DISCOVERING REMBRANDT'S ARMENIAN MERCHANT, MODEL

Posted on March 19, 2025 by Keghart

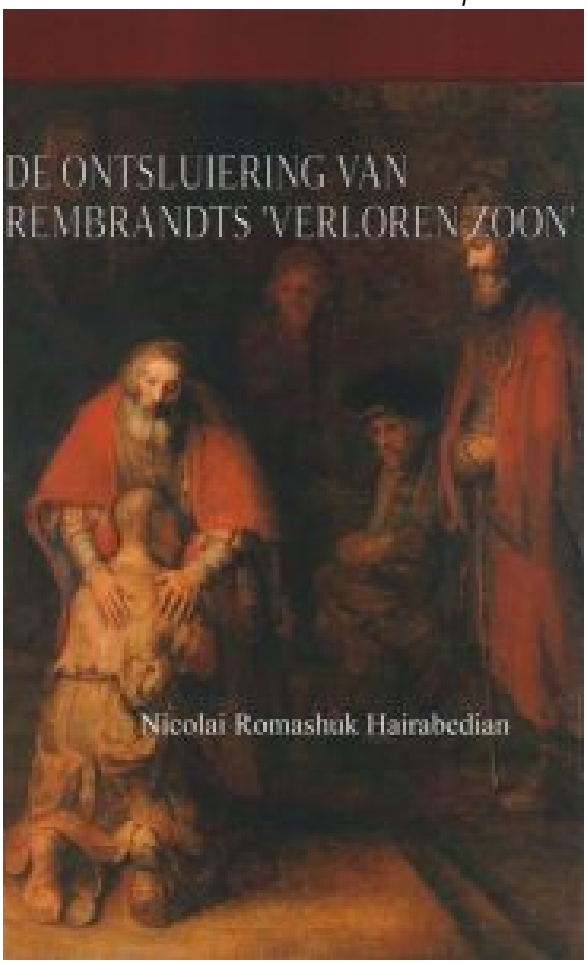


Category: Opinions

By Art Stepanian, Toronto, 8 March 2025

Super-patriot Nicolai Romashuk Hairabedian has another arrow in his quiver: In the past decade he has managed to have an ancient Amsterdam passageway named "Armenian Bridge" and has installed in Assen the Armenian Monument dedicated to the 200,000 Armenian soldiers who gave their lives (some in the Netherlands) during the Second World War.

The most-recent achievement of Jerusalem-born Hairabedian is the unearthing the identity of the people depicted in Rembrandt's famous *The Return of Prodigal Son*. In his book, published last October and titled *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, Hairabedian reveals the man wearing a beret and sitting across from the Prodigal Son and Father is Aghamir, an Armenian merchant from Julfa who sold the red oil paint in powder form to Rembrandt. Armenia was the sole manufacturer of the powder which derived from a worm found only in Armenia. The powder was known as Vortan Garmir (Red Worm).



During the 17th Century, considered Netherlands' Golden Age, there were a large number of Armenian merchants plying their trade in the country. They not only sold the precious red powder, diamond, dry fruits and wool but also monopolized the silk trade. A Dutch historian has written that the Armenian merchants greatly contributed to the Golden Age of the Netherlands.

Digging through Dutch and Armenian archives, Hairabedian also discovered the identity of the two

key models in *The Return of Prodigal Son*. They were famous poet Joost Van Den Vendel and his son who bore the same name. The poet's son, like the Biblical son, was prodigal. He was exiled to India after wasting much of his father's money. He died on board the ship which was taking him to India.

The detailed story of Hairabedian's discovery was published in book form (*The Return of Prodigal Son)* and sells for 22.50 euros. The proceeds will be donated to charity. The book can be ordered through Amazon. Its Dutch title is *De Ontsluiering van Rembrandt Verloren Zoon*.

The painting was bought in 1776 in Brussels by the Russian ambassador for Catherine the Great. It's now on display at The Hermitage in St. Petersburg.

*****

There are no comments yet.