

‘Lochy’ Names and Adomnán’s *Nigra Dea*¹

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Introduction

In Adomnán’s *Vita Columbae*, there is a curious reference to ‘...in fluio (sic) qui latine dici potest nigra dea’,² ‘...in the river which can be expressed in Latin as “the black goddess”’. Although the phrase *nigra dea* is not glossed directly, the context in the narrative suggests that the name refers to the River Lochy in the Great Glen in Scotland. Other river names have also been taken to derive from the same source, and these survive predominantly in two forms as *Lochy* and *Lochty*, with allographic alternations between *Lochie*, *Lochay* and *Lochtie* respectively. Most scholars have taken this etymon as correct with little or no discussion.³ This article seeks to provide a more thorough survey of these names, and then to use this material to discuss the traditional derivation from a mythological, linguistic and distributional viewpoint, and to offer some other possible explanations suggested by this discussion.

Survey

Lochy names

In many occurrences there is the problem that a final *-y* or *-ie* in anglicised Gaelic words can represent a number of different coalesced grammatical suffixes or elided lexical terms. The main issue here is the genitive form of Gaelic (G) *loch* ‘lake’, which is *locha* or *lochaidh* anglicised as ‘lochy’ in place-names. For instance the name Gairlochy,

¹ This is a revised version of the essay awarded the 2003 Essay Prize by the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland.

² Adomnán of Iona, trans. A. O. Anderson and M. O. Anderson, *Adomnan’s Life of St Columba* (Edinburgh, 1961), p. 414.

³ For instance W. J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh and London, 1926; repr. Edinburgh, 1993), p. 50; Anderson and Anderson, *Adomnan’s Life of St Columba*, pp. 142–43.

a section of River Lochy, means in Gaelic ‘the roar of the Lochy’. It could equally mean, however, if the location was not known, ‘the roar of the loch’. Thus it should be borne in mind that a large number of these names discussed below cannot be said to contain our term with absolute certainty.⁴

River Lochy INV (NN1175 – NN1884)

Loch Lochy (NN1884 – NN2896)

PN = **Glen Lochy** (NJ1175 – NN1884)

PN = **Gairlochy** (NN1784)

PN = **Inverlochy** (NN1174)

stagnum Loogdae 729 *The Annals of Ulster*⁵

stagnum Lochdae c.690 *Vita Columbae*⁶

Inverloquhy 1496 *RMS*⁷ ii no. 2329; *Inverlocha* 1495 *RMS* ii no. 2281;

Inverlochty 1556 *RMS* iv no. 1097

Louthe, Louth fl. Enuerlothea 1592 *Scotiae Tabula* by Henricus Nagel⁸

Loch Lutea, Lothea Lacus, Lutea Blaeu 1654 *Blaeu Atlas of Scotland*
100–01

Lochius 1654 *Blaeu Atlas of Scotland* 8–9

Enuerlochtie, L. Lochou 1527–1596 Leslie, John map

Loch Lochy connects Loch Linnhe with Loch Ness. It has by far the earliest forms for any Lochy name. The identification of this river name with the reference to *nigra dea*, although almost universally accepted, is not certain. The same can be said for *stagnum Lochdae* from which *nigra dea* is usually said to be a translation. The two phrases are mentioned in different sections of *Vita Columbae*, but the

⁴ County abbreviations follow standard pre-1975 conventions. PN = denotes a settlement name; otherwise a water name is denoted.

⁵ *The Annals of Ulster*, edited by S. MacAirt and G. MacNiocaill (Dublin, 1983).

⁶ Anderson and Anderson, *Adomnan's Life of St Columba*, p. 190.

⁷ *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum* (Edinburgh, 1882–1914), referred to in this text as *RMS*.

⁸ Maps are derived from <http://www.nls.uk/digitallibrary/map/index.html>, including Pont Texts, but excluding Bartholomew.

two have generally been identified with each other through context.⁹ Moreover, the identification of *stagnum Loogdae* is far from definite.¹⁰ Although it should be borne in mind that these names may relate to another watercourse in this survey (or some other vanished river name), it is nevertheless the linguistic old forms which are central here.

River Lochy INV (NN1927 – NN3131)

PN = **Glen Lochy** (NN1927 – NN3131)

PN = **Inverlochy** (NN1927)

G *Lòchá Urchaidh*¹¹

Glenlochquhy 1528 *RMS* iii no. 591; *Glennochay* 1530 *RMS* iii no. 994; *Glenloichay* 1536 *RMS* iii no. 1596; *Glenlochane* 1510 *RMS* ii no. 3498

This Lochy flows into the Orchy, whence the Gaelic name. In common with the names above, these names comprise a ‘full set’, that is, inlet (inver-), valley (glen), river and lake (loch). These sets are also the largest water features to have this name, and are situated at the westernmost borders of the ‘Lochy zone’.

