

The Church of Psilomethoxin (Notes for Further Investigation)

Reference: <https://psilomethoxin.com/> (the church's website, has some of their back story and details about membership application and fees (\$55 annual fee), it does not disclose the price for the actual product they sell as "psilomethoxin" but they sell it to members for \$175 for half ounce and \$300 per ounce according to a member who I am in contact with)

For more information see the wikipedia page:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/4-Hydroxy-5-methoxydimethyltryptamine>

And especially visit the links toward the bottom under References.

On November 30th, 2022 the church reported having 500 members: <https://psilomethoxin.com/grateful-for-500-members-on-our-one-year-anniversary/>

They are sending out this "psilomethoxin" product all over the United States and its co-founder claims they have sent it to "thousands" of people (reference below).

While the background story on how they allegedly produce psilomethoxin is at least plausible on the surface, I was immediately skeptical about it nonetheless. They claim to feed 5-MeO-DMT to psychedelic mushrooms (via putting it into the substrate) and the mushroom takes it up and hydroxylates it creating [4-HO-5-MeO-DMT](#), they claim the idea came from Alexander (Sasha) Shulgin who is almost considered a "god" in the psychedelic community. Furthermore they claim their methods result in mushrooms that produce **only** 4-HO-5-MeO-DMT and no psilocybin or psilocin - my immediate thoughts were "how could they possibly get the mushroom to not produce any psilocybin whatsoever?" Then my thoughts were, well maybe they are somehow removing the psilocybin after processing, otherwise how could it possibly be a legal product as they claim?? But no, church founder Ian Benuis reveals (interview below) that they do not do any processing other than drying and powdering the mushrooms. But honestly I had my doubts that the process they describe would even work in the first place.

Since I'm involved in the psychedelic scene, I initially contacted the Church of Psilomethoxin through their website, requesting a small sample for high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) analysis as part of a community review but the group completely ignored me (the first red flag). I didn't think much about it after that, until I saw the below interview that Hamilton Morris did:

<https://youtu.be/p-bkFf6f6qc>

At 56:38 Hamilton talks specifically about psilomethoxin (responding to a question that brought it up) "I did look at a sample of that material and I'll say the results are not conclusive at the moment. **I did not detect it** in a first analysis but I'm going to look again and see if I can find it..." (a new major red flag for me)

The cofounder of the church is "Ian Benuis":

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ianbenouis/>



Ian Benouis · 3rd

Co-Founder Church of Psilomethoxin. Entheogenic Intellectual Property Attorney creating and advising holy sacrament churches. Served as Chairman of the Board, Executive Director and General Counsel for 501c3's.

Austin, Texas Metropolitan Area · [Contact info](#)

[Psychedelic Musalman](#) 

7,168 followers · 500+ connections

About

Ian Benouis is a West Point graduate, former Blackhawk helicopter pilot, US Army officer and combat veteran who participated in Operation Just Cause in the Republic of Panama. This operation was the largest combat operation in US history focused directly on the War on Drugs.

He describes himself as “a West Point graduate, former US Army officer, Blackhawk helicopter pilot and combat veteran”. Someone should attempt to verify his background, it would be an even more entertaining story if even that was faked but I have no idea, haven't researched it. It also says he is an attorney by the way, so expect lawsuits if you publish this story (one more reason I want absolute anonymity and confidentiality).

Ian Benouis was also formerly a [Pfizer sales rep](#):



District Hospital Representative

Pfizer

1990 - 1993 · 3 yrs

Received fastest promotion in company's history from Sales Representative to District Hospital Representative.

Won the 1993 3rd Quarter contest for having the highest sales in the company of a new product (225% of quota).

Finished 1992 ranked eighth out of sixty District Hospital Representatives nationally.

Brought territory from the bottom third in the region to the top third, with a maximum performance score for 1991 (116% of quota).

Co-Founder of the church, [Greg Lake](#) is also a lawyer:



Greg Lake · 3rd

Co-founder Church of Psilomethoxin

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, United States · [Contact info](#)

500+ connections

[Message](#) [+ Follow](#) [More](#)



Church of Psilomethoxin



University of Texas at Tyler

About

I am a trial and appellate attorney, entheogenic church consultant, author of the "Psychedelics in Mental Health Series," and Co-Founder of www.entheoconnect.com.

You can see an hour long interview with Ian here:

<https://youtu.be/SeROOGFnwek>

Not sure if it really means anything but I noticed he touches his nose a bunch of times and I've read this is [a sign someone may be lying](#).



At 17:10 he is asked "How long is the experience" and he basically answers "It seems to parallel the same hours as a psilocybin experience" (another red flag).

