

A Sumbel is a formal drinking ritual composed of toasting, hails, oath-taking, the recitation of poetry or song, and other forms of verbal expression. The Sumbel is composed of rounds, in which the horn is passed in a circle, each person saying their hail or other appropriate verbal expression, drinking, and passing the horn along. The purpose of the Sumbel is great; words spoken at Sumbel have a great power to them imbued by the nature of the holy rite. Oath-taking is a common part of Sumbel, as it is considered to be especially meaningful and especially binding to take an oath before the gods and the community during this rite. This rite not only connects us with the gods and goddesses, but with our ancestors, our community, and to a degree with ourselves. Here we may express ourselves in a holy forum, allowing us to define our place in the community as well as honor the gods and goddesses.

A typical Sumbel can be broken up into four parts.

1. An introduction by whoever is hosting the Sumbel
2. The First Round – Dedicated to the Gods and Goddesses – they are hailed at this time.
3. The Second Round – Dedicated to the Ancestors and Heroes gone by – they are hailed at this time.
4. The Third Round – This is the time for all to make oaths, speak poetry, sing a song, etc.

A Sumbel can have many more rounds than three, and those rounds are usually "anything goes" as long as what is spoken is in the proper vein and with the spirit of a holy gathering.

A Sumbel usually ends with the pouring out of the horn's remaining drink much like that which is done at a blót's end. The horn is refilled multiple times during the Sumbel, of course, and is sometimes filled once more for the libation. The rite is then declared at an end. Much of the etiquette held for a blót applies here.