Burn of Lochy MOR (NJ1424 – NJ1315)

PN = **Cnoc Lochy** (NJ1621)

PN = **Knoc-Lochy Well** (NJ1620)

PN = **Inverlochy** (NJ1324)

Lochy fl., *Innerlochy* 1634–1655 Gordon of Straloch

Inverlochy 1503 *RMS* ii no. 2689; *Inverlochty*, *Inverlochy* 1549 *RMS* iv no. 366

This small set of names comprises a hill with a well on its lower parts, from which flows the burn into the Avon in Moray. Its upper part is called The Burn of Brown. From its name it seems reasonable to

⁹ Such as Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*, p. 50.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ W. J. Watson, *Scottish Place-Name Papers* (Edinburgh, 2002), p. 164. This follows Watson’s orthography.

assume this burn is a genuine Lochy name rather than an anglicisation of a hypothetical G **Allt Lochaidh* ‘Burn of a Loch’, especially as there is no actual loch in the vicinity.

River Lochay PER (NN5733 – NN4030)

PN = **Glen Lochay** (NN45733 – NN4133)

Locheia 1654 Blaeu Atlas of Scotland 88–89

Glen-Lochay, Lochy Water c.1600 Pont Text 116

Glenloicha 1546 RMS iv no.6

G *Lòchá Albannach*¹²

This is the largest river of this name. It feeds Loch Tay at the western end. The variant spelling probably arose in order to differentiate this water course from the River Lochy flowing into the Orchy nearby.

Lochy Burn PER (NN9412 – NN9210)

PN = **Drumlochy** (NN9109)

PN = **Lochie** (NN9511)

torrens de Lochtie 1622 RMS viii no. 284; *torrens de Lochtie* 1624 RMS viii no. 694

Lothayae 1654 Blaeu Atlas of Scotland 90–99 (perhaps)

terra de Drumlochty alias Lochty 1468 Exchequer Rolls of Scotland¹³

This is a small tributary of Ruthven Water outside Auchterarder.

Lochty names

There are four Lochty names which denote water courses and three or perhaps four denoting settlement names. They are all situated in now anglicised areas, a point discussed below.

Black Burn BNF (NJ1862 – NJ0551)

PN = **Inverlochty** (NJ1861)

Innerlochty 1634–1655 Gordon of Straloch

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *The Exchequer Rolls of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1878–1908).

Black or Lochty Burn 1902 Bartholomew¹⁴

Mekil Innerlochtin, Innerlochtie 1654 Blaeu Map Moravia Scotiae provincia (derived from Pont record below)

M:Innerlochty, Innerlochty c.1600 Pont Map 8

Mekle Inverlochty, Litol Inverlochtye 1569 RMS iv no. 1886; *Litol-Inverlochty* 1472 RMS ii no. 1051

Inuerlochty 1623 REM¹⁵ 137; *Inuerlothy* 1623 REM 138; *Innerlochte* 1623 REM 392

This burn flows into the Lossie just west of Elgin. The name is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, it only remains as Inverlochty. Secondly, the water course is now called Black Burn, and this could seem to accord with at least the ‘*nigra*’ part of Adomnán’s etymology (see below). Thirdly, this is by far the most northerly name of this type and stands outside the main distribution. This suggests the element may have once been more common and could have been replaced by other names, which would be consistent with their relative antiquity.

Lochty Burn ANG (NO5634 – NO5336)

Loghte 1678 Angusia Provincia Scotiae

This burn, situated a few miles south of the above entry and running through Carnoustie, is not named on the 1:50000 scale OS maps and seems to have been excluded from previous surveys of this type of name. It was once a boundary between the parishes of Barry and Monikie.

Lochty Burn FIF (NT2798)

PN = **Lochtside** (NT2798)

PN = **Boglochty** (NT1996) (not extant)

Lochtie Burn, Boglochty, Lochtysid 1654 Blaeu Map, Fifae Pars Orientalis

¹⁴ J. G. Bartholomew, *The Survey Atlas of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1912), plate 47.

¹⁵ *Registrum Episcopatus Moraviensis* (Edinburgh, 1837), referred to in this text as *REM*.

Lochtio 1654 Blaeu Atlas of Scotland 78–79

wattyr off louchty 1413 *St. Lib. A.*¹⁶ p.1, *monlochty* 1413 *St. Lib. A.* p.3,
Moneloccodhan 1413 *St. Lib. A.* p.114

Lochtiesyde 1632 *RMS* viii no. 2065; *Inverlochtie alias Spittell* 1627
RMS viii no. 1058

Modern maps show only a burn running from Benarty hill into the River Ore. The burn itself springs from Gruoch's well, named after the wife of MacBeth. Older sources show that there was once a bog of some sort at the foot of the hill, which is now a quarry. The bog seems to have originally been called Monlochty (with an eleventh-century form *Moneloccodhan*), but later came to be known as Boglochty. Simon Taylor has suggested to me that this Gaelic generic change from *moine* to *bog* could be due to the influence of Scots. The river is well documented, as it became a boundary of the lands of Kirkness. *Lochtysyd* is now Lochtyside, a minor settlement. Neighbouring Pitlochry derives from Pit- and G *clach* gen. *cloiche* 'stone', and is not a Lochy name.¹⁷

Red Burn ABD (NJ8915)

burne of Lochtie 1584 *RMS* v no. 776

From a description in the *RMS*, this appears to be the original name of Red Burn, and to be the only record of this earlier name.