At 28:30 he says they have shared this product with "thousands of people" (and "tens of thousands of doses") and the people who have tried it admit it is not like 5-MeO-DMT, it doesn't have a sharp peak, it's more smooth (Me: essentially people describe it as a low dose or microdose of cubensis mushrooms, another red flag)

39:17 He says you don't have to do analytical testing (chromatography/mass spec etc to measure things) because you can just bioassay it (eat some yourself) and "figure it out" haha.

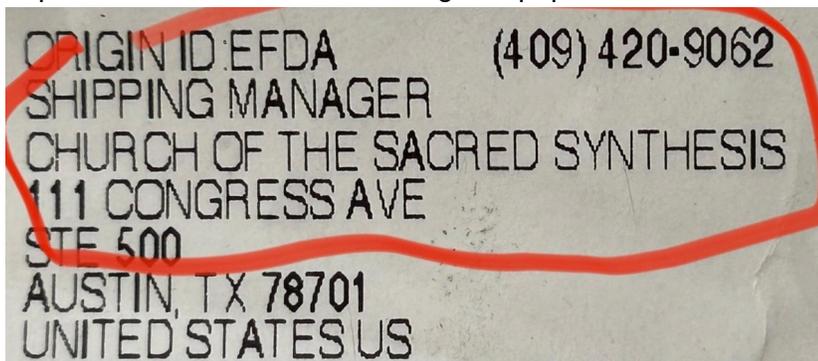
39:40 he describes dosing and the range mentioned is identical to cubensis mushrooms (coincidence or another red flag?)

At 45:00 he describes how wonderful it is to short circuit normal drug testing protocols and just give it to thousands of people and collect anecdotes instead, apparently informed consent is a good substitute for safety studies and animal testing and scientific rigor.

At 46:00 mark he makes the claim that there is NO psilocybin in the product (the basis for claims that the product is completely legal/unscheduled). He also claims it's not subject to the analog drugs act because it's not a hallucinogen.

Because I'm quite connected with the psychedelic community, I put the call out for someone to send me a sample of this group's alleged psilomethoxin product so that I could have it properly tested (I'm friends with several testing labs that specialize in mushroom testing). It didn't take me that long to find someone

willing to send me a sample. Here is a picture of the shipping label used by the church (presented just as evidence that the sample did in fact come from them) but note they use the name "Church of the Sacred Synthesis" on the package which is a legal entity linked to Ian Benouis and George Lake as per opencorporates.com (not sure why but the officer registered as "Ian Benouis" was removed then they added "Kemal Ian Benouis" but according to this source they are the same person: http://www.theamericanmuslim.org/tam.php/features/articles/benouis_kemal_ian/)



The product is being shipped out of Austin, Texas which is where Ian lives according to his LinkedIn page.

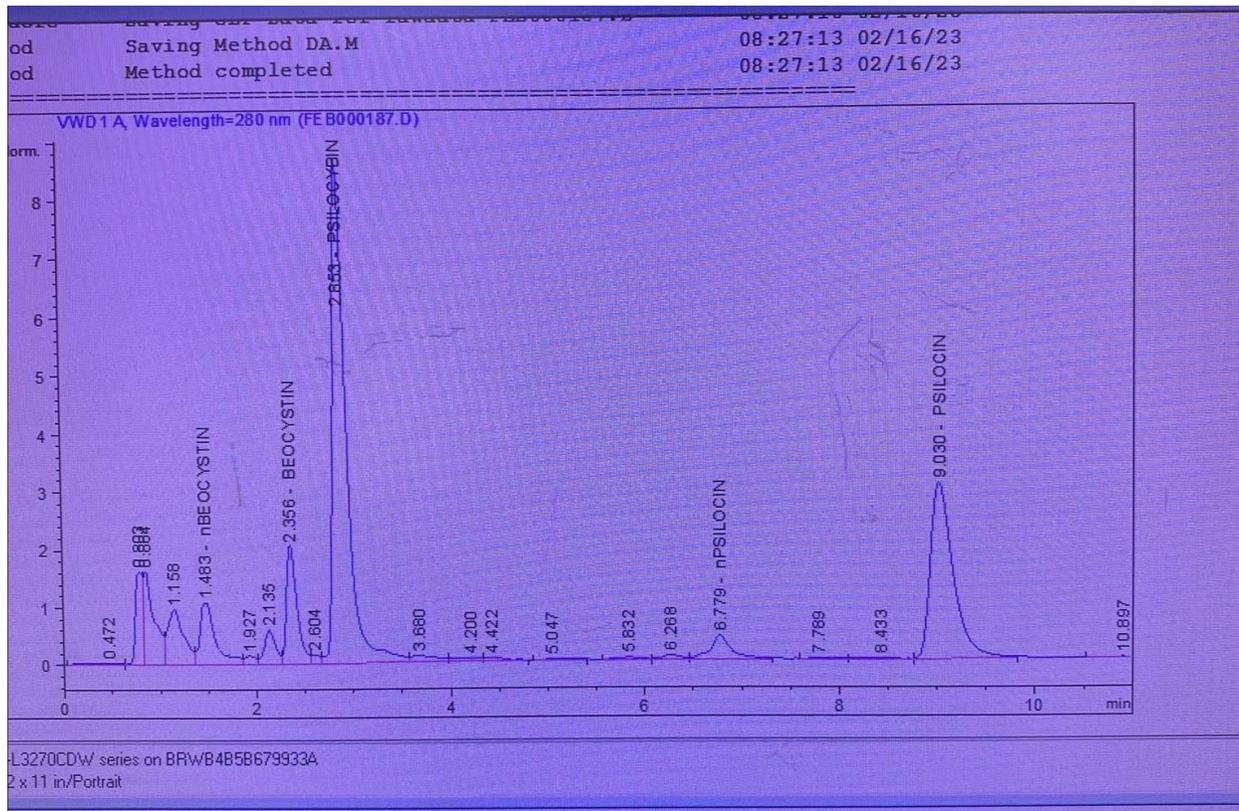
It is a fine gray powder that looks and smells exactly like every mushroom powder I've seen (nothing notable or unusual about it):



