

AWLAD AL-'ASSAL (13th c.)

Family of scholars. The term Awlad al-'Assal ("the children of al-'Assal") is conventionally used to refer to four brothers who played a major role in the revival of Coptic thought in the decades between 1230 and 1260. Their father, Fakhr al-Dawlah ("Pride of the State") Abu al-Mufaddal al-As'ad, was a wealthy and generous Coptic [notable](#) who provided his children with an excellent education. He was married twice; **al-As'ad** Abu al-Faraj Hibatallah and **al-Safi** Abu al-Fada'il Majid were full brothers to one another, and half-brothers to **al-Mu'taman** Abu [Ishaq](#) Ibrahim and [al-Amjad Abu al-Majd](#) Fadlallah.

Al-As'ad, al-Safi, and al-Mu'taman were the scholars who made the name Awlad [al-'Assal](#) nearly synonymous with the 13th-century golden age or renaissance of the literature of the Coptic Orthodox Church. However, the role of al-Amjad must not be forgotten; he was a high-ranking civil servant who was capable of financing the scholarly activities of his brothers. He maintained a house in Damascus that often served as a kind of research center, commissioned treatises of various sorts, and engaged the future patriarch **Gabriel III** not only as tutor to his son but also as a skilled scribe who copied [manuscripts](#) for ongoing projects. Within the family, patronage and talent met.

The Awlad [al-'Assal](#) were loyal children of the Coptic Orthodox Church who were involved in the struggles of the Church for institutional well-being (e.g., in the struggles surrounding Patriarch **Cyril III ibn Laqlaq**) and who were greatly interested in the Church's specifically Coptic heritage, as their canonical and Coptic philological production attest. At the same time, they possessed an extraordinary intellectual openness, including a readiness to benefit from earlier Arabic Christian literature of any **Christological** confession. These ingredients, added to the mix of patronage and talent just mentioned, helped to fertilize a glorious flowering of **Copto-[Arabic literature](#)**.



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GAWDAT GABRA

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