode* or *church mode* at all. That choice could have been motivated, at least in part, by the different and contradictory interpretations of Greek and ecclesiastical modes in contemporary Finland; maybe Launis lacked courage to enter into a debate on this matter (*cf.* Tyrväinen, 2014, 17). On the other hand, he now seems to bring forth information on the Arabo-Moorish music he himself had obtained. In a hand-written hence apparently early version, he describes the scalar structures in question, relating them to the European minor and major. In the typed version, which obviously dates from a later moment, he does not refer to the formal aspect of the scales.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> This, obviously, is a generalization. In his travel book, Launis mentions that Kabyle wives are more independent than other Algerian women (Launis, 1927, 147, 163).

<sup>18</sup> There is a major exception, however. The typed version of the lecture is not quite consistent conceptually. Thus Launis writes: “For an example of such a transubstantiation of a key’s character, let us mention the sika key. As its original form, the old musicians recall the scale b–c–d–e–f–g–a–b. It has transformed no less than twice since.

Instead, Launis relates that the third key, 'er-remel' (sand), depicts the motion of sand in the desert. The fourth one echoes the crowing of a cock. The sorrowful seventh key suits a funeral, while the eighth one, according to him, imitates the braying of a donkey. An objection to Launis might be voiced here; after all, according to a verse in the Qur'an, there is no worse sound than the donkey's bray. But instead of the French word *âne* (donkey), could Launis's informant have mentioned the word *mulet*, which Launis in turn would have mistaken for the well-known odd-toed ungulate mammal animal? However, the word *mulet* does not only designate a mule, but also a bird famed for its beautiful song. Thus maybe Launis was told that the eighth key imitated, not the bray of a donkey, but a beautiful birdsong. The twelfth key, he says, is gentle, and the thirteenth would imitate the sound of a camel. But a more appropriate interpretation seems to be valid for this case too: rather than the sound of a camel, the thirteenth key would imitate the camel drivers' (*hida*) song; Launis's original piece of information would have applied to the folk and archaic sphere of the Arabo-Moorish life.<sup>19</sup> It is quite plausible that musicians or music listeners spoke in this way during Launis's interviews. Apart from these observations, Launis could in fact have written his trial lecture without ever setting his foot on North African ground.

There is no reason to take Launis's interest in the symbolic aspect of the Arabo-Moorish music, as expressed above, for superficiality or for a lack of professionalism. Some time earlier, a similar reasoning based on the emerging ethnomusical methods had led him to decipher the symbolic implications of the *Saami joik* tunes (see Launis, 1908, V–IX).<sup>20</sup> Maya Saïdani has, as for her, published interesting information about symbolic content that, according to folklore and fantastic accounts, goes together with the different modes (Saïdani, 2005, 209–211).

It is crucial to notice that the university post occupied in 1928 was not an academic scholar-teacher's position. Launis hardly saw himself as running for such a post. This might explain the surprising fact that he scarcely showcased his own research in his trial lecture. Be that as it may, his trial lecture is descriptive and stylistically close to his writing for the press. It does not specify any scientific issues to be solved, the methods to be applied, or its source material. After the committee reports were released, Launis cancelled his application (HY KA 21 May 1928). For him, the process brought a final goodbye to the University of Helsinki. In 1930 he settled in France for good.<sup>21</sup>

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At first the tone f was raised by half a step and later, also the tone d. Its original form hardly remains known." This too is straight from Rouanet.

<sup>19</sup> When on 14 June 2011, I had the opportunity to give a paper on Launis's trial lecture in the CNRPAH conference 'La nûba: empreintes passées et perspectives d'avenir' in Tlemcen, Algeria, the audience voiced the remarks in question. It was my colleague Youssef Touaïbia who deciphered the origin of Launis's misunderstandings. As the correct word for sand, he mentions *al ramal*, not er-remel. I remain in gratitude to Mr. Touaïbia for his statement during the debate and for his email of 24 June 2011. Al-ramal is simply a more graphocentric transcription of the Arabic, following modern orthographic convention. Er-remel is not wrong, it is just a bit quaint.

<sup>20</sup> I am grateful to Professor Heikki Laitinen for an oral exchange of ideas on this matter taking place in particular on 9 June 2012.