Lochty settlement names

PN = **Lochty** PER (NO0625)

Loichty 1450 *REB*¹⁸ i, 152

¹⁶ *Liber Cartarum Prioratus Sancti Andree in Scotia* (Edinburgh, 1841) referred to in this text as *St. Lib. A.*

¹⁷ S. Taylor, 'Settlement Names in Fife' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1995), p. 251.

¹⁸ *Registrum Episcopatus Brechensis* (Aberdeen, 1856), referred to in this text as *REB*.

PN = **Lochty, Nether Lochty** FIF (NO5208)

PN = **Lochty** FIF (NO5362)

Lochti, 1450 *REB* i, 164

Lochetie 1632 *RMS* viii no. 1936; *Lochtie* 1626 *RMS* viii no. 971; 1556
RMS iv no. 1108, 1628 *RMS* viii no. 1279; *Louchte* 1540 *RMS* iii no.
 2169

Perhaps PN = **Leoch** ANG (NO3036)

Leoucht 1490 *RMS* ii no. 2043

These names denote minor settlements which do not seem to derive from a water feature. It is interesting that although no settlement is near any river called Lochty, they are all squarely within the general distribution area for the names. They could be transferred names from the watercourses, or the final syllable could derive from *G taigh* 'house', although this word order is rare.

Lochsie names

Glen Lochsie Burn ABD (NO0572)

PN = **Glen Lochsie** (NO0572)

PN = **Faire Lochaidh** (NO0572)

Allt Lochaidh (NO0572)

Glen Lochy 1902 Bartholomew plate 36

Losie, Loch Losie 1654 Blaeu Map Scotiae provinciae mediterraneae

Loch Losy c.1600 Pont Map 27

The -s- infix here is uncertain but discussed below. Blaeu portrays a small loch, 'Loch Lossy', on his 1654 map where there is none now, so it is uncertain whether the form *Lochaidh* is a genitive of *G loch* 'lake' or is actually a reinterpretation from a Lochy name.

The Black Goddess: evidence in mythology and in other place-names

As happens all too often, there has been little attempt made by onomasticians to investigate to whom or what ‘the black goddess’ could refer. Although black goddesses are common in Asia and Africa, there seems to be no European goddess who has this epithet. As so little is known of Pictish mythology, it might be tempting to postulate that it refers to a forgotten Pictish deity. There is perhaps some inconclusive evidence for this: it is generally thought that the Picts took part in hydrolatry; the overlapping of theonyms and hydronyms attests this. For example, river names such as the Dee, the Don, the Tanner, and the Nethy are all suggestive of Celtic divine names.¹⁹ Adomnán in *Vita Columbae* writes of a well infested by malign supernatural beings in Scotland.²⁰ There is also no reason to think that pre-Christian Pictish religious practice was radically different from other Celtic peoples.

One Gaulish goddess with both dark and aquatic aspects is *Rosmerta*. Her name has been said to have a number of derivations, one being ‘The Very Smeared One’,²¹ with the implication of being smeared in blood. It could also be that one of her consorts, *Tuetates*, is portrayed on the Gundestrup Cauldron dipping or drowning his victims in blood.²² There is also a Pictish tribe mentioned by Ptolemy as Σμερται or Smertae, which is perhaps etymologically related to the name *Rosmerta*.²³ It is, nevertheless, pure conjecture whether these names refer to this or any other divinity.

¹⁹ In these cases, see below for Dee and Don, the Tanner has been said to correspond to the Gaulish deity Taranis, and the Nethy is often compared to the Old Irish name *Nechtán*, which, amongst others, is the name of an Irish divine figure.

²⁰ Anderson and Anderson, *Adomnan's Life of St Columba*, p. 348.

²¹ Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*, pp. 17–18.

²² G. Roth and P. M. Duval, *Larousse World Mythology*, edited by P. Grimal (Feltham, 1965), p. 339.

²³ A. L. F. Rivet and C. Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London, 1979), p. 460.

The linguistic evidence

The traditional etymology and its problems

The usual derivation by scholars in agreement with Adomnán has been thus: Old Irish (OI) *loch* ‘black’ with the suffix from the genitive of OI *día* ‘goddess’ derived from Old Celtic (OC) **deiua* > **dēua* > **dēau* > **dēa*, the genitive being OC **deiuias* > **deue* > **dēe* > *dē*,²⁴ thus, *Lochdae* ‘of the black goddess’. There are, however, problems with this derivation including some that have been rarely discussed. The derivation is usually endorsed by another supposed example of *de* in *Vita Columbae*. This is in the phrase *au inde*²⁵ which has been interpreted as *au find+dē* ‘of the white eared goddess’, but which can alternatively be interpreted as *aufinde* ‘of the White-eared’.²⁶ There are different readings of the final vowel cluster for the name *Lochdae* in the various manuscripts and this could reflect a confusion or discrepancy between what the name was supposed to mean and how it was pronounced.

