Magnesium-Coordinated Chelation Control in 1,3-Dipolar Cycloaddition of Chiral α-Alkoxymethyl Ether Nitrile Oxide: Application to the Synthesis of (–)/(–)-*cis*-Clausenamide

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Abstract: A facile regio- and diastereoselective nitrile oxide cycloaddition method using magnesium-coordinated chelation control of chiral α -alkoxymethyl ether nitrile oxide is reported. This reaction could be successfully applied as a key step in both the formal total synthesis of (–)-clausenamide and the total synthesis of (–)-*cis*-clausenamide.

Key words: cycloaddition, magnesium, nitrile oxide, diastereoselectivity, natural products

The 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition of nitrile oxides has attracted considerable attention in synthetic organic chemistry because of its application in the synthesis of complex natural products.1 Thus, numerous examples of regio- and/or diastereoselective nitrile oxide cycloaddition reactions have been developed and intensely studied.² One of the major advances in this field is the metal-coordinated 1,3dipolar cycloaddition of benzonitrile oxide with allylic alcohols in the presence of magnesium alkoxides, which introduce a high reaction rate enhancement and absolute regiocontrol, as reported by Kanemasa et al.³ Recently, Carreira et al. have developed convenient and broadly applicable (i.e., including aliphatic nitrile oxides) reaction conditions for highly diastereoselective cycloaddition reactions by improving upon Kanemasa's methods.⁴ In this contribution, we describe the regio- and diastereoselective 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition of α -alkoxy aliphatic nitrile oxides to 3-substituted allylic alcohols.

Racemic clausenamide was first isolated from *Clausena lansium* (Lours.) Skeels, a Chinese folk medicine; (-)-clausenamide (1) has shown potent nootropic activities in many behavioral experiments, and is currently being developed as a promising antidementia drug.⁵ Moreover, (-)-*cis*-clausenamide (2), the C3 isomer of 1, is demonstrated to be nearly twice as active as 1 (Figure 1).⁶ Given the important pharmacological activity and interesting molecular structure — namely, a densely substituted pyrrolidinone ring with four contiguous stereocenters — it is clear why the clausenamides are widely studied by synthetic chemists as important synthetic targets.⁷

In the context of our study on 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition reactions, we succeeded in the development of a new syn-

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(-)-clausenamide (1) (-)-cis-clausenamide (2)

Figure 1 Structure of (-)-clausenamide (1) and (-)-*cis*-clausenamide (2)

thetic route toward the stereocontrolled synthesis of 3,4,5trisubstituted 2-isoxazolines, including an improvement in cycloaddition diastereoselectivity by use of a combination of alkoxymethyl ether nitrile oxides with magnesium alkoxide. This facile approach to the synthesis of substituted 2-isoxazolines was applied to both a formal total synthesis of **1** and a total synthesis of **2**.

The outline of our synthesis strategy toward the clausenamides is illustrated in Scheme 1. The clausenamides may be synthesized from 2-isoxazoline **A**, by (a) oxidation and esterification, (b) selective reduction, and (c) N–O bond cleavage and subsequent recyclization to construct the pyrrolidinone rings. 2-Isoxazoline **A** may be obtained by a putative 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition of nitrile oxide **B** with cinnamyl alcohol **3** from the less hindered face in an *exo* fashion.



Scheme 1 Retrosynthetic analysis of clausenamides

On the basis of our strategy, various chiral nitrile oxide precursors, hydroximoyl chlorides $4\mathbf{a}-\mathbf{e}$, were readily prepared from known ester L-methyl mandelate (Table 1).⁸ When compound $4\mathbf{a}$ was treated with (*E*)-cinnamyl alco-