<sup>21</sup> The fact that the evaluation of the trial lectures then occurred in an academic spirit reveals the vagueness of the criteria set by the university. The concerned documents prove that the committee members' opinions differed as to the relevance of practical and artistic vs. musicological merits for a successful holding of the post. In Kajanus's mind, the artistic merits were decisive; scientific merits should only be taken into account if the artistic merits of two candidates were equal. Krohn thought, as for him, that the appointment should be considered from the viewpoint of musicological tuition: "The merits being more or less equal, priority should be given to the person holding the higher university degree in Musicology." (HY KA 21 May 1928.)

The policies then applied in connection with the employment process defined the new course of University of Helsinki Musicology. While Kajanus as music teacher had concentrated on conducting the Academic orchestra,

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## The professional challenges of a cosmopolitan man of music in the early 20th century

The assignment of composer Leevi Madetoja to the University of Helsinki music teacher's post was not a consequence of the fact that Launis did not indicate Rouanet as the source. The committee members very likely did not know Rouanet's article. Instead, Ilmari Krohn wrote in his report on Launis's trial lecture:

But despite details which were indicative of an astute power of observation, [Dr Launis's] presentation gave ground for severe remarks regarding some factual matters and, in particular, its formal aspect. – – Doctor Launis has enjoyed a leave of absence on his own request during the entire time [of his nomination] as university docent, focusing his work on composing his operas. During that period, he has not lectured in the university at all, his tasks having been limited to holding a couple of examinations during the trip abroad of the permanent office holder. (HY KA 21 May 1928)

Thus I cannot reach any other conclusion than considering it advantageous to the university to propose the applicants in the following order:

- 1) Master of Arts [*maisteri*] Leevi Madetoja,
- 2) Doctor Armas Launis,
- 3) Professor Selim Palmgren.

It is reasonable to ask at this point what the professional motives of Launis's Maghreb stays might have been. In addition, the above information gives reason to ponder the place of Launis's activities with Maghrebi music in his career, and more generally, his contribution to the history of musicology.

Jann Pasler (Pasler, 2012) has pointed out that during its first decades, the Third Republic of France, established in 1870, nurtured the idea that the African element had an innovative impact on French culture and was greeted as welcome for inducing progress (the idea of an assimilation of cultures). However, such an attitude began, by 1900, to give way to an emphasis on racial distinctions (association of cultures). In her article "Musical Hybridity in Flux: Representing Race, Colonial Policy, and Modernity in French North Africa, 1860s–1930s," Pasler brings this change in the French way of thinking about North African music back to the colonial process, of which new meanings and functions were a part. Pasler explains how the new attitude of the French – including French music scholars – pointed to their uncomfortable experience of loss of vitality and even fear of racial degeneration. As the French reflected on the relationship between race, culture and nation, their focus shifted to cultural differences. They also looked for "purely African" music. The French valorisation of local cultures increased, especially the valorisation of the urban classical musical tradition in North Africa brought from the Andalusian courts. At the same time, the French participated in shaping the musical histories of their North African colonies as well as the tastes of their elites (Pasler, 2012, 21–26).

It is striking that Launis's early scholarly thinking during the time when Finland remained the stronghold of his activity does not embody such categories of thought as racial hierarchies based on stereotypes, valuation of 'authenticity', a solemn respect for tradition, and an opposition to innovation, such models of thought which, according to Pasler, are characteristic

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teaching music theory courses and supervising the relevant exercises now became the main task of the music teacher (Lappalainen, 1990, 183).

of French colonialism (Pasler, 2012, 22–25, 50–57, 60). For Launis as a researcher, the culture of his native country consisted of many elements and cultures, even of different ethnicities. Research on Finnish folk poetry, held in especially high esteem in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Finland, also highlighted the ancient age of that poetry, thus seeking the unwritten history of Finnishness. Launis had joined that continuum in principle when he wrote his doctoral dissertation on the nationally most pivotal genre of folk music, the *runo* tunes. However, his work does not suggest any commitment of his own to the nationalist ideology, for he did not identify with those currents that sought and most intensely valued the roots of Finnishness. Viewing the simple tunes as ancient and typical did not, in his case, mean that he himself valued them most. In Ingrian *runo* singing, he appreciated the distinct polyphony which he took for an influence of Russian folk or church song. (Kallio, 2014, 14–15.) As a composer, he incorporated motifs of Russian origin in his opera *Kullervo* (1917) about a character from the national epic of Finland, *Kalevala*, and later he included North African inspiration in his operas *Jehudith* (1937–1940) and *Théodora* (uncompleted) (Kallio 2014, 15–23; Tyrväinen, 2014, 72–81). In that perspective, it is striking that in the 1928 trial lecture he adopted an organicist portrayal of the Andalusi music.

