

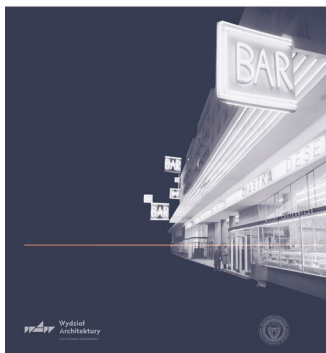
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The Polish-Syrian Cooperation (Selected Examples): Past, Present and Beyond

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Abstract

This article presents selected examples of Polish-Syrian cooperation in the fields of archaeology, architecture, and urban planning, focusing primarily on initiatives developed during the second half of the 20th century and their legacy in the 21st century. It traces the historical roots of this collaboration, beginning with archaeological missions and educational exchanges through architectural projects such as the Al-Assad National Library and urban development plans in Syrian cities. The article also highlights the limited but meaningful cooperation that continued during and after the Syrian conflict, including efforts to preserve cultural heritage, such as the restoration of the Lion of al-Lat in Palmyra. Additionally, it examines more recent humanitarian and cultural initiatives, exhibitions, charity auctions, and artistic collaborations that reaffirm mutual respect between the two nations. Rather than offering a comprehensive historical overview, the article emphasizes selected examples to illustrate how long-term cultural and academic collaboration can evolve into meaningful international support in times of crisis.

Keywords Polish-Syrian relations | cultural heritage | archaeology | humanitarian aid | urban planning | architectural cooperation

1. Introduction

The history of Polish-Syrian cooperation reflects a long standing relationship grounded in shared academic, cultural, and professional exchanges. Since the mid-20th century, both countries have engaged in collaborative efforts in archaeology, architectural design, urban planning and education. These initiatives contributed to knowledge exchange and professional development, especially through joint archaeological missions and the education of Syrian students in Polish universities.

This article presents selected examples of this cooperation, highlighting projects that took place primarily before the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2011. It also addresses several cultural and humanitarian initiatives that emerged during and after the war. While the benefits for Syria included knowledge transfer, urban planning support, and heritage preservation, the cooperation also enhanced Poland's international academic and cultural presence, offering Polish professionals opportunities to work abroad and contribute to cross-cultural dialogue.

2. Historical Background of Polish-Syrian Relations

2.1. Beginnings of Academic and Archaeological Cooperation

Polish-Syrian cooperation dates back to the 20th century, particularly in the late 1950s, when both governments and academic institutions launched joint cultural and scientific projects. Among the most significant early endeavors was archaeological collaboration which was established in 1958; Polish researchers, especially from University of Warsaw and Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, were granted access to key excavation sites across Syria.¹ These efforts laid the foundation for a long-term engagement with the country's ancient heritage, notably in cities such as Palmyra, Tell Qaramel, Dura-Europos, Tell Arbid, and Qasr al-Hayr al-Gharbi.

Simultaneously, a growing number of Syrian students and researchers pursued higher education in Poland, in fields such as architecture, civil engineering, medicine, fine arts, humanities, and agricultural sciences. These exchanges were made possible through a series of intergovernmental agreements, beginning with the Agreement on Cultural and Scientific Cooperation signed in 1971, followed by specific educational protocols in 1977, 1980, 1984, and 1992.²

Polish institutions, such as the University of Warsaw, the Warsaw University of Technology, the Krakow and Wroclaw Universities of Technology, welcomed Syrian scholars and doctoral candidates. These exchanges laid the groundwork for professional advancement and cross-cultural understanding. Many Syrian graduates returned to Syria to occupy leadership roles in academia, architecture and city planning, public health, arts, and a wide range of other disciplines. Their education in Poland exposed them to not only technical methodologies but also broader ideas of social equity, participatory urbanism, and heritage stewardship, and over time, these educational and academic connections evolved into a subtle yet powerful form of soft diplomacy.

Alumni of Polish institutions often maintained personal and professional ties with their host country, creating a transnational network that proved critical during Syria's time of crisis. These individuals acted as cultural mediators, facilitating communication, heritage restoration, and humanitarian aid between Polish organizations and Syrian communities.