hol $(3)^9$ in the presence of *i*-PrOH and EtMgBr in CH₂Cl₂ at room temperature, the cycloaddition proceeded to give a 62:38 separable mixture of cycloadduct 5a and its diastereomer 5a' in 69% combined yield (entry 1). Treatment of 4b with 3 under similar conditions resulted in a decrease in diastereoselectivity to give a 54:46 mixture of 5b and 5b' in 80% yield (entry 2). However, when a similar reaction was carried out with 4c, with an α -hydroxy hydroximoyl chloride and a MOM protecting group, the starting material was smoothly consumed to give a 75:25 separable mixture of 5c and its diastereomer 5c' in 85% yield (entry 3). When 4d, possessing MEM substitution, was treated under similar conditions, the diastereoselectivity of the cycloaddition was slightly increased to 78:22 (entry 4). Finally, the use of toluene as a solvent with 4d gave more satisfactory results, affording the corresponding cycloadducts in 64% yield with 87:13 diastereoselectivity (entry 5). Treatment of 4e with 3, to verify that the method preserves the stereochemical configuration at the benzyl position, gave the corresponding cycloadducts in 56% yield, similar to the result obtained using 4d, without racemization (entry 6).

The significant increase in diastereoselectivity in the reactions of nitrile oxides **4c** and **4d** with cinnamyl alcohol (**3**) might be explained by considering the chelation effect between magnesium alkoxides and the MOM and MEM group of the nitrile oxide. This chelation effect, which causes a steric interaction with the phenyl group of **3** in the cycloaddition transition state, results in the cycloadduct being obtained by reaction in the less hindered *exo* mode (Figure 2).

This effect between magnesium alkoxides and α alkoxymethyl ether nitrile oxide might be supported by an experiment in which replacing the MEM group of the nitrile oxide with an alkyl group would result in a change in diastereoselectivity. The structure of major cycloadduct **5c** was established by X-ray crystallographic analysis after further elaboration to 7, as shown in Scheme 2. Treat-



Figure 2 Stereochemical model



Scheme 2 *Reagents and conditions*: (a) Dess–Martin periodinane, CH_2Cl_2 , r.t.; (b) NaClO₂, NaH₂PO₄, 2-methyl-2-butene, *t*-BuOH–H₂O, r.t.; (c) TMSCHN₂, benzene–MeOH, 91% from **5c**; (d) HCl aq, THF, r.t., (e) 4-nitrobenzoyl chloride, Et₃N, CH_2Cl_2 , r.t., 90% from **6**.

ment of **5c** with Dess–Martin periodinane, followed by oxidation with sodium chlorite, yielded the corresponding carboxylic acid. Subsequent methyl ester formation with TMS-diazomethane gave methyl ester **6** in 91% yield over three steps. Deprotection of **6** with acid produced the corresponding alcohol, which was esterified with 4-nitroben-zoyl chloride to give a crystalline product, ester **7**, in 90% yield.¹¹

3 (1.1 equiv) EtMgBr (3.0 equiv) i-PrOH (3.3 equiv) solvent. 0 °C to r.t., 12 h R¹O R¹O 4а-е 5a-e 5a'-e Entry 4 R¹(4) Solvent Cycloadducts Yield (%)^a Ratiob 1 TBDMS 4a CH₂Cl₂ 5a/5a' 69 62:38 2 4b n-propyl CH_2Cl_2 5b/5b' 80 54:46 MOM 3 4c CH_2Cl_2 5c/5c' 85 75:25 4 4d MEM CH_2Cl_2 5d/5d' 56 78:22 5 4d MEM toluene 5d/5d' 64 87:13 5e/5e' 77:23 6 4e (+)-menthoxymethyl CH_2Cl_2 56

Table 11,3-Dipolar Cycloaddition of Cinnamyl Alcohol 3 with α -Hydroxy-Protected Nitrile Oxides $4a-e^{10}$

^a Isolated yield after column chromatography.

^b Determined by ¹H NMR spectroscopic analysis after purification.

We then examined the elaboration of **8** to intermediate **9** en route to (–)-clausenamide (**1**) (Scheme 3). 2-Isoxazoline **8**, which was available from MOM-group cleavage of **6**, was subjected to trimethyloxonium tetrafluoroborate to give *N*-methylisoxazolinium salt C.¹² In our trials using several hydride-delivering reagents (data not shown) for the conversion of **C** into **9**, treatment with zinc borohydride successfully afforded **9** as a single stereoisomer in 63% yield from **8**. To our knowledge, this is the first example of a stereoselective reduction of the C=N bond of a 3,4,5-trisubstituted isoxazolinium salt.¹³

