

SAQRA'S CULT – REJECTING ESTABLISHED VALUES

Although Saqra's Cult originates from the multi-cultural hotbed of our capital Brussels, the band's thematic approach is dedicated to the intriguing Inca culture. Today marks the release of their sophomore album "*The 9th king*" which was a great opportunity to ask the band some questions concerning the new record and its background. Guitarist S. and drummer A. give some insights in Saqra's Cult mysterious universe. (JOKKE)



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Hail! Before talking about the new album, I would like to go back to the roots of the band. When did you start the band?

Hello and thank you for your interest in Saqra's Cult. The band was founded in 2014 by G. & S., respectively drummer and guitarist. After a few rehearsals we were joined by L. and A., who were already playing in the band Maleficence with S. before.

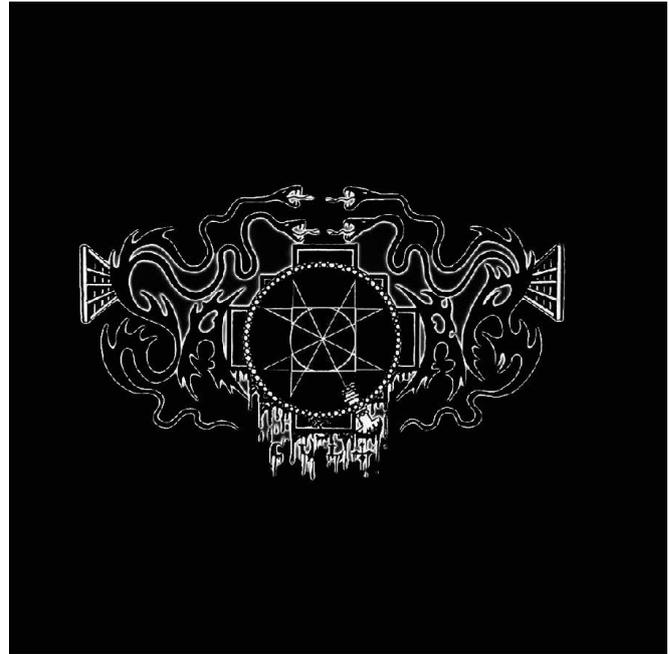
Our goal was to recreate a black metal entity based on acts such as old Mayhem, Leviathan, Xibalba, Katharsis... but quickly we developed our own way of writing the material, haunted, twisted and aggressive, based on uncommon guitar riffs. This resulted in the recording of our first demo «*Initiation to forgotten rites*», home recorded in 2015, soon followed by our first full length «*Forgotten Rites*», recorded at Blackout Studio in 2017.

Why did you choose for the name Saqra's Cult?

The name Saqra's Cult was chosen to refer to a mean, restless entity. It's a close synonym to Supay, which is the devil in Inca culture.

What symbols can be seen in your band logo?

Around the Q you can see a Chakana or "Andean Cross". The chacana is not simply a geometric motif, but represents the very close links that unite heaven and earth. The square is suggested to represent the other two levels of existence. The three levels of existence are *Hana Pacha* (the upper world inhabited by the superior gods), *Kay Pacha*, (the world of our everyday existence) and *Uku Pacha* (the underworld inhabited by spirits of the dead, the ancestors, their overlords and various deities having close contact to the Earth plane). The Q bar represents a Tumi, sacrifice knife. Inside the Q is a solar clock. Once again to show how important the sun was for the Incas.



The Inca-concept is part of Saqra's Cult DNA since former drummer Gabriel Tapia has his roots in Ecuador. Do the other members share the same interest for the mysticism and traditions regarding the Inca's?

We all have interest in mysticism and traditions in general. At the root of this project lies the Inca culture, as G. is an artist from Ecuador who developed his creations about this part of his identity. We chose to embrace this subject as a manner of putting in perspective the established way of thinking about art and society. The band is not to be seen as a folk band that uses these ceremonies to develop a scenic and theatrical distinction, but more as a basis, through glimpses of the Inca history and culture, to reconsider and destroy the way western religion was established as the prime filter to understand the world we live in.

Did you ever visit Peru or another Latin-American country where the mighty Inca's once ruled and what impression did it have on you?

S. : Ten years ago, I went to Peru to travel and meet relatives who live there. I've indeed visited sacred Inca places, some of them more touristical than others and as you can imagine, those are very impressive and solemn places. I was also introduced to Quechua because one friend was teaching it in school. I've always had interest in their cultures, so when we had the idea to create this band with G., I was of course motivated by his cultural perspectives.

What is one of the most important things that you learned from studying the life and society of the Inca-empire?

I think there isn't a fact/history that is more relevant than another. It's in itself the aspect of embracing a new cosmology that understands differently the world we live in and has different answers and questions to apprehend what we experience in life (and after).

Will Saqra's Cult continue to explore Inca-related themes in the future now G. is no longer part of the band?

Yes. It's a complex and intriguing theme so we'll continue to explore it for the next releases. It's another way of questioning our values. Black metal was once the reject of established values, and we intend to continue that way. Although we have no intention to use the Inca culture as a folklore to add on stage like a band as Cult of Fire is doing for example (with a lot of respect for that band). We'll continue to play ancient-inspired black metal, about that specific thematic.

Why did he leave?

G. left the band just after the recording of "*Forgotten Rites*" because of disponibility but he remains part of the identity of the band as he is always responsible for all the artworks. He stills work as an artist and now also is a tattoo artist, you may sometimes see some Saqra's Cult-like artwork tattoo here and then.