2.2. Architectural and Urban Planning Contributions

Polish Syrian architectural cooperation began in the early 1960s, gaining momentum throughout that decade with major projects launched over the following two decades. Polish architects and urban planners were invited to Syria to assist in designing cultural institutions, academic campuses, and urban master plans. These projects reflected Poland's technical expertise and a deeper cultural dialogue, where modern design sensibilities were adapted to Syrian contexts. Among the achievements

¹ M. Gawlikowski, *Gods and Temples of Palmyra*, "Miscellanea Anthropologica et Sociologica", 2014, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 76–91.

² J. Knopek, Z. Danielewicz, *Poland's Cultural Relations with Middle Eastern Arab Countries*, "Polish Political Science Yearbook", 2020, vol. 49, no. 1, p. 36.

of Polish architects in Syria, it is worth noting several of the most memorable contributions, described, among others, by Joanna Klimowicz,³ and cited below.

2.2.1. National Library in Damascus

One of the most iconic architectural projects resulting from this collaboration was the Al-Assad National Library in Damascus, completed in 1976 (Fig. 1). Designed by a team of Polish architects: Jan Jacek Meissner, Małgorzata Mazurkiewicz, Marek Dunikowski, and Wojciech Miecznikowski. The library stands as a monumental cultural institution⁴ in the heart of Damascus, the capital of Syria. The building combines functionalist principles with respect for local symbolism, offering modern infrastructure for knowledge while integrating with the fabric of the capital.

2.2.2. Urban Development and General Plans

At the same time, Polish urban planners contributed to the development of general master plans for rapidly expanding Syrian cities. These included Dummar, Douma, Adra, and Hama, where Polish teams worked in coordination with Syrian ministries to guide spatial planning, infrastructure zoning, and public services.⁵ Their designs aimed to accommodate fast-paced population growth while incorporating climate-sensitive planning and accessible public spaces.

These urban development initiatives were not limited to technical consultancy. They were framed within a spirit of solidarity and cultural adaptation, emphasizing long-term sustainability and compatibility with Syrian architectural traditions. Polish architects demonstrated an ability to understand local urban conditions and social dynamics, which made their proposals both innovative and contextually appropriate.

2.2.3. Olympic Sports City in Latakia: Wojciech Zabłocki's Vision

Another exemplary figure in this partnership was Wojciech Zabłocki, a renowned Polish architect and former Olympian, who designed the Olympic Sports Complex in Latakia for the 10th Mediterranean Games in 1987 (Fig. 2). His winning proposal integrated organic forms, inspired by the local terrain and marine life.⁶ The complex embodied Zabłocki's philosophy of blending functionality with poetic form. It also became a symbol of regional pride and international visibility for Syria, showcasing how architecture could serve not just infrastructural needs but cultural representation on a global stage.

³ DSc Arch. Joanna Klimowicz is an architect and academic teacher affiliated with the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology. She has conducted research and published numerous works on Polish architectural and urban projects in Syria, including the monograph *Polish Architects and Urban Planners in Syria. Selected Projects*, Warszawa 2019 and articles, including *Prace polskich architektów w Syrii w latach osiemdziesiątych XX wieku: Stanisława Niewiadomskiego i Wojciecha Zabłockiego*, „Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki”, 2010, vol. LV, no. 3, pp. 74-90, documenting both completed and unrealized projects by Polish specialists in Syrian cities. She collected materials and researched during numerous field visits to Syria (2002–2007). She has delivered numerous lectures at Syrian universities (Teshreen in Latakia, Al Baath in Homs, and Al Qallamoon in Qallamonn). As a visiting professor, she also lectured (2005–2006) at the Faculty of Architecture at PUSA University in Aleppo.

⁴ J. Klimowicz, *Prace polskich architektów w Syrii w latach osiemdziesiątych XX wieku: Stanisława Niewiadomskiego i Wojciecha Zabłockiego*, „Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki”, 2010, vol. LV, no. 3, pp. 74–90.