Following the proposition that the traditional etymon for this term is problematic, and that ‘black goddess’ is not a known phrase, the linguistic evidence should be examined in a fresh light. Part of the possible confusion lies with near coalescence of two Old Irish adjectives, *lóch* ‘shining’ and *loch* ‘black’, with only a difference in vowel quantity. It seems both these terms derive from OC **louk-* from Proto Indo-European **leuk-*, meaning ‘white’ or ‘shining’, although it is unclear how the terms diverged. Pokorny posits a number of terms from which *lóch* and *loch* may derive, mentioning **louk-* as a derivation for the first term and **luk-* for the second.²⁷

Whilst Adomnán clearly thought the name meant ‘black goddess’, this would have yielded a short *o* in the place-names in question; yet, where the orthography can show it, there is a long *o*, as evinced by *stagnum Loogdae* above, where the double <oo> stands for a long vowel (if this is to be identified with Loch Lochy), in Watson’s Gaelic

²⁴ Anderson and Anderson, *Adomnan’s Life of St Columba*, p. 142.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 394.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 395 n. 12.

²⁷ J. Pokorny, *Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 2 vols (Munich, 1959–69), I, 687–88.

form, *Lòchá*, and in several records for other Lochy/Lochty names. This suggests that at least some of the names in this discussion derive from OI *lóch* ‘shining’, and that Adomnán’s translation is incorrect. This is discussed at greater length below. The confusion seems to have been compounded by W. J. Watson who consistently translates *lóch* as ‘dark’, and does not discuss *loch* at all. He states, ‘*lòch* is glossed *dub*, black, in Cormac’s *Glossary*’,²⁸ yet in the available editions of Cormac’s *Glossary*, it is *loch* rather than *lóch* (or **lòch*) which is actually glossed *dub*.²⁹

If the names in the survey above can be said to contain elements deriving from the two Old Irish words *lóch* and *loch*, it might be expected that they appear with different elements in other place-names. Hence a short survey of other place-names containing these two terms with some mention of their non-onomastic use should be undertaken at this point. Following this is a survey of names containing **deiua*.

G **loch* ‘black’: its use in language and toponymy

There seems to be no evidence for its lexical use in Scotland; it is quoted as obsolete in all Scottish Gaelic dictionaries. In Old Irish it is glossed as *dub 7 doirche* ‘dark and gloomy’.³⁰ *Auraicept na n-Éces* also contains the term twice in a list of separate types of Ogham, in a list of colours of sows in a litter.³¹ Elsewhere it possibly appears in a compound, *lochliatha*, referring to the eyes of a snake, perhaps to be translated as ‘dark-grey’, though the translation given is German *see graue* ‘lake-grey’.³²

There are two possible candidates for the occurrence of this term in Scottish toponymy. Since the vowel length cannot be ascertained in the names, there are no names which can be attributed to this term with

²⁸ Watson, *Scottish Place-Name Papers*, p. 81. Watson here has used the modern Gaelic orthography for an Old Irish term.

²⁹ *Three Irish Glossaries: Cormac’s Glossary Codex A* (London, 1862), p. 26.

³⁰ O’Curry’s Law Transcripts from the Royal Irish Academy, cited in *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, edited by E. G. Quin (Dublin, 1913–79).

³¹ *Auraicept na N-Éces*, edited by G. Calder (Edinburgh, 1917), p. 288.

³² *Ein Irisches Leben der Heiligen Margarete*, edited by L. C. Stern, cited in *Zeitschrift für Celtische Phonologie*, 1 (1897), 127.27.

any degree of certainty. It would seem that if this term is actually present in Scotland at all, it is very rare.

Loch Loch PER (NN9874)

L. Lochin 1654 Blaeu, Scotiae provinciae mediterraneae

Loch Lochen c.1600 Pont Map 27

Loch Lochin, Auō Lochin c.1600 Pont Map 20

This name has been generally said to be due to a cartographic error, as the loch does seem to look like two lochs, although the old forms rule this out.

Lochter Burn ABD (NJ7722)³³

The second element is obscure, possibly *G dobhar* ‘water’, or perhaps *G tìr* ‘land’. Alternatively it may be that the ending represents an adjectival suffix; if this is the case the name would be comparable with Lochar Water. See below where this is discussed further. Unfortunately no old forms seem to exist for this name.

G *lòch ‘black/shining’: its use in language and toponymy excluding Lochy and Lochty names

Like its counterpart, this term also seems to be lexically obsolete in Scottish Gaelic, except tangentially in the words *lòchran* ‘lamp’ and *lòchrann* ‘sun’. In Old Irish *lóch* is glossed as ‘solas’, ‘light’,³⁴ but seems to be very rare.

These names are those with Gaelic forms or old records which clearly show a long [o].

PN = **Inverlochlarig** PER (NN4318) and **River Lochlairig** (NN4618 – NN3516)

*G Inbhir-lòchlairig*³⁵

³³ W. M. Alexander, *The Place-Names of Aberdeenshire* (Aberdeen, 1952), p. 84.

³⁴ *Betha Colmain maic Luachain* 10.4, cited in *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, edited by Quin, p. 178.

³⁵ Watson, *Scottish Place-Name Papers*, p. 81.

