

ELSEVIER

HANS JANSEN Arabist (Arab Specialist)

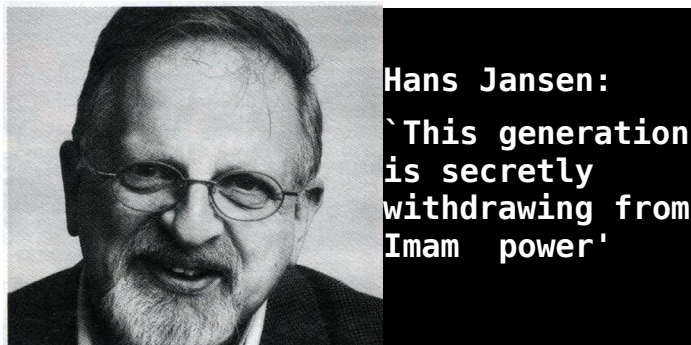
'The Islam needs a French Revolution'

Arabist Hans Jansen wrote numerous books about Islam and is currently working on the German translation of his last book *The historical Mohammed*. He does not fear the Islam in the Netherlands, but objects to group coercion amongst Muslims. 'As means means of propaganda head scarfs are effective. Even better as a kalasjnikov.'

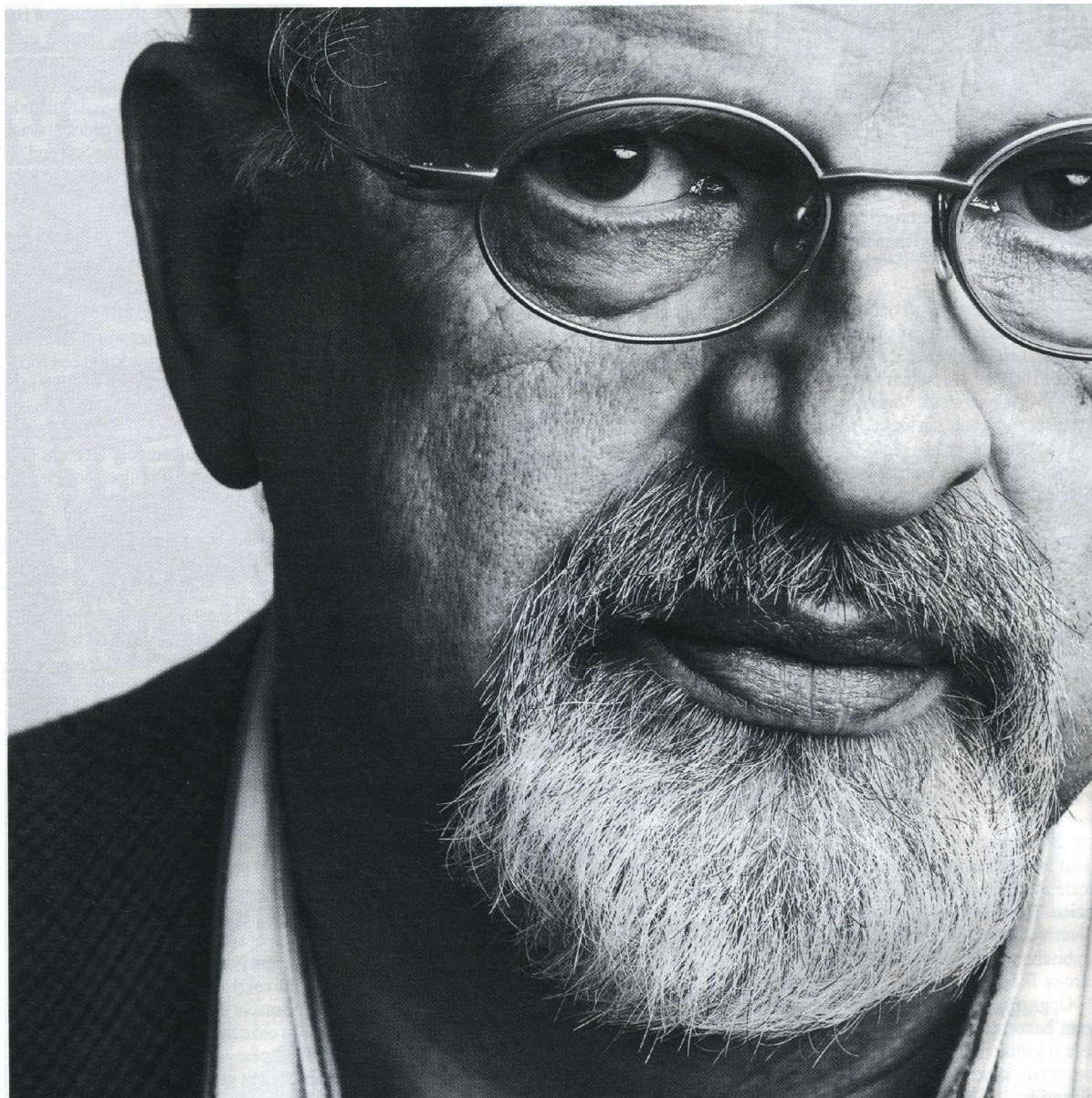
Hugo Camps Pictures Marco Bakker

No, he's not shivering for Islam every day. 'I'm only afraid for weird people.' The Arabist and special tenure professor in current day Islamic thinking at the University of Utrecht, Hans Jansen (64), is not really worried sofar about a Islamic tsunami. 'When in 1940 the Germans invaded the Netherlands one could hear: 'The Germans have invaded. Well most Germans were just doing the dishes.'

For panic its too early. 'At the end of this century Muslims will be the majority in Europe, according demographic Fetishists. That is, if nothing changes. But something will change of course. There's numerous Muslims who actually already have departed from Islam. Like many Dutch, who are still registered as Catholic Christians, but still didn't take the effort to write themselves out. Obviously Muslims have good reasons to not withdraw their registration. The death penalty is a pretty radical sanction. But it could happen that one day all these Muslims who hanged their harp in the willows will come out of the closet. Then it will go swift.