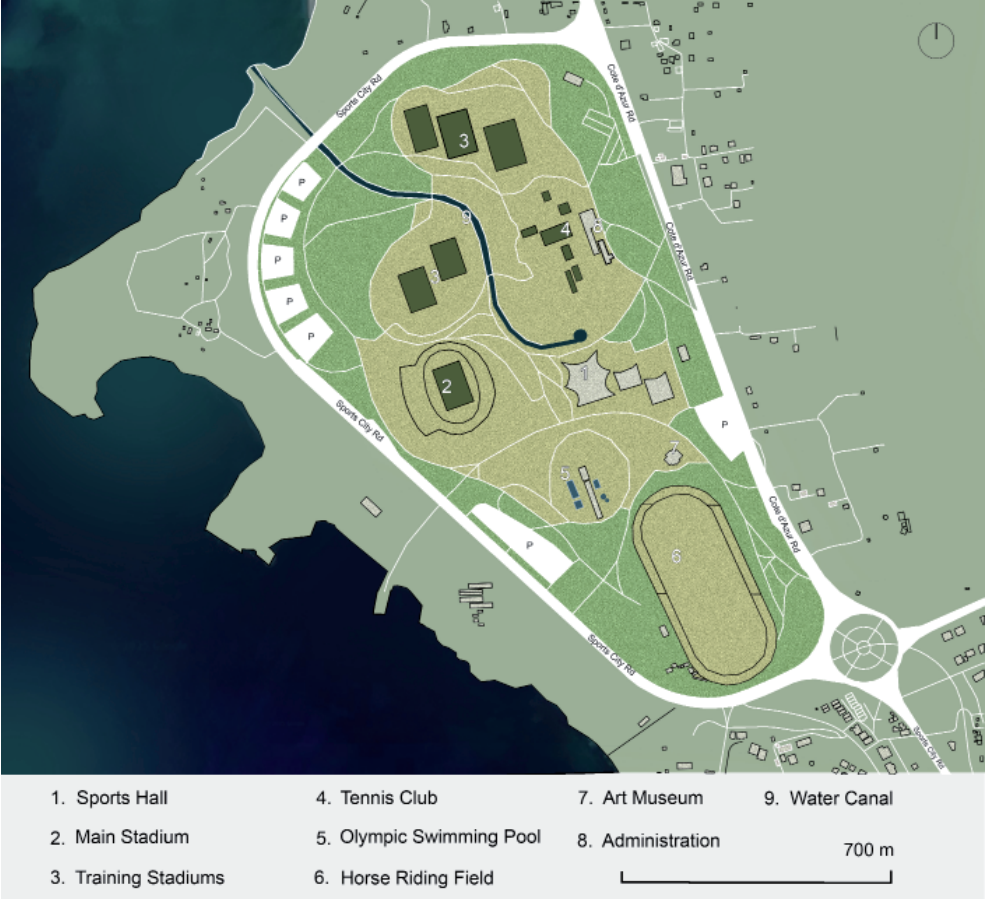
⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ Ibidem.

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1. Al-Assad National Library, Damascus. Photo by the author, 2010

2. Schematic drawing of the Olympic Sports City, Latakia. Elaborated by the author

2.2.4. Al-Baath University: Stanisław Niewiadomski's Master Plan

In the 1980s, architect Stanisław Niewiadomski designed the master plan for Al-Baath University in Homs (Fig. 3). The plan emphasized flexibility, featuring a primary east-west pedestrian axis intersected by secondary axes from the north and south. This layout allowed for the cohesive integration of various faculties, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration. The design also incorporated considerations for natural light and environmental harmony. Furthermore, the master plan included the integration of recreational and green spaces throughout the campus. These areas were strategically placed to provide students and faculty with accessible environments for relaxation and leisure. The incorporation of greenery not only enhanced the aesthetic appeal of the campus but also contributed to improving microclimatic conditions, promoting a healthier and more comfortable environment for its users.⁷

Niewiadomski's approach to campus planning demonstrated a holistic understanding of urban design, where functionality, environmental considerations, and human well-being were seamlessly integrated. His work on Al-Baath University stands as a testament to the positive impact of thoughtful architectural planning in educational institutions, particularly in regions facing challenging semi-arid climatic conditions.

2.3. Archaeological Cooperations

Polish archaeologists have played a fundamental role in uncovering and preserving Syria's ancient heritage, particularly in the iconic city of Palmyra. This cooperation, which began in the late 1950s, evolved into a long-term academic and cultural partnership. Over the decades, it produced groundbreaking discoveries and became a symbol of resilience and shared responsibility during Syria's most difficult times.

