

The movie is a fascinating story about a sensational archaeological find from the Roman era in the city of Homs, to be told by the rector of the Umm Al-Zunnar* church, Priest Youhann Salameh.

In 1953, in the city of Homs in Central Syria, during the restoration of the local church, archaeologists, with the participation of Patriarch Abraham I, made a sensational discovery - found a secret place in which was a stone mortar, and in it a metal case with a woman's belt of woolen threads, embroidered with silver.

According to ancient written sources discovered a few years earlier, clergymen and experts from the Department of Antiquities under the direction of Dr. George Saliba established that the find - the belt, belonged to the St. Virgin Mary.

The story of this unique discovery, contains almost detective story, in brief it is as follows: once, Patriarch Abraham I, who was a great expert in history and had an excellent knowledge of the Syriac language, sorting out ancient manuscript documents of the church library, found 46 messages written in Arabic and "karshuni"***. One of them informed about the Belt of the Holy Mary, which was hidden somewhere in the secret place of the local church. However, the exact location of the secret hiding place was not specified. Further, from the document it followed that the belt of the Holy Mary is in the city of Homs since the 5th century. The acting Church, where events took place, is younger only than some Jerusalem temples. It was erected as early as 659 on the site of an ancient crypt (underground chapel), one of the first in the world, founded as early as 59 AD ***

Well preserved artesian well, 15 meters deep, narrow neck, which passes through the foundation of the first construction of the church and through the floor of the new building, built in 1852. The patriarch ordered the search for the cache to begin.

What was known? Syria is often mentioned in the Gospels because it was the land from which Christian civilization, which with the apostles Peter, Paul, and Thomas, spread to other countries. Historically, the evangelists, when naming Palestine or Jordan, mention them as part of the territory of Syria.

Local legend from the mouth of priest Johannes Salame says that even before the death of the Holy Mary, the disciples of Christ went to different countries, carrying the word of God. Apostle Thomas was then in India.

When the Holy Mary has passed away, all apostles have gathered in Jerusalem to spend it in last way. All except Thomas, who was three days late. When, together with Peter and John Thomas came to the tomb of the Mary, they saw her herself appear in the sky. Thomas asked for something to give him as a reminder, as a proof of the holy vision.

And St. Mary gave him her holy belt.



This event is painted on touching naive frescoes from the 17th century in the Christian **church of the biblical town of Cedad (Sadad)**. Here, the Orthodox (descendants of the Ghassanids) live in the western part of the city, and the Jacobites live in the eastern part.

The priest Abu Addulah will comment on the local artistic reading of famous biblical subjects: the scene of the Dormition of the Holy Mary and Mary passing the belt to St. Thomas. The manuscripts went on to say that the Belt traveled with St. Thomas to India and remained there for a long time...

Eventually, through the mediation of influential Syrian families, the belt reached the city of **Ruha, in what is now Turkey**.



At the end of the 4th century, the monk Peter from Homs, who was going on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, took the relic with him. However, because of the political situation at that time, he did not take the belt to Jerusalem, but left it with the priest of the Church of the Holy Mary in Homs. Before his death, he gave it to one of the ministers of the church, who hid it, and the location of the belt remained unknown until 1852.

The belt remained hidden for another 100 years until 1953. Unique photographic documents have been preserved, which show the removal of the secret storage “stupa”, where the belt was located. In the photos, experts from the Department of Antiquities under the direction of Dr. George Saliba examine the found items - including cotton threads 74 cm. long, 5 cm. wide. The Patriarch Abraham himself is also present, showing the belt to the faithful.

Since that time in the city of Homs local Christians have two holidays: one is dedicated to the event of finding the belt, the other - associated with the Holy Mary - the feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary (August 15). On this day the belt is taken out of the temple for general viewing and prayer by the parishioners of the temple. The holy well is used for sprinkling the faithful.

In 1903, during a cholera epidemic, the people of Homs, both Christians and Muslims, drank this water without fear of infection. The movie ends with a colorful eventful episode of the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

* Umm Zunnar means the Church of the Belt of the Virgin Mary. Hence the name of the local church

** Karshuni - Arabic language, transcribed from Syriac letters.

*** The Jerusalem Church (as an organization) arose first, and the second was the Antioch Church