Launis's travel book contains several indications of cross-border travel of impulses. He portrays abundantly several monuments of the Roman antiquity and evokes historical incidences of that era, but the links he points at are far from being exclusively Eurocentric. Remember that he distinguished an inspiration from ancient Egypt in the dance of Moroccan Berbers. Other times, the culturally hybrid nature of music is present, as in the surprising remark on the family relation of the *qanun* and the *kantele*, an observation which extends to matters of style and playing technique. On the other hand, in his trial lecture Launis emphasises, like Rouanet, that the Arabo-Moorish tradition is rooted in the past and places itself against innovation. Like Rouanet, he regrets that the omnipresent influence of Western music threatens to bring an end to this tradition and repertoire causing, as he writes, a great harm to the art of music generally.

The idea that the end of the Arabo-Moorish (or Andalusi) music is inevitably approaching marks Launis's presentation just as it penetrates Jules Rouanet's writings. But not only has Western but also North African scholarship portrayed the evolution of the *nouba*, the most valued genre of the Arabo-Moorish-(or Arabo-Andalusian, or Andalusi) music, as a gradual decline. Recently, Jonathan Glasser has brought out in detail that in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the French and the indigenous Algerians participated together in the revivalist project of Andalusi music, albeit basing on partly on different motifs (Glasser, 2016). Christian Poché and others have shown that that musical tradition evolved and transformed for centuries for being in contact with other traditions (Poché, 1995, 35–50; Reynolds, 2008).

It will be difficult in the end to evaluate rigorously Rouanet's influence on Launis's thought. As shown above, Yafil served as Launis's informant, while the Algerian musician was also famously a close collaborator of Rouanet. It is an interesting coincidence that Launis resided in Algeria shortly before Yafil famously accused Rouanet of stealing his knowledge of the musical patrimony (cf. Glasser, 2016, 140–141). Secondly, Yafil too was a revivalist (Glasser, 2016). Thirdly and more generally, the Romantic myth of origin and the idea of civilisations rising and then declining and new ones taking leading positions was part of the thinking of Rouanet's and Launis's era. It was common to regret what was seen as the inescapable death of popular music traditions of various countries. I shall need to leave the specification of the particulars of Rouanet's and Yafil's cooperation to other scholars.

Finally, how should one appraise the objectives and accomplishments in North Africa of Launis, in his youth a passionate professional in analysis, classification and compiling statistics (Laitinen, 2014, 108) and one of the most promising young European musicologists in the beginning of the century? Far from associating with the French colonial project, he communicated his knowledge of the Maghreb in Finnish language to Finns, thus enriching the world-view of his remote compatriots. His genuine appreciation is visible in another manner in that while in Algeria, he encouraged Mahieddine Bachetarzi to take the famous El Moutribia orchestra on a European tour, thereby experiencing much doubt and mistrust on behalf of the musician (Launis, 1933, 1239). El Moutribia made its successful first foreign tour to Paris in 1927 (Glasser, 2016, 140). In his memoirs, Mahieddine relates that a contract entailing six concerts of El Moutribia, to take place in 1934 in the Finnish capital, was signed with an impresario whom Launis introduced to Mahieddine (Bachetarzi, 2009, 172). Regrettably, this Finnish tour seems never to have taken place.

Mahieddine implies that musicological research was the reason why the couple Armas and Aino Launis settled in Algiers. More specifically, he relates in his memoirs that the Finn was motivated by a wish to immerse himself in the Arab music of “all Oriental countries” (*dans tous les pays orientaux*), which Yafil helped him to do where Algeria was concerned (Bachetarzi, 2009, 172). True, Launis had visited Crimea and, in a press article, had portrayed the Dervishes of the area whom he also recalled during his trip to the Sahara (Salmenhaara, 1996, 388; Launis, 1927, 140). However, Bachetarzi’s recollection does not capture the totality of Launis’s motives.

Rather, Launis’s decision to travel to North Africa was the result of several factors; self-evidently, these included economic considerations. In the autumn of 1924, when their plan of a sojourn in Algiers was emerging, the couple Launis dwelled in the French Basque town Saint-Jean-de-Luz near the Spanish border. Armas Launis was totally immersed in his composer’s work. In the previous spring, the couple had made a quick trip to Tunis and Carthage by boat from Sicily. There, they had heard “an Arab orchestra” and “witnessed the strange performance of a snake charmer blowing his pipe.” Thus their interest in North Africa had already arisen when, in the summer of 1924, Armas Launis, working on several compositions, made the acquaintance of the family of Eugène Cannebot, a French civil servant of the Algerian railway administration, who also resided in Saint-Jean-de-Luz. It is the Cannebots who instigated the couple to travel to Algiers; their contacts continued in the white city. (Launis, KK 123.20 p. 17, 18.) In the middle of their travelling arrangements, Launis wrote to Krohn, perhaps a little humorously, that the agreeable winter weather of Algeria served as an attraction (SKS KA Ilmari Krohn, AL: IK 20 August 1925).