The Polish archaeological presence in Palmyra was established in 1959, when Professor Kazimierz Michałowski, a pioneer of Polish Mediterranean archaeology, initiated research at the site.⁸ His work marked the beginning of one of the longest and most respected international missions in Syria.

In 1973, leadership passed to Professor Michał Gawlikowski, who directed the Polish mission for nearly four decades. Under his guidance, teams uncovered key structures, including a Roman military camp, the temple of the goddess Al-Lat, and several Byzantine Christian churches from the 4th to 6th centuries CE. These discoveries significantly expanded global understanding of Palmyra's religious diversity, urban planning, and architectural hybridity.⁹

The Polish archaeological mission in Palmyra was not only notable for its academic rigor but also for its ethical collaboration with Syrian authorities, fostering local training, employment, and heritage awareness.

⁷ J. Klimowicz, *Rola terenów rekreacyjnych w różnych strefach klimatycznych – na przykładzie Syrii*, „Środowisko Mieszkaniowe”, 2016, no. 16, pp. 57–65.

⁸ M. Gawlikowski, op. cit.

⁹ Ibidem.

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3. Schematic drawing of Al-Baath University campus, Homs. Elaborated by the author

In addition to Palmyra, Polish archaeologists have been active at several other sites across Syria. One notable example is Tell Arbid in northeastern Syria, where Professor Piotr Bieliński of the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology led excavations from 1996 to 2010.¹⁰ The site, part of the Khabur River basin settlement zone, provided significant insights into Bronze Age Mesopotamian urbanism and material culture.¹¹ These projects highlight the geographical breadth and academic depth of Polish archaeological engagement in Syria, which has spanned diverse historical periods and regions.

Another significant example of Polish archaeological involvement is Tell Qaramel, located near Aleppo in northern Syria. Excavations at this prehistoric site were led by Dr. Ryszard Mazurowski of the University of Warsaw from 1990 to 2011, in close cooperation with Syrian archaeologists.¹² Tell Qaramel is considered one of

¹⁰ P. Bieliński, *Polish Archaeological Missions in Northeastern Syria: The Tell Arbid Project*, "Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean", 2009, no. 19, pp. 341–358.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² R.F. Mazurowski, M. Białowarczuk, Z. Kobylński, *Archaeological excavations at Tell Qaramel near Aleppo (1999–2007)*, ed. W. Kubiak, Wiesbaden 2009, Vol. 1, pp. 565–582.

the oldest permanently inhabited settlements in the world, with remains dating to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A period. The Polish team uncovered circular stone structures, domestic buildings, and early ritual spaces, offering critical insights into the early stages of human settlement, architecture, and spiritual life. The project highlights not only the scientific importance of Polish research in Syria. It also reflects the depth of mutual collaboration between the two nations in reconstructing the earliest phases of human civilization.¹³

3. Post-War Cooperation: Cultural Heritage as Resistance

Polish–Syrian academic and heritage collaboration experienced a profound shift following the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2011. This period saw a major pause in Poland’s active engagement. The exchange programs and archaeological missions were suspended. In 2012, Poland closed its embassy in Damascus, evacuating diplomats for security reasons a pause that lasted until 2017, when a chargé d’affaires was reappointed. However operations remained limited.¹⁴ Despite this breakdown in formal ties, the longstanding partnership between the two countries regained purpose through humanitarian restoration efforts. Polish experts in archaeology and conservation re-entered Syria to assist with post-conflict recovery efforts that represented not only technical support but profound expressions of emotional solidarity and cultural resilience.

3.1. The Impact of War on Syrian Heritage

The Syrian civil war marked a catastrophic turning point for many of the country’s historic sites. The ancient city of Palmyra, a UNESCO World Heritage site, suffered extensive damage during occupation by extremist groups. Iconic landmarks, including the Temple of Bel, the Temple of Baalshamin, and various funerary towers were intentionally targeted in a symbolic campaign to erase Syria’s cultural memory. This destruction was more than an assault on stone monuments; it was an attack on national identity, collective memory, and the right to remember. The deliberate targeting of cultural sites sought to fragment Syria’s historical continuity and deprive future generations of their heritage.¹⁵

3.2. Restoring Identity and Hope: The Preservation of Syrian Cultural Heritage in the Aftermath of Conflict

Despite the challenges posed by the ongoing conflict, Polish archaeologists Bartosz Markowski and Robert Żukowski returned to Syria in 2016 to aid in the restoration of artifacts damaged during the war. They focused on recovering and

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ A. Salloom, *The Polish–Syrian Ebb and Flow*, LoginLublin, <https://loginlublin.pl/en/the-polish-syrian-ebb-and-flow/> (accessed: 20.04.2025).