The essence of Saqra's Cult lies in black metal although one can also hear influences from death and thrash metal. Which bands are of great importance for the sound of Saqra's Cult?

I want to answer with classics: Darkthrone, Burzum, Dissection, Mayhem, Leviathan, Morbid, Katharsis, Archgoat, Rotting Christ, Black Witchery ... but we can add other influences for the guitar riffing and atmosphere as examples: The Chasm, The Ruins of Beverast, Deathspell Omega, Krieg, Hate Forest, Blood of Kingu, Volahn, Rhinocervs ... It's basically everything we listen to that builds our sound, but the list is way too long to summarize here.

What has to be clear, in regards with some comments about our band, is that our musical intention is not to be an Inca folk black metal band, that would not make any sense. Neither is it to be an orthodox black metal band. These are not our musical visions, and I think it can be heard, but with the "scene" slowly opening to the uberground, you hear plenty of things now...



Your new record is entitled "*The 9th king*" which, I assume, refers to Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui, the 9th Inca king. What is so intriguing about this historical figure besides the fact that most archaeologists now believe that the famous Inca site of Machu Picchu was built as an estate for Pachacuti?

You're right. The four songs on the album refer to Pachacuti Yupanqui, the 9th king. At first, it was just a song, the first of the new record. But after reading more about him we've decided that making a complete work referring to this powerful figure would make more sense. There are so many legends and stories around Pachacuti Yupanqui. Although he initiated the

expansion of the Inca Empire, we focused more on the legends surrounding him. Often based on established facts, it is the mystical way they are told that fascinated us. We found a fertile soil to build a coherent musical and lyrical universe.

One can hear some traditional chanting on some of the new songs. Were they performed by the band members? Is this a typical Inca-way of chanting? They sound like some ritualistic ceremonial chanting?

All the chantings were performed by A. and the backing vocals by J. It's not a traditional Inca way of singing. The point was to give more madness in the singing. This mad way of singing is always correlated to a precise and often violent passage of the story that we want to narrate. This brings a special aura, reinforcing in our opinion, the violence or the sadness of the lyrics. To be honest, it is really difficult to use original traditional Inca melodies into black metal as they are always cheerful.

For the recordings of "*The 9th king*", you returned to the Blackout Studios. What makes these recording facilities one of the best in Belgium for recording metal music?

Their professionalism, enlightened advices and the good people. They are true musicians who know the subject and true sound engineers who work really well. S. has been there with Possession as well, it's part of the Brussels family, and loyalty is important in that scene. Their sound and techniques are better every time we come and we always have a great experience there. It's the same with our label, Amor Fati. We are working with Marius since the beginning for the same reasons. He's now part of our family.



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It seems Saqra's Cult never played a lot of concerts in Belgium and has always looked more behind the borders with gigs in Germany, France, Switzerland and even Iceland. Is there a specific reason why your performances on Belgian soil are rather scarce?

There is no reason except that we don't want to play too often in the same place, it has to be a special event, like our release party in Bunker and next march with ATLC festival.

For Brussels, your hometown, the legendary Magasin 4 has been of great importance for underground gigs. Unfortunately, this concert hall will soon close its doors. What are some of your greatest memories connected with this venue?

We'll play there for the first and the last time in March. We played there twice with our previous band Maleficence (one for the Detest record farewell gig), and some other times with Possession. It's always special to play in our home town. There are countless memories in that venue, but also countless lacks of memories... The March festival will be the last chance to celebrate it.

S., since you are also part of Possession, I wanted to take the opportunity to ask what we can expect from this band in 2019?

Before answering, I want to make clear that the musical projects of both Saqra's Cult and Possession are very different. Saqra's Cult is not a Possession's member side project, it's an entity on itself. Both bands are doing black/death metal with some shared influences, but it's not the same tuning, spirit, atmospheres although I do write music for both, with the same passion. Obviously, Possession members and Saqra's Cult members are belonging to the same sick-fuck Belgian family, but I think it would be disrespectful for both entities not to see them respectively as separate musical projects.

About your question, Possession just finished the recording of 4 songs that are going to be released on two splits. One with Venefixion and one with Spite. We also have plenty of gigs in Germany, France, Belgium, UK, Ireland ...

But there are plenty other good entities to watch from Belgium in 2019 : Slaughter Messiah went into the studio, Dikasterion are going to release something, Heinous as well, Pox, and some other projects you'll find out about soon enough, I'm surely forgetting plenty. This scene has been active for a long time and slowly gets more and more interesting.

Finally, what 5 records blew your mind in 2018?

A.: Master's Hammer with "*Fascinator*", Demonomancy with "*Poisoned atonement*", Xibalba Itzaes with "*Ah Tza Xibalba Itzaes*", Culte des Ghoules with "*Sinister or treading the darker paths*", Sargeist with "*Unbound*" and Svartidaudi with '*Revelations of the red sword*'.

S.: Moenen of Xezbeth with "*Ancient spells of darkness*", Temple Desecration with "*Whirlwinds of fathomless chaos*", Spite with "*Antimoshiach*", Abigor with "*Höllenzwang (Chronicles of perdition)*" and Galvanizer with "*Sanguine vigil*".

... And plenty of others : Malthusian, Ploughsare, Antlers, Funeral Mist, Satan, Torture Rack, Death Fortress, Culte des ghoules, Sorcier des glaces, Dikasterion, Traveler, Archgoat, Judas Priest, Varathron, Summoning, Primordial, Runemagick, Evoken ...

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