PN = **Inchlochel** INV (NH204383)
 G *Innis-lòicheil*³⁶ Modern: Innisanloichel
Inchelochill 1542 *RMS* iii no. 2817

PN = **Lochy Bay** INV (NH53)
 G *Camas-lòchaidh*³⁷

PN = **Lochletter** INV (NH4529) on River Enrick
 G *Lòchleitir*³⁸
Lochlettre 789 *RMS* i no. 1384; *Lochlett* 3392 *RMS* ii no. 1509

PN = **Drumlochlan Wood** PER (NN7422)
 G *Drum-lòchlainn*³⁹

Leochel Burn ABD (NJ5516 – NJ5608) and PN = **Leochel** (Parish name) (NJ5208)
Loychell 1199 *RMS* i no. 1207 *Loquhell* 1574 *RMS* iv no. 2290

PN = **Shenachie** INV (NH828348)
 G *Poll-lòchaig*⁴⁰
Polochaig 1902 Bartholomew
Polochaig 1875 Ordnance Survey
Pollochack or the Loch poole c.1600 Pont Text 154

Watson treats the names Inchlochel and Leochel as a contraction of *G coille* ‘forest’ lenited,⁴¹ but elsewhere suggests an ending cognate with Welsh (W) *ial* ‘clearing’.⁴² Padel, however, suggests that this is an adjectival suffix meaning ‘place abounding in X’, which is prefer-

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ W. J. Watson, *Place-Names of Ross and Cromarty* (Edinburgh, 1904), p. 190.

⁴² Watson, *Scottish Place-Name Papers*, p. 82.

able.⁴³ Lochy Bay has not been included in the main discussion because it is only found in Watson, and it is not a watercourse, although its location is consistent with the distribution of Lochy names. Of note is the fact that none of these names are primary river names, i.e. where they do appear in river names, they are secondary developments from nearby features. This will be discussed further below.

This list is probably not complete; there are other names denoting features with no non-anglicised Gaelic names with which to discern the vowel quantity. There are, for instance, two small lochs a few miles apart from each other named **Carlochy** ANG (NO3978 and NO4183). It is possible these names are secondary names relating to a now lost primary Lochy name. **Munlochy** ROS (NH6453) also could contain this term.

Names containing OC **deiua*⁴⁴

Dee KCB (NX5574 – NX6569)
 Δηούα (*De:ούα*) Ptolemy II, 3, 2

Dee ABD (NO7396 – NO1290)
 Δηούα (*De:ούα*) Ptolemy II, 3, 4

Don ABD (NJ2309 – NJ8115)
 Δηούανα (*De:ούανα*) Ptolemy II, 3, 9

Dee CHE (SD7286 – SJ2180)
 Δηούα (*De:ούανα*) Ptolemy II, 3, 11

Wales

Dwyfawr – ‘Big Dwy’ CAE (SH4737)

⁴³ O. J. Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, English Place-Name Society, 56/57 (Cambridge, 1985), p. 138.

⁴⁴ Rivet and Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain*, p. 336; and G. R. Isaac, *Place-Names in Ptolemy's Geography*, CD-ROM (Aberystwyth, 2004).

Dwyfach – ‘Small Dwy’ CAE (SH4637)

These names go back to a very ancient stage in Europe’s nomenclature. They appear throughout the hydronymy of the British Isles and have several important features. The names occur mainly as simplex formations and not as part of a compound. The reason for this is not exactly clear; it may be that they originally had qualifying divine names attached to them, which were later lost with the advent of Christianity. For instance it has been demonstrated that the Dee in Cheshire was once called *Aeruen* in early Welsh poetry.⁴⁵ Skene attributes this to a goddess name containing Old Welsh *aer* ‘battle’. Whether this derivation is correct or not, it nevertheless shows that the Dee in Cheshire once had another name. Two European examples are *Dea Sequana* (= Seine) and *Dea Matrona* (= Marne), both of which are attested Celtic deities, showing that ‘Dea’ was once qualified by divine names in other parts of Celtic Europe.⁴⁶

The waterways are all fairly large, probably sufficiently so that the early landlocked inhabitants would not know their full extent and thus did not need to distinguish a particular river from any other of the same name. Equally the name could have become taboo, as happens with some holy names.⁴⁷ If the Lochty and Lochy names were supposed to contain an adjective qualifying the word ‘goddess’, it would be the only instance of this occurring, since in all other cases the word for ‘goddess’ as a hydronym was qualified by an appellative (e.g. *Sequana* or *Matrona*) or stood alone as a simplex name. The Welsh examples, Dwyfawr and Dwyfach, may appear to contradict this, but these refer not to the goddess herself as a ‘large goddess’ or a ‘small goddess’ but to the two rivers in order to distinguish them from each other.

⁴⁵ W. F. Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1868), I, 341; II, 449.

⁴⁶ W. F. H. Nicolaisen, ‘The *Dee* at Chester and Aberdeen: thoughts on rivers and divinities’, in *Names Places and People. An Onomastic Miscellany in Memory of John McNeal Dodgson*, edited by A. R. Rumble and A. D. Mills (Stamford, 1997), pp. 247–53.

⁴⁷ E. Ekwall, *English River-Names* (Oxford, 1928), p. 118.