'People who have tasted economical and social liberties will sooner or later claim their religious freedoms. That's why the group coercion is tightly protected. The beating of Ehsan Jami is clearly meant to warn for potential apostasy from Islam. To put it more clearly : One is born a Muslim. Period.'



The cultural loyalty to Islam goes far deeper as its religious part. 'Allochtone writers in the Netherlands all shout they are atheists. They believe in nothing anymore. I then think : Why don't you tell this at home? They won't do that. Certain values and laws can be carried around, even when one has lost its religious background. Look at Maarten 't Hart, and those kind of people. These are also present in the Arab world. I have the impression that most immigrated Muslim Arabs are not really fanatic occupied with the Koran. Then again the conceptions about family proportions are stronger and less reversible.

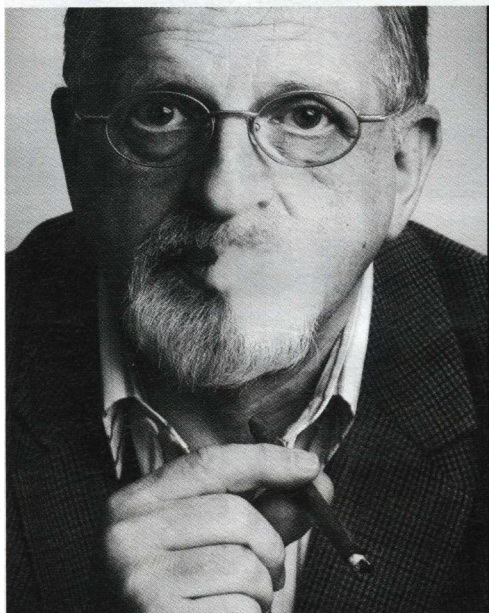
`There's even Muslima's who have started a new life, thanks to Ayaan Hirsi Ali. I sometimes go shopping with my two daughters to buy T-shirts at H&M. Then sometimes i get taken aside by Moroccan sales girls who whisper me some inciting wordings. After which i say : `Oh how nice, lets drive to the Hilversum TV studios'. But on tv they don't dare of course. Muslims are willing to state they don't want part anymore in what Wilders calls the fascist side of Islam. Its only that they also know how dangerous it is to shout high from the tower. The increasing sleeping apostasy is the reason why I think that in the Netherlands the Muslim dictatorship will turn out different as we fear today.