At that early stage of Finnish university musicology, a doctorate did not, as a rule, guarantee its holder a secure professional path and a solid income. The professional identities of these pioneers are generally hybrid. (See *e.g.*, Tyrväinen, 2017, 63–67.) It can be concluded that an inquisitive cosmopolitan way of life, rather than any specific professional reason, motivated Launis’s Maghreb stays. Hence, no conscious career strategy can be read into these sojourns or, for that matter, into the trial lecture. After 1910, having given up extensive scientific writing, Armas Launis had concentrated on composing and on establishing people’s conservatories in Finland (Kallio, 2014, 16). In 1915, he published the book *Ooppera ja puhenäytelmä* (Opera and spoken theatre, Launis 1915) the title of which is indicative of his own investment in composing operas. He was awarded the Finnish state’s composer prize in 1915 and 1919. In 1921, he was bestowed a composer’s pension for life by the state, which also enabled him to work abroad. When giving up his position of *docent* on 28 October 1922, Launis had, in the



practical sense, already given up his academic career in favour of composing. (HY KA [curriculum vitae] 21 May 1928.)

The motive for running for the university post in 1928 could well have been that, after residing abroad for a long time, Launis missed his earlier prominent national status, and perhaps more particularly a closer connection with the Finnish Opera which had already staged his operas. As a skilful writer for the press, he could expect the Finnish audiences to read, with curiosity, his paid reports from North Africa in this heyday of travel writing, but it is reasonable to think that he might have appreciated a more regular income. It would be a mistake to see in Launis's trial lecture the expression of an active musicologist's ambitious career strategy. The scientific works of his youth and the ideas of the trial lectures are separated by an abyss, the filling up of which he would not have dreamed of; it would have proved impossible. Owing to financial support from his native country, his high-level university education, an intense field work, and permission to use a phonogram during his excursions of 1906 and in 1922 (Kallio, 2014, 9–10; Jousté, 2014, 37), he had succeeded in his study of North European popular repertoires in distinguishing transformations of tunes and their age relations, but he was not equipped to challenge Rouanet's (and an entire epoch's) thought on the history of the Arabo-Moorish music and the *nouba*.

In 1932, only four years after Launis's trial lecture, a congress on Arab music organised in Cairo on the initiative of Mahmud Ahmad al-Hifni (who had studied in the University of Berlin with the financial support of Ministry of Education of Egypt and had lived in this city for ten years) became a major historical event bringing together European and Arab scholars (see *e.g.*, Racy, 1991). Ali Jihad Racy has brought to light how the different ideals regarding the future of Arab music collided in the Congress. There, European representatives of comparative musicology insisted that musical transformation was something organic, something that was rooted in the character and experience of the different peoples. This relativistic view fused with a vivid interest in “authentic” musical manifestations. Representatives of the local party aspired to the regeneration of music in accordance with the evolutionary models outlined by Western historians. Yet with the Western linear idea of historical evolution, they integrated the assumption that since Arab music had already reached the zenith of its evolution in the Middle Ages, it could rise from decline to a new ascent. Leading music from an unsystematic diversity to a simple uniformity was part of the adopted modernist evolutionary objective. (Racy, 1991, 70, 82–85.)

Launis is not one of those who engaged in the new musicological project inspired by the Cairo Congress. But surely, while anticipating the ethnomusicological methods that would emerge, the separate interviews and observation he practiced with Maghrebi people appear of scientific value from today's perspective. High up in the North, as a byproduct of Launis's unsuccessful application for the University of Helsinki music teacher's post, Jules Rouanet's ideas of the Maghreb music did not obtain a footing in Finland. To put Launis's failure into a wider still perspective: research on Arab and North African music did not have a future there more generally after this broad-minded Finnish man of music settled permanently in France in 1930.

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### **Notifications**

- Mr. Abdelkader Mana, sociologist, Morocco, email dated 5 January 2016.
- Mr. Youssef Touaïbia, coordinator, Groupe Yafil, Algiers, email dated 24 June 2011.

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