The suffix: its origin and survival

Once the idea that this suffix means goddess has been shown to be problematic, another explanation should be sought. There is in fact an adjectival suffix *-de* or *-dae* in Old Irish which is discussed extensively by Wodtko.⁴⁸ The dictionary of the Irish Language states that is a ‘frequent adj. suffix joined to substantives and adjectives’,⁴⁹ whilst Thurneysen states that ‘*-de...* denotes quality, kind, appurtenance, origin, material, time etc.’⁵⁰ This suffix is evinced elsewhere in P-Celtic languages, such as in the tribal name recorded by Ptolemy, Ἐπίδοι or *Epīdii*, which derives from British **epos* ‘horse’ with the suffix,⁵¹ having a direct correlation with OI *echdae* ‘equine’. Thurneysen also mentions the Gallo-Latin name CARANTODIUS and its Old Irish cognate *cairdide* ‘friendly’.⁵² In Welsh it exists as *-dde* denoting ‘of the nature, quality, appearance of’,⁵³ and even combines with *llug* (the Welsh equivalent of OI *lóch*) to form *llugdde* ‘shining, brilliant’. Nicolaisen has also posited this suffix as perhaps existing in Pictish in the form of **-idio-* or **-odio-*.⁵⁴

It may be possible that some of these names, where there are no early forms containing a dental, in fact do not have this suffix. Names containing this term as a simplex formation are attested; *Leuca* is mentioned below under Loughor, and the *Leuci* were a Celtic Belgic tribe, meaning ‘the white ones’.⁵⁵ Although this cannot be proven, it should be borne in mind that the *-de* suffix is only actually evinced for one hydronym in the set.

The implication in the traditional interpretation has been that Lochty names come from a *-de* ending and that Lochy names derive either from a simplex formation or are from the same origin as the

⁴⁸ D. S. Wodtko, *Sekundäradjektive in den altirischen Glossen* (Innsbruck, 1995).

⁴⁹ *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, edited by Quin, p. 165.

⁵⁰ R. Thurneysen, *A Grammar of Old Irish* (Dublin, 1946), p. 220.

⁵¹ Rivet and Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain*, p. 360.

⁵² Thurneysen, *A Grammar of Old Irish*, p. 222.

⁵³ *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru*, PDF format (Caerdydd, 2004), p. 1564.

⁵⁴ W. F. H. Nicolaisen, ‘Studies in Scottish Hydronymy’ (unpublished B.Litt. dissertation, University of Aberdeen, 1956), p. 124.

⁵⁵ Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*, p. 34.

Lochty names but have suffered more phonological weakening than Lochty names, and have lost the medial *-t-*, with the Lochsie example as an intermediate point. This is not the case, however; there are two sound changes which complicate the matter: Firstly, the internal consonant cluster represented in the old form *Loogdae*, would probably have been pronounced as [ɣd]. At some point in the Middle Ages, the sound change [d] to [ɣ] occurred, which would have made, [ɣɣ] > [ɣ] or [χ], thus **lōɣd̥ə* > **lōɣɣə* > **lōɣə* (> **lōχə*). This would have had the effect of not only effectively removing or hiding the *-de* suffix, but also making it indistinguishable from any forms that did not have that suffix, if there were any.⁵⁶

Secondly, the modern alternation between Lochty and Lochy probably reflects internal G sound changes, whereby a final velar voiceless stop becomes pre-aspirated, as in [k] > [χk]; another sound change made [χt] change into [χk], thus the final consonant clusters in the two words G *nochd* and *sloc*, for example, would converge. Under the traditional interpretation, one would expect that where an old form does not have a *-t-*, the newer form would not have it either. In fact, there are several instances of variation, only one of which conforms to this pattern. This is our most famous example: modern Loch Lochy from *stagnum Loogdae*. Others are *Inverlochy* 1503, *Inverlochty* 1549 modern Inverlochy (mentioned above), showing an alternation between the two versions, and Lochy Burn which is on record as *torrens de Lochtie* 1622.

It seems then that some of these names were reanalysed to some extent with an epenthetic *-t-*, where there was none earlier, as if perhaps the earlier form was closer to *Lochty* than *Lochy*. In anglicised areas, the written forms seem to have gained enough currency to become the standard pronunciation (perhaps falling into line with the Lochty settlement names, if these names do in fact come from G **loch taigh* ‘black house’). This would explain the distribution of Lochty names and names with Lochty on record in the map below, where Lochty river names lie in anglicised areas and in the same vicinity as Lochty settlement names.

⁵⁶ Many thanks to O. J. Padel for this suggestion.

This same process can perhaps be seen in other names as well. There is Loch Ore FIF which has old forms as *Loch Torrens* and *Loch Torre*,⁵⁷ where it would seem the same process occurred. Lochter Burn mentioned above could possibly be a candidate here, if the second syllable represents an adjectival suffix.

Although this process is not fully understood, and formally is problematic, since it is normally a voiceless stop which becomes pre-aspirated, not a voiceless fricative which gains stops, the old forms do show an epenthetic *-t-* emerging and only being preserved in anglicised areas. This evidence does suggest some sort of phonological or orthographical interchange rather than Lochty names deriving from stems with suffixes in *-de* and Lochy names without.