The hydroxyl group of **9** was protected as the acetate by using acetic anhydride, then reduction of **10** with zinc dust and acetic acid effected cleavage of the N–O bond followed by concomitant cyclization of the resulting amino ester to pyrrolidinone **11** in 73% yield. By using the Barton–McCombie deoxygenation protocol,¹⁴ **11** was transformed into thionocarbonate **12**, which was then treated with tributyltin hydride and a stoichiometric amount of triethylborane to afford the deoxygenated intermediate. Subsequent treatment with LiOH gave deoxypyrrolidinone **13** in 63% yield over two steps; the latter compound is a known intermediate of (–)-clausenamide (**1**).^{7a,15} Finally, reductive cleavage of **9** with zinc dust and acetic acid gave (–)-*cis*-clausenamide (**2**) in 66% yield (Scheme **4**).¹⁶



Scheme 3 Reagents and conditions: (a) $(CH_3)_3BF_4$, CH_2Cl_2 , r.t.; (b) $Zn(BH_4)_2$, THF, -78 °C, 63% from 8; (c) Ac₂O, DMAP, pyridine, CH_2Cl_2 , r.t.; (d) Zn, AcOH-H₂O, 90 °C, 73% from 9; (e) *O*-phenyl chlorothionoformate, pyridine, DMAP, CH_2Cl_2 , 40%; (f) Bu₃SnH, cat. Et₃B, toluene, r.t.; (g) aq LiOH, MeOH, r.t. 63% from 11.



Scheme 4 Reagents and conditions: (a) Zn, AcOH–H₂O, 90 °C, 66%.

In conclusion, we have revealed that magnesium alkoxides influence not only the regioselectivity, but also the diastereoselectivity of the 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition of α alkoxymethyl ether nitrile oxide and cinnamyl alcohol; we have used this mode of reactivity to develop a new route for the synthesis of clausenamide and derivatives. We believe that our results constitute a valuable contribution toward asymmetric 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition reactions without chiral catalysts and/or auxiliaries. The elucidation of the mechanism for the diastereoselectivity of the cycloaddition and further applications of this method to the synthesis of additional natural products are under intense investigation.

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- (10) 1,3-Dipolar Cycloaddition of Cinnamyl Alcohol (3) with a-Hydroxy-Protected Nitrile Oxides; Typical Procedure for 4c: To a solution of the (E)-cinnamyl alcohol (3) (796 mg, 5.94 mmol) and i-PrOH (1.50 mL, 17.8 mmol) in CH₂Cl₂ (187 mL) was added EtMgBr (1.0 mol/L in THF, 17.8 mL, 17.8 mmol) at 0 °C. The resulting mixture was stirred for 30 min at 0 °C. At this time, hydroximoyl chloride 4c (1.50 g, 6.53 mmol) in CH_2Cl_2 (100 mL) was added to the reaction dropwise by using a dropping funnel over 20 min, followed by two rinses with CH₂Cl₂ (5 mL each). The reaction mixture was stirred for 12 h and gently warmed to r.t., then the reaction was quenched with sat. aq NH₄Cl solution. The organic layer was separated and the aqueous layer was extracted with CH_2Cl_2 (3 × 40 mL). The combined organic layers were washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, filtered, and concentrated in vacuo. The residue was purified by silica gel column flash chromatography (hexane-EtOAc, 1:1) to give cycloadducts 5c/5c' (1.81 g, 85%) as a yellow oil. d.r. = 75:25 [integration of signals at δ = 5.40 (major) and 5.28 (minor) ppm in the ¹H NMR spectrum]. **Major Cycloadduct 5c:** $[\alpha]_D^{27}$ –160.7 (c 1.00, CHCl₃). IR (film): 3428, 3060, 3028, 2945, 2889, 2825, 1604, 1494, 1455, 1151, 1094, 1035, 902, 753 cm⁻¹. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, $CDCl_3$): $\delta = 7.36-7.27$ (m, 8 H), 7.17 (d, J = 6.8 Hz, 2 H), 5.40 (s, 1 H), 4.58 (dd, J = 5.6, 3.6 Hz, 1 H), 4.32 (dd, *J* = 60.4, 6.8 Hz, 2 H), 4.19 (d, *J* = 6.0 Hz, 1 H), 3.73–3.68 (m, 1 H), 3.59–3.53 (m, 1 H), 3.11 (s, 3 H), 1.94 (t, J = 6.4 Hz, 1 H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): $\delta = 161.5$, 138.4, 137.3, 129.0, 128.5, 128.3, 127.9, 127.8, 127.1, 93.8, 89.9, 72.2, 63.1, 55.7, 55.4, 53.4. HRMS (FAB): m/z [M + H^{+}_{19} calcd for $C_{19}H_{22}NO_{4}$: 328.1549; found: 328.1533.
- (11) Spectroscopic Data for 7: Colorless crystals; mp 131–133 °C (from MeOH). $[\alpha]_D^{28}$ –212.9 (c 1.00, CHCl₃). IR