¹⁵ D. Matouk, *Palmyra – The Rise and Fall of the City*, Doctoral dissertation written under the supervision of prof. dr hab. inż. arch. A. Gawlikowski, Warsaw University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture, 2019, pp. 150–153, typescript in the collection of the WAPW Library.

restoring pieces from the Palmyra Museum, many of which had been destroyed or severely damaged. This effort was not just about preserving artifacts; it was about restoring a sense of identity and hope for the Syrian people amidst the chaos of war.¹⁶ The dedication and resilience of these archaeologists have symbolized a beacon of hope and solidarity, demonstrating the deep sentimental value of their contributions during such tumultuous times. The article highlights this example not because it was the only restoration effort, but because it encapsulates the emotional and historical significance of Polish-Syrian cooperation. Al-Lat Lion has become a visual icon of the city of Palmyra and its survival and thus serves as a powerful case study of heritage recovery linked to earlier decades of bilateral engagement.

3.2.1. The Importance of Restoring Al-Lat Lion

Restoring Al-Lat Lion or any artifact that was destroyed during the war is a multifaceted endeavor that serves to reinforce cultural identity, national pride, educational opportunities, economic recovery through tourism, international solidarity, and social healing. It is a powerful symbol of the resilience and enduring spirit of the Syrian people and their commitment to preserving their rich historical legacy.

The Al-Lat Lion, also known as the Lion of al-Lāt, is an ancient statue dating back to the 1st century AD. the statue of a lion guarding a deer (gazelle) in his arms and engraved on it “May al-Lat bless whoever does not spill blood on this sanctuary” was guarding the Al Lat Goddess temple’s entrance. The meaning of Al-Lat Lion sculpture, which represents a fierce lion and a gazelle sitting safely at his feet, is related to the Arabic proverb “Whoever enters my house is safe.” This fact is also known through ancient scripts. It was both customary and legal in what is called *Opoi Asyilia* in ancient Greek and means “the right of asylum” ie, the sanctuary of the temples, where persecuted people can take refuge, and they would be safe as long as they were in temple.¹⁷

Thanks to the Polish archaeological mission, this breathtaking sculpture exists the way it is today. It was discovered in pieces, reused in ancient times to rebuild the walls of the Al Lat Temple. After recollecting the pieces together, the statue was put at the entrance of the national museum in Palmyra. Professor M. Gawlikowski said in an interview for BBC, talking about discovering the statue: “For well over 1000 years, the statue had lain buried in the ruins of the ancient city, though parts had been used as foundations stones in other buildings, you could hardly see what it was. I could see it was a sculpture and an old one from Palmyra, so we decided it was necessary to put it together immediately. It wasn’t clear from the beginning what this was – and then we found the head, so it became obvious.” Since that time the statue became the symbol of Palmyra.

One of the Polish team members was the sculptor Józef Gazy, who enthusiastically took on the task of restoring Al-Lat Lion. In 2005, the statue underwent another restoration because it became unbalanced. A Polish team consisting of Bartosz Markowski and Robert Żukowski rebuilt the statue to resemble as closely as possible

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

4. Al-Lat Lion at the entrance of the Palmyra Museum, 1st century AD. Photo: Mappo, 2010.
Source: Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 4.0



4.

what is thought to be the ancient design, with the lion appearing to leap out of the temple wall. The sculpture was the most prominent feature of the old temple and is characterized by its large size. Probably because the lion in ancient times was feared and admired and that would explain why the statue is twice as high as a human being, with a length of 345 cm, weighing 15 tons.

The same team of Mr. Markowski and Mr. Żukowski came later in 2016 to restore the lion to its previous glory. Today, the sculpture is proudly displayed at the National Museum in Damascus.