`The power of the Imam's is subjected to erosion. The youngest generation is fluent with the Dutch language. They are confronted with a all knowing Imam, except of the rules of Dutch grammar. That's a small dent in his credibility. I sometimes hear students say: `Well, if you know all why not know about bending strong verbs.' This generation is secretly withdrawing from the Imam's power. The trouble is that many boys and girls still have many Aunts and Uncles in Morocco and Turkey. Here they live in a country with many rights and can do many things. If they in between go to Morocco they are again without these rights. It seems to me not a easy position.'

Hans Jansen is a respected scientist. He wrote numerous books about (radical) Islam, published his own translation of the Koran, and currently is working on the German translation of *The historical Mohammed*. Over the years he has radicalized himself, although still with humor and irony.

`The explosive surge of interest in Islam is a thing from the last couple of years. Four years ago, someone like Paul Cliteur never uttered a thought about Islam. I know a man who fled from Egypt. He is in the Netherlands for twelve years now and a tenure track professor. As long I have known him he tells me : In half a year i will be able to return. That won't be possible of course. What we experience today is a religious war, because a real war has a beginning and a end. The sympathizers of Osama Bin Laden take a advance on the future from some sort of almighty fantasy. Al-Qa'ida is a double form: religious and ideological. The twofold nature of fundamentalist Islam is very hard to control.

`In a dictatorship one can also have it good and sociable. People are more tempted to agree with each other and there's mutual solidarity. We from the West are still trying to spread democracy and capitalism inside the third world. There this world is no longer appreciating these efforts, as we now see inside Iraq. Muslims have always been successful imperialists. They have the people whom they conquered, also changed and turned. If one asks in Indonesia: what was there before Islam? Then one hears nothing about Buddhist Java, but only about Arab sand.'



Hans Jansen:
`Muslims don't know of a sorry-culture. Admitting errors, cannot be put on your father, your brother, your people'

Long live the Revolution. `It has been said that the Islamic world is in need of a Enlightenment. Wrong, What is needed is a French Revolution, where the old suppressing elite needs to be skillfully eliminated. I do however make it clear that I myself don't feel tempted to offer any help. Inside a Islamic society politicians, military and clergy men keep their rule firm in place. They have closed links, and do not tolerate any intellectual freedoms. The people there have got used to that. As long this linkage is not falling apart, one can not speak of a change. No, its not up to us to light up the fire over there. The people should do

it themselves. Doesn't everyone in the Netherlands also get upset when the European Union wants to change the size of pigs cabins?

`There's something i don't understand. Many people from the Middle East who immigrate on a individual basis, are all doing well. They get diploma's, become members of political party's and Masonic lodges. Nothing wrong with that. Still they didn't succeed to democratize their own country. Science, which has some relevance, also doesn't emerge from the Arab world. A Nobel price cannot be spotted anywhere. Yes, for literature and peace and other consolidated subjects. Individual migration however can be called a success. But migrate a whole village from Morocco to the Netherlands, and the old values travel along. One sees severe pressure to solidify old values and even make em more strict.

The Islam and the West, actually they are irreconcilable worlds. 'Arabs know that two plus two is four, But aside from that they talk each other into religious convictions. A typical case of brain washing from Christian culture is notion of wrong and guilt. We know it is OK to admit guilt. After that one is free again. Admitting guilt is unnatural behavior. Other cultures don't allow for this. Muslims don't know of a sorry-culture. They know they make mistakes, but admitting them cannot be held upon their fathers, brothers and people. Never before has someone from that corner heard one sorry for the Armenian Genocide.

`When i was living in Egypt, first as a student and later as director of *The Dutch Institute*, i learned that Arabs have different values. The culture of showing off is deeply rooted. A tram warden is still referred to as a chief engineer, a diplomat is a ambassador by definition and a ambassador a minister. One time i have heard a minister being called his majesty. Showing off is very common. If our culture of played humbleness comes in contact with a culture where showing off is allowed, it results in severe hazards.

Inside Egypt he learned the iron logic of Islamic fundamentalists. `I translated the pamphlets who were spread before the death of president Anwar Sadat. Sadat was killed by radical Muslims because be was seen as a apostate from Islam. Until deep in the 1990s I was absolutely convinced that conflicts inside the Arab world would not skip over to Europe. I was wrong.'

