

# דינה

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# Danu (Irish goddess)

In Irish mythology, **Danu** ([ˈdanu]; modern Irish **Dana** [ˈd̪ˠanˠə]) is a hypothetical mother goddess of the Tuatha Dé Danann (Old Irish: “The peoples of the goddess Danu”). Though primarily seen as an ancestral figure, some Victorian sources also associate her with the land.<sup>[1]</sup>

## 1 Name

The nominative form of the name, *Danu*, is not found in any medieval Irish text, but is rather a reconstruction by modern scholars based on the genitive *Danann* (also spelled *Donand* or *Danand*), which is the only form attested in the primary sources (e.g. in the collective name of the Irish gods, *Tuatha De Danann* “Tribe of the Gods of Danu”).

The etymology of the name has been a matter of much debate since the 19th century, with some earlier scholars favoring a link with the Vedic water goddess *Danu*, whose name is derived from the Proto-Indo-European root *\*d<sup>h</sup>enh2-* “to run, to flow”, which may also lie behind the ancient name for the river Danube, *Danuuius* (perhaps of Celtic origin, though it is also possible that it is an early Scythian loanword in Celtic).<sup>[2]</sup>

In one of the more recent examinations of the name *Danu*, renowned linguist Eric Hamp rejects the traditional etymologies as fantasy, proposing instead that *\*Danu* is rather derived from the same root as Latin *bonus* (Old Latin *duenos*), from Proto-Indo-European *\*dueno-* “good”, via a Proto-Celtic nominative singular n-stem *\*Duonū* meaning “Aristocrat”.<sup>[3]</sup>

## 2 In mythology

Danu has no myths or legends associated with her in any surviving medieval Irish texts, but she has possible parallels with the Welsh literary figure (or goddess) *Dôn*, who is the mother figure of the medieval tales in the *Mabinogion*.<sup>[4]</sup>

## 3 References

- [1] Squire, Charles *Celtic Myth and Legend*, p. 34: “Danu herself probably represented the earth and its fruitfulness, and one might compare her with the Greek Demeter. All the other gods are, at least by title, her children.”

- [2] Koch, John (ed.), *Celtic Culture: a Historical Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO, 2006, p. 569

- [3] Hamp, Eric, “The Dag(h)d(h)ae and his relatives”, in: Sawicki, L. and Shalev, D. (eds.), *Donum grammaticum: Studies in Latin and Celtic Linguistics in Honour of Hannah Rosen*, Peeters, 2002, p. 163-169.

- [4] O hOgain, Dáithí (1999). *The Sacred Isle : Belief and Religion in Pre-Christian Ireland* (1. publ. ed.). Woodbridge: Boydell [u.a.] p. 65. ISBN 9780851157474.

## 4 External links

- Associations between the Welsh *Dôn* and the Irish *Dana*

## 5 Text and image sources, contributors, and licenses

### 5.1 Text

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