The significance of restoring the Al-Lat Lion goes far beyond aesthetics or archaeological interest. This statue is a profound emblem of Syrian identity, rooted in centuries of spiritual and cultural meaning. Its destruction during the war was not only a physical loss but also a symbolic blow to Syria's cultural heart, a calculated attempt to erase memory, weaken morale, and sever the connection between a people and their heritage. In this context, the restoration of the Lion becomes more than an act of conservation, it becomes an act of resistance, defiance, and profound emotional healing.

While physical aid during times of war, such as food, shelter, and medical assistance, is vital for immediate survival, emotional and cultural aid play an equally crucial role in the long term recovery of individuals and communities. The reappearance of this powerful and compassionate figure at the National Museum in Damascus offers Syrians more than just a visual connection to their past; it provides a sense of continuity, resilience, and pride in the face of loss. The lion represents an enduring legacy of protection and refuge, and its reassembly reaffirms that Syria's soul cannot be erased by violence.

The values symbolized by the lion, strength, care, protection, and sanctuary, are precisely what a wounded society needs during a time of displacement and trauma. To rebuild the statue is to reclaim a piece of national dignity, a declaration that despite the ruin, Syria's cultural spirit remains unbroken. The act of restoration becomes a collective expression of identity, memory, and belonging.

Moreover, the global involvement in the statue's restoration, especially by Polish archaeologists and conservators, highlights the power of international solidarity in defending cultural heritage. It illustrates that cultural monuments are not merely national symbols, but part of a shared human story deserving of protection and reverence. Al-Lat Lion, once buried and fragmented, now stands tall not only as a monument to the past but as a guardian of Syria's hope for the future.

In this way, Al-Lat Lion is more than stone and symbolism, it is a living testament to the unyielding strength of cultural resilience. It reminds us that even when cities fall and histories are threatened, the human will to remember, protect, and rebuild can overcome destruction. Al-Lat Lion is not just a restored artifact, it is a restored belief in survival, dignity, and the enduring power of identity.

4. Recent Developments: Rebuilding Together

At a time when formal diplomatic channels between Syria and the international community were strained, Poland's commitment to cultural diplomacy emerged as a beacon of hope. Through exhibitions, archaeological restoration, and academic exchanges, Poland cultivated an alternative space for connection, one that transcended politics and spoke directly to the shared humanity between the two nations. These initiatives were far more than symbolic gestures; they were quiet yet profound affirmations of solidarity, weaving a tapestry of mutual understanding that withstood the turbulence of war.

This cultural dialogue extended beyond the realms of academia and archaeology, manifesting in vibrant artistic collaborations, musical tributes, and heritage preservation projects. Each endeavor served as a bridge between people, a testament to the resilience of cultural ties even in the face of devastation. Below are noted the most multifaceted ways in which art and heritage became lifelines of connection and how Poland's efforts reverberated from Warsaw to Damascus.

4.1. Exhibitions Celebrating Shared Heritage

In 2018, the *Shared History* exhibition at St. John's Centre in Gdańsk epitomized the power of art to transcend borders. Curated by Syrian director Ibrahim Mouhann and Polish visual artist Agnieszka Wołodźko, the project united artists from eight countries, Poland, Latvia, Sweden, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, Belarus, and Palestine, in a dialogue that celebrated universal human experiences.¹⁸ The exhibition's installations, films, and visual artworks did more than showcase talent; they

¹⁸ I. Mouhann, A. Wołodźko, *Shared History – Exhibition*, Gdańsk, <https://nck.org.pl/en/event/3242/shared-history-exhibition> (accessed 20.04.2025).

dismantled barriers, offering a space where trauma and hope could coexist. For Syrian participants, many of whom were refugees, the project was a rare opportunity to reclaim their narratives. For Polish audiences, it was a window into the lived realities of conflict, fostering empathy and challenging stereotypes.

This exhibition was not an isolated event but part of a broader pattern of cultural resilience. By centering marginalized voices, *Shared History* echoed Poland's longstanding role as a custodian of collective memory, a theme that would reappear in later initiatives.

4.2. Art as a Means of Support

Art's capacity to heal took on a tangible form in October 2023, when the Polish Medical Mission and the Association of Polish Artists organized a charity auction at Warsaw's PROM Kultury Saska Kępa gallery. Under the curation of Syrian artist and academic Majid Jammoul, the event featured 109 works donated by 80 artists, ranging from paintings to sculptures.¹⁹ The proceeds funded medical aid for earthquake-stricken regions of Syria, transforming creativity into lifesaving support.