I immediately sent the sample to a lab for testing. I can provide the details of the lab if required for the story but he is also worried about retaliation just like I am, and wants anonymity for his protection (as I do). You can easily obtain your own sample and send it to a lab for testing if you wanted to (labs that specialize in mushroom testing include: [TrypLabs](#), [Tryptomics](#), [Rose City Labs](#), [Flourish Labs](#), [Hyphae Labs](#) and [MagicMyco](#)).

Anyway, the results came back and the product these guys are selling looks like a FRAUD. It is nothing more than a run of the mill psychedelic mushroom dried and powdered, probably a cubensis mushroom based on the alkaloid analysis. It contained 0.87% psilocybin and 0.13% psilocin which is a pretty typical result for cubensis mushrooms. Furthermore, there were NO unusual spikes on the chromatogram that

would indicate the presence of anything novel/new/unexpected. In other words, it appears there is ZERO “psilomethoxin” in this product. The product is obviously totally illegal for this group to be selling in the U.S.



100% methanol Extraction Chem Station report

Name	n/a	Analyst	n/a		
Sample	Psilo Methoxin	Analysis	HPLC-UV		
E. Tech	UAE/ Sono 48hr 100% MeOH	Date	2/9/2023		
Matrix	PCB/ PCN	Date Tested	2/20/2023		
Moisture %	n/a	PCNE(mg/g)	PCNE(%)	PCBE Total (mg/g)	PCBE Total (%)
<u>Equivalent Values</u>		7.53	0.75%	10.49	1.05%
Compound		(mg/g)	(%)	Total Compounds Found:	
nBEO		0.731	0.07308	12.83	1.28%
BEO		1.009	0.10090		
PCB		8.681	0.86808	This sample was tested anonymously for research purposes. <i>Anonymous</i>	
nPCN		1.110	0.11100		
PCN		1.300	0.13000		
Totals		12.831	1.28306		

It would be hard to imagine but perhaps Ian and Greg have avoided doing the proper analytical testing just so that they can have "plausible deniability", they know its psychoactive, and they know it could potentially help people (because psilocybin has been proven to help people) so maybe the thinking is "We can just not test it and hope no one does and we'll just pretend its psilomethoxin for legal purposes"? Notice in that hour long interview linked above, Ian doesn't talk about analytical testing at all, he describes testing it on himself by just taking it starting with small doses and he says something dumb like (paraphrase) "I knew it was psilomethoxin because I could feel my teeth tingling and that's what happens when I use 5-MeO-DMT" haha. He says he has never tried more than 1.5g, they ask him how long the experience lasts and he says "the same as psilocybin" (hahah) and he talks about feedback they've gotten from THOUSANDS of people and they all say it's nothing like 5-MeO-DMT and it has no sharp peak, and it's basically just like a microdose or low dose of cubensis! (because that's what it is). In the interview he even "poo-poo's" analytical testing. Furthermore, their website basically says "we tried to do analytical testing but IT'S NOT POSSIBLE" (WOW!! So they even admit they have no real evidence!): <https://psilomethoxin.com/psilomethoxin-the-history-testing-pharmacodynamics-and-pharmacokinetics/> "We have performed GC-MS multiple times on our sacrament and to date, no one has been able to detect the molecule using this destructive testing process... Our church personally bioassays each batch of our sacrament for efficacy and safety." (So instead of doing proper testing, they are doing TASTE tests? Unbelievable! How have they gotten away with this for so long without any real testing or any scientific evidence? They don't even hide it! This is insane.)

