

The Early Atlantic Reading Group Presents:

Same-Sex Intimacies in an Early Modern African Text about an Ethiopian Female Saint, Gädlä Wälättä Peṭros (1672)

Presented by Professor Wendy Belcher

Associate Professor of African Literature at Princeton University



When: Friday, April 12, 2015

Where: Room 105, Graduate Student Center, 504 Northwestern Ave., West Lafayette

Time: 1:30-2:45 pm.

All are welcome!

The seventeenth-century Ethiopian book *The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Wälättä Peṭros* (Gädlä Wälättä Peṭros) features a life-long partnership between two women and the depiction of same-sex sexuality among nuns. The earliest known book-length biography about the life of an African woman, written in 1672 in the Gəʿəz language, Gädlä Wälättä Peṭros is an extraordinary account of early modern African women's lives—full of vivid dialogue, heartbreak, and triumph. It features revered Ethiopian religious leader Wälättä Peṭros (1592-1642), who led a nonviolent movement against European proto-colonialism in Ethiopia in a successful fight to retain African Christian beliefs, for which she was elevated to sainthood in the Ethiopian Orthodox Täwaḥədo Church. An important part of the text is her friendship with another nun, Əḫatä Krəstos, "lived together in mutual love, like soul and body" until death. Interpreting the women's relationships in this Ethiopian text requires care, but queer theory provides useful warnings, framing, and interpretive tools. The talk emerges out of Prof. Belcher's work with Michael Kleiner to translate the text, which will be published in 2015 by Princeton University Press as *The Life and Struggles of Our Mother Wälättä Peṭros: A Translation of a Seventeenth-Century African Biography of an African Woman*.

Dr. Belcher is graciously hosted by Dr. Nush Powell of the English Department.