This auction exemplified a recurring theme in Polish-Syrian cooperation: the fusion of cultural expression with humanitarian action. Just as Polish architects had once built libraries in Damascus, now artists were constructing bridges of compassion. The event also highlighted the diaspora's role in sustaining ties; Jammoul, a Syrian expatriate in Poland, embodied the dual identity many refugees navigated, honoring their roots while contributing to their adopted homeland.

4.3. Music Uniting Hearts

On January 6, 2017, the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews resonated with melodies of solidarity during the Playing for Syria! charity concert. Organized with the Polish Humanitarian Action, the event brought together renowned musicians to raise funds for war victims.²⁰ The choice of venue was poignant: a museum dedicated to Jewish heritage, itself a symbol of survival against erasure, now extended its narrative to include Syrian suffering.

Music, with its universal language, became a vessel for collective mourning and resilience. The concert's success underscored a critical truth: cultural diplomacy thrives when institutions and individuals collaborate. It also marked a moment of introspection for Poland, a nation familiar with wartime loss, now channeling that empathy outward.

4.4. Showcasing Polish Contributions to Syrian Heritage

The exhibition *Against the Sands of Time*, which opened in April 2017 at UNESCO's headquarters in Paris, highlighted Poland's efforts in documenting and reconstructing world heritage sites. Among the featured projects was the restoration

¹⁹ *Charity Auction of Works of Art to Help Syria*, <https://pmm.org.pl/en/charity-auction-of-works-of-art-to-help-syria/> (accessed on 20.04.2025).

²⁰ *Playing for Syria! A Charity Concert at POLIN Museum*, POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, <https://polin.pl/en/event/playing-syria-charity-concert-polin-museum> (accessed: 20.04.2025).

of the Lion of al-Lat from Palmyra, symbolizing Poland's commitment to preserving Syrian cultural heritage.

The story of Polish-Syrian cooperation is not merely about shared projects in archaeology or academic exchange. It is about solidarity that endured through war, the quiet strength of cultural memory, and the human connections that outlast political tides. Whether through the painstaking restoration of the Lion of al-Lat, the welcoming of Syrian students to Polish universities, or the shared exhibitions that gave voice to both pain and hope, this partnership has embodied a deep respect for identity, resilience, and mutual growth.

As Syria slowly rebuilds, and as memories of loss remain etched in its landscapes and museums, Poland's role in preserving its heritage stands as a reminder: that even in times of destruction, there are those who choose to protect, to listen, and to rebuild not just buildings or artifacts, but futures. This cooperation, rooted in decades of trust and shared effort, continues to be a lifeline not only in times of war, but in the enduring work of recovery, remembrance, and cultural revival.

5. Conclusions

The long-standing cooperation between Poland and Syria, as illustrated through selected examples in archaeology, architecture, and cultural diplomacy, demonstrates the lasting impact of academic and professional exchange. From the excavation of ancient cities like Palmyra, Tell Qaramel and Tell Arbid, to architectural collaborations in Damascus, Homs, and Latakia, Polish specialists have contributed not only technical expertise but also enduring partnerships based on mutual respect.

This article has shown how such collaborations evolved over time: beginning with scholarly missions in the 1950s and 1960s, expanding through architectural projects in the 1970s and 1980s, and transforming into cultural support and heritage preservation during and after the Syrian conflict. Notably, the restoration of the Lion of al-Lat in 2016 exemplifies how shared cultural stewardship can become a powerful gesture of solidarity and healing.

Although the examples discussed are selective, they offer insight into the mechanisms of trust, continuity, and international responsibility in the face of political rupture and destruction. Polish Syrian cooperation stands as a living legacy adaptable, resilient, and rooted in the belief that cultural heritage is a universal human value.

As Syria begins the long process of rebuilding, this partnership offers lessons for future international cooperation: that education, shared heritage, and cultural diplomacy can form a bridge not only between institutions, but between societies. In this way, the legacy of Polish Syrian collaboration endures not only in stone and memory, but in the ongoing commitment to restore, protect, and understand.

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