Another suffix which deserves mention at this point is the Old Celtic feminine morpheme **-tiā*, although this cannot be accepted as a derivation for the Lochy mentioned in the *Vita Columbae*. This is actually attested in some Gaulish personal names. **Louketiā* in the masculine appears in inscriptions as LEUCETIOS, which was an epithet for the god Mars but originally a Celtic war god perhaps with connotations of lightning; his name is cognate with OI *lóche*, gen. *lóchet* 'lightning'. In the feminine form occurs his consort, IUNO LUCETIA,⁵⁸ it also occurs as a place-name in the original name for Paris (*Lucetia Parisorum*).⁵⁹

As far as the name Lochsie is concerned, there are two possibilities as to its origin. The first is that it is not related to these other names at all, and that it derives from some other term.⁶⁰ This is hardly satisfactory, however, as there seem to be no candidates. The second explanation is that the name possesses the same term but has a separate suffix to Lochy and Lochty names. Although very rare, Nicolaisen points out that Broxy Burn BNF (NJ5064) and possibly *Allt Chamasaidh* ROS

⁵⁷ *Loch Torre* from Hector Boece 1540, Chronicle of Scotland, *Loch Torrens* from a map by Gerhard Mercator 1512–1594. Thanks to Simon Taylor for these old forms and identification.

⁵⁸ A. Holder, *Alt-Celtischer Sprachschatz* (Leipzig, 1904), p. 195.

⁵⁹ Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*, p. 34.

⁶⁰ Watson, *Scottish Place-Name Papers*, p. 81.

(NH1858) share a sigmatic extension.⁶¹ The extension is also preserved in insular P-Celtic, at least in the Welsh word *maes* ‘plane, field’, deriving from **mag-est-u*,⁶² from an original root **mag-*. The Lochsie flows into Shee Water in Glenshee (from G *Gleann Sidhe* ‘Glen of the Fairies’), and the coincidental similarity of endings in the etymologically unrelated names may have influenced the name Lochsie by analogy or helped it to retain its distinctive termination.

All this leads to the following conclusion: that the suffix in old forms of Lochty and Lochy names is not in fact to be derived from OI *día* ‘goddess’, but is actually from an Old Celtic suffix of some kind that, at least in the *Vita Columbae*, has been changed by folk etymology.

The stem: linguistic and semantic variation between names deriving from **louk-* and **luk-*

The stem **louk-* or **leuk-* meaning ‘shining’ was very productive in personal names, river names and derived settlement names throughout Celtic Europe and occurred with a variety of suffixes. Here is a short survey of those names appearing in the British Isles. Although it should be noted that not all these identifications have been universally accepted, it does show the general extent of these types of names in Britain.

Lugar AYR (NS5821)⁶³

Leucaro Antonine Itinerary 4841 ‘place on the river Leucara’

Glenlochar AYR (NX7364) on the Dee⁶⁴

Leucopibia (Λουκοπιβία) Ravenna 10737

This form is obscure or corrupt, and the identification with Glenlochar is not certain.

⁶¹ Nicolaisen, ‘Studies in Scottish Hydronymy’, p. 119.

⁶² K. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), p. 445.

⁶³ Rivet and Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain*, pp. 388–90; and Isaac, *Place-Names in Ptolemy’s Geography*.

⁶⁴ Rivet and Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain*, p. 390.

Lochar Water LAN (NY0566 – NY0273)
Locchyrr R. 1644 Pont Map 35

The Luggie DNB (NS7072)

Wales

Loughor CRM (SS5798)

W. Llychwr, Llwhwr

Leuca Ravenna 10829

Leugosena, Ravenna 10830

Afon Llugwy DEN (SH6961)⁶⁵

Most of these modern names contain a voiced velar stop, i.e. [g] from an Old Celtic [k], which is expected of words in P-Celtic languages, whilst in the Q-Celtic languages, Old Celtic [k] became [χ] written as -ch-. The [g] in these examples reveals that the names in question are clearly British in nature, which is exemplified by their Scottish south westerly and Welsh distribution.⁶⁶

It has been fairly clearly demonstrated that Pictish was probably a P-Celtic language (with perhaps a non-Indo-European substrate). Thus the velar fricative of Lochy and Lochty, whatever the derivation, definitely reflects a Q-Celtic development. A Pictish tribe mentioned by Ptolemy as the Λούγιοι or *Logi*, which is commonly thought to be cognate with OI *loch*, and to mean ‘The Black Ones’, possibly ‘The Ravens’, further illustrates this point.⁶⁷ Secondly, there is no P-Celtic *Aberlochy, but several instances of Q-Celtic Inverlochy.

Functionally, there is a geographical difference with the term

⁶⁵ Nicolaisen, ‘Studies in Scottish Hydronymy’, p. 112.

⁶⁶ The Welsh river name *Llychwr* or *Llwhwr* is formally problematic, since one would expect a [g] rather than a [ch], but for the purposes of this argument it is the old forms which are important. See Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain*, p. 688 n.2, who posits a by-form **Luccarā*.