Raised in a strict reform protestant family, Hans Jansen converted to the Roman-Catholic Church on a later age. He is still going to Church. `I find rituals very important - they are enlighting and healing. One can have many preservations against catholicism, but to say sorry once a while is culturally, socially and scientifically of vast importance.

A collective repentance has meaning. Jewry also knows of 800 different ways to admit guilt on reconciliation day.

`My problem with Protestantism was that it didn't fit intellectually. Why a difference between what is written and tradition? The writing is a solidified form of tradition. I'm sorry to say this, but the key phrases of Protestantism are rubbish. In Cairo i came across many Catholics. And i always thought : They know how to keep the world turning.'

Religion is and remains a battle of symbolics. Head scarfs, head caps, black hats ... the rubbish continues. The Arabist is talking about a created tradition. `When I was in 1966 for the first time in Cairo, one didn't see head scarfs at all. They were introduced during the 1970s as a symbol of rejection of the ruling regime. A certain mobilization power emerges from symbolics. At the time of the Bhagwan one saw people walk in strange garments. If one sits in a tram with thirty demonstrators, no-one pays attention, but three Muslims inside a tram always catches ones eye. Uniform behavior is a frequent used method of religions and ideologies. It gives others the impression that this group is frequently abundant. As a means of propaganda the head scarf is very effective. Better as a kalasnikov.

`For a religious one its always pleasant to meet people who also belong to the

club. A head scarf, a beard, a black hat, it all has for believers a encouraging aspect. It has all been introduced. Moses surely never weared a head cap. In Indonesia i have given guest lectures for thousands of head scarved ladies. What strikes me is that its not the handsomest ones who sit dressed and packed up inside the tram.

Arabic is a nice language. 'It's nice to feel at home in someone else's language. With the Luxemburg language i would have the same. Create words for a specific thoughts construction, thats were Arabs excel. The language offers ways to flirt, but less to seduce. Convince people that the evil in this world, now and here, needs to be battled, that is easy in Arabic. Satire likewise.'

Inside *The historical Mohammed* Hans Jansen sifts the truth and the contraction about the prophet who blowed Allah into the Koran. He doesn't want to call it a biography. 'That's impossible. There's not enough documents and inscriptions. It has become a book about the biography of Mohammed, about the several misleading roads. Was the prophet a paedophile? To make such accusations one needs to know the age of the paedophile and that of the victim. One needs a calendar and a chronology. Both were not available in the time of Mohammed.

'On even days i think he existed, and on uneven days he did not. In oldest times inside the Middle East a religious mythology existed about turning ones chances. U know things like : The slave who becomes under King. a sterile woman conceives a child. I can imagine that such a pile of stories gets attached to a person. To David, to Jesus, to Mohammed. It could also be that a person is replaying these stories, like he is actually modeling his behavior to them. Actually not a single sensible word can be mentioned about the factual existence of Mohammed. The only thing which would help is to excavate the entire of Saudi Arabia and see if something can be found under the sand. Without archaeological support we won't resolve a single step further.

Religion itself is not the evil. 'religion should make people a little more happier to come through the middle phase between birth and death. The evil part of Islam is group coercion; the violent cry for battle likewise. Inside the Netherlands I would also like to call for battle against evil. The problem is only : what is evil? coercion certainly not. If the rays of the sun and power originate from one point, our society goes defunct. There need to be different ruling systems of authority. Sadly enough Islam doesn't have ears for this.

The Islam has no respect for small suffering. 'The absurdity of ritual cleaning is evident to the ordinary Dutchman. Does it matter to Allah what kind of meat-balls i eat? If your unlucky and blind, one could easily be rejected a seat in a taxi cab. Muslims don't allow dogs inside their car. A blindmans guiding dog, would a exception be made for them? No, as dogs are unclean, get rid of them. It are in particular these idiotic tormentations which make some Dutch think : Muslims, get rid of them.

Yes, sometimes he misses Cairo. 'The bookstands, horse riding in the desert, the pamphlet culture. In the Arabic world people regularly make verbal confrontations to each others arguments. In the Netherlands this is nowhere to be observed anymore.' ■