This story/church is totally ridiculous when you really think about it, these guys are an embarrassment to science and the psychedelic community.

Why I'm conflicted about sharing all of this with the community: The people involved are pretty much just giving out psilocybin to other people that "essentially" want what low dose psilocybin does, the effects have pretty much been accurately described by Ian and others in interviews. This "church" thing may in fact be some kind of back door way of making psilocybin more accessible to people and essentially decriminalizing psilocybin for those willing to go through a "church" to access it. Psilocybin has shown all sorts of medicinal promise, in fact it was just rescheduled in Australia this month and for the first time it can be prescribed by doctors to treat depression. The United States is expected to follow suit (phase 3 clinical trials are already underway) and many jurisdictions in the U.S. have already decriminalized psilocybin. I don't really see this group as putting anyone in harm's way because the safety profile of psilocybin is well known and it's [safer than alcohol](#), also this group is promoting quite low doses, and their general message seems to be positive and healing in nature. Ian seems to have a history of helping veterans through the use of psychedelics or supporting organizations that do this, and I give him respect and admiration for that.

On the other hand, what they are doing here seems very sketchy, they are either lying about what the product is and essentially defrauding people or they are just being dumb and not really bothering to find out what's in the product, either way, that's bad. Ian is also promoting junk science related to drug testing as well as the entire myth of psilomethoxin from mushrooms. They are also selling this product for [approximately twice the "street price" of cubensis mushrooms](#) so not only a fraud but a rip off. I've seen too many charlatans in the psychedelic community and it really needs to stop. The only way to stop this is to shine a light on it. Plus lets be honest, it was only a matter of time before someone started testing this product anyway.

Also there is at least the *possibility* that this is not a deliberate con by the church and its officers, those guys may genuinely believe they are producing 4-HO-5-MeO-DMT, I have no idea. If they did ever do analytical analysis maybe whoever this group used for that analysis didn't know what they were doing or deliberately gave them wrong info, or perhaps they really did make 4-HO-5-MeO-DMT at some point but they haven't been able to consistently do it, or maybe their partner who makes the product in Mexico just decided to cut corners/cut costs and send regular cubensis powder instead of psilomethoxin? Maybe the producer/supplier ran out of the 5-MeO-DMT required to make the psilomethoxin and just decided to make the product without it at some point? I have no idea, you could speculate all you want all day and we may never know the truth. It would be fun for an investigative journalist to go visit the manufacturer in Mexico. Anyway, the product they are currently selling is identical to a cubensis mushroom, nothing special in any way...

For what it's worth, I actually feel *BETTER* knowing they are just giving people regular cubensis mushrooms, as we know they are safe, if they were actually sending out psilomethoxin I'd be much more concerned (testing a new drug on thousands of people without any proper safety data is nuts! The things Ian says in that interview about drug testing is equally NUTS, you could do a whole story on that alone).

There are legitimate safety/toxicity concerns around 5-MeO-DMT which would logically extend to psilomethoxin (perhaps even more so due to the much higher doses presumably being used compared to vaped 5-MeO-DMT). Reference: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3028383/> There are also theoretical concerns that psilomethoxin could cause long-term lowering in serotonin and norepinephrine functioning if it is metabolized to 4,5-dihydroxy-DMT. Several dihydroxy tryptamines are considered neurotoxins to serotonin and norepinephrine.

Here's an older paper identifying 4,5-dihydroxytryptamine as a neurotoxin:

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF00306720>

And here is a paper showing 5-MeO-DMT is turned into 5-HO-DMT by CYP2D6, suggesting the same thing might happen with psilomethoxin: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2879007/>

As an aside: This idea of making psilomethoxin from mushrooms was ultimately inspired by a published paper from Gartz: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/2614674/> Over the years many people have [tried and failed](#) to reproduce Gartz's results and the study is widely regarded as [bullshit](#) and a [great example of how one misleading paper can lead to years of misinformation](#). I'm also told Gartz was notorious for stealing work from other mycologists and publishing before they could so there may actually be a long chain of sketchy behavior behind all of this, one fraud leading to another.

NOTE: I do not wish to be identified or linked to this story in any way because I fear retaliation and I don't want to be dealing with lawyers. If you as a journalist want to pursue the story I would suggest you obtain your own sample directly from the church and do your own lab testing. I also cannot rule out the remote possibility that the lab I used made a mistake, or the sample I received was not representative of the product other people receive from this church (maybe it was "just a bad batch").