⁶⁷ A. Ahlqvist, ‘Two ethnic names in Ptolemy’, *Bulletin of The Board of Celtic Studies*, 26 (1975), 143–46.

between those lying approximately within the ‘Pictish area’ and those lying outside it. If the territory of names containing **lòch* is compared to Nicolaisen’s map of Pit- names and the map of Pictish symbol-bearing cross-slabs in Scotland,⁶⁸ which are taken as markers for the general range of Pictish influence, it can be observed that there is a correlation. Names containing **lòch* in the West of Scotland do not occur only with watercourses but also with typical Gaelic elements such as *drum*, *leth-tìr* and *lairig* etc. (as discussed above), and as such should be considered simply as Gaelic names. On the other hand, the names with **lòch* in Eastern Scotland (i.e. within the ‘Pictish’ area) relate purely to primary river names.⁶⁹ Perhaps these river names are Gaelic assimilations of a Pictish equivalent, phonetically close to *W llug*. Within the P-Celtic Scottish onomasticon, this could have been a term predominantly applied to watercourses, much like *W pefr* (perhaps its counterpart). If the term did originally belong to a P-Celtic substrate, and was later assimilated to its Q-Celtic equivalent, this might explain the discrepancy between the term’s relative scarcity in Old Irish toponymy (and lexicon: it is never used in the Táin, for instance, and evidence for it is virtually non-existent outside scholastic usage) and its greater use in Scottish toponymy.

From a semantic standpoint, although Watson consistently translates this term as ‘dark’, it seems that it could have originally meant ‘shining or reflective black’ in Scottish hydronymy. In Old Irish it seems to simply mean ‘shining’, yet in Scotland, there are two instances of translations. Firstly Adomnán’s *nigra* from *niger*, in Latin meaning ‘dark, dusky’. Secondly there is possibly Black Burn for an original Lochty Burn, implying perhaps that the original meaning lies somewhere between ‘black’ and ‘shining’. If the Ptolemaic Pictish tribal name *Logi* mentioned above can be translated as ‘raven’, then ‘reflective black’ would be an apt description indeed.

⁶⁸ W. F. H. Nicolaisen, *Scottish Place-Names*, new edn (Edinburgh, 2001), pp. 198–99.

⁶⁹ Lochty settlement names are an exception to this, but they have been disregarded since their earliest forms are relatively late, they could be transferred or derived from their hydronymic counterparts, and in many cases the vowel length cannot be ascertained.

Conclusion

It seems that there are three possible conclusions which can be drawn. The first is that Adomnán's derivation was essentially correct. He was interested in place-names; it is known that he studied Jerome's treatise on the Hebrew place-names mentioned in the Bible,⁷⁰ and *Vita Columbae* is peppered with other attempted derivations of place-names.⁷¹

The second alternative is that the secondary element OI *dea* 'goddess' is indeed correct, but that the root is **louk-* or **leuk-* meaning 'shining'. Thus, the derivation is OC **louko-diā* 'bright goddess' as suggested by Diack.⁷² Adomnán's alteration was due to folk etymology, that is, a misinterpretation that becomes commonly believed and changes the way a word is pronounced; hence OI *lóch* 'shining' became considered to be *loch* 'black'. This would have been consistent with Adomnán's own attitudes about pre-Christian religion in Scotland; black had negative connotations in his culture as much as ours and he may have been willing to portray pagan supernatural figures negatively, whilst preserving the idea of a deity connected with light for Christianity.

The next possible conclusion is also that Adomnán's alteration was due to folk etymology, but that the name originally meant 'black/shining' and the termination reflects a variety of Old Celtic suffixes, or rather, the same suffix with different extensions, i.e. **-odi-* (or the later Old Irish *-de /-dae* suffix), perhaps **-iā-* (later *-ie/-y*) and **-st-* (later *-sie*). One or more instances of this name could have been altered again by folk etymology to be pronounced and spelt to mean 'black goddess', but were etymologically from another source. This type of reanalysis is consistent with the type of word play indulged in by scholars of this period such as Adomnán and Isidore.

This final argument fits best with the linguistic, onomastic and historical facts:

⁷⁰ Adomnán of Iona, trans. R. Sharpe, *Life of St Columba* (London, 1995), p. 54.

⁷¹ For example Anderson and Anderson, *Adomnan's Life of St Columba*, p. 274.

⁷² Nicolaisen, 'Studies in Scottish Hydronymy', p. 120.

- The phrase ‘black goddess’ cannot be satisfactorily ascribed to any known deity.
- The vowel length in certain records suggests the names derive from G **lòch* or OI *lóch* ‘shining’, not *loch* ‘black’.
- Nowhere else are river names deriving from OC **deiua* attested with adjectives from the same linguistic stratum.
- The stem **louk-* meaning ‘shining’ is well attested as a primary Celtic river name; **luk-* or its derivations such as OI *loch* ‘black’ is not.

It should be stressed that this conclusion is speculative and not complete. It is almost certain that other factors are also working here which have not been discussed, but this article has at least attempted to pave the way for discussion of a derivation that has remained largely unchallenged for almost thirteen hundred years.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the following people, organisations and websites:

Ms A. Burnyeat, Mr I. Fraser, Prof. W. Gillies, G. Isaac, D. King, M. King, Dr E. Lyle, Prof. W. Nicolaisen, Dr O. Padel, Dr S. Taylor, Edinburgh University Library, School of Scottish and Celtic Studies, National Map Library of Scotland.

www.monikie.org.uk, <http://edina.ac.uk>, www.nls.uk,
www.chartingthenation.lib.ed.ac.uk

Map showing positions of discussed terms.