(film): 3113, 3067, 3031, 2970, 2947, 2847, 1742, 1732, 1601, 1523, 1517, 1351, 1264, 1235, 1105, 1012, 851 cm⁻¹. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): $\delta = 8.13$ (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2 H), 7.62 (d, J = 9.2 Hz, 2 H), 7.42–7.17 (m, 10 H), 6.95 (s, 1 H), 4.95 (d, J = 4.8 Hz, 1 H), 4.48 (d, J = 4.4 Hz, 1 H), 3.72 (s, 3 H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): $\delta = 169.5$, 162.7, 158.1, 150.6, 137.3, 135.1, 134.2, 130.8, 129.5, 129.1, 129.0, 128.3, 127.7, 126.0, 123.3, 86.7, 71.2, 57.1, 52.9. HRMS (FAB): m/z [M + Na]⁺ calcd for C₂₅H₂₀N₂O₇Na: 483.1168; found: 483.1181.

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- (15) **Spectroscopic Data for 13:** $[\alpha]_D^{27}$ -184.1 (c 0.50, CHCl₃); mp 122–124 °C. IR (film) 3362, 3088, 3056, 3030, 2923, 2243, 1670, 1492, 1454, 1401, 1259, 1042, 911, 760 cm⁻¹. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): δ = 7.28–7.06 (m, 8 H), 6.71–6.69 (m, 2 H), 5.34 (d, *J* = 3.6 Hz, 1 H), 4.64 (dd, *J* = 2.8, 3.2 Hz, 1 H), 4.28 (dd, *J* = 3.2, 5.2 Hz, 1 H), 3.82 (dt, *J* = 8.4, 12.4 Hz, 1 H), 2.91 (s, 3 H), 2.08–1.96 (m, 2 H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 173.4, 141.2, 137.7, 128.4, 127.7, 127.3, 127.0, 126.8, 126.3, 72.1, 67.8, 40.7, 33.1, 30.1. HRMS (FAB): *m/z* [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₁₈H₂₀NO₂: 282.1494; found: 282.1522.
- (16) Synthesis of (-)-cis-Clausenamide (2): A mixture of 9 (350 mg, 1.07 mmol) and zinc dust (1.05 g, 16.0 mmol) was heated at 90 °C in AcOH-H₂O (10:1, 18 mL) for 3 h. The reaction mixture was concentrated in vacuo, diluted with EtOAc, neutralized with sat. aq NaHCO₃ solution and washed with brine. The organic layer was dried over MgSO4, filtered, and concentrated in vacuo. The residue was purified by silica gel column flash chromatography (CHCl₃-MeOH, 15:1) to give (-)-cis-clausenamide (2) (272 mg, 86%). $[\alpha]_{D}^{26}$ -6.78 (c 1.00, CHCl₃); mp 194–196 °C. IR (film): 3299, 3209, 3181, 2919, 2852, 1684, 1661, 1454, 1404, 1239, 1214, 1103, 1023, 953, 910 cm⁻¹. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, $CDCl_3$): $\delta = 7.29-7.19$ (m, 10 H), 4.81 (d, J = 4.8 Hz, 1 H), 4.53 (d, J = 6.8 Hz, 1 H), 4.17 (dd, J = 6.0, 0.8 Hz, 1 H), 3.84 (dd, J = 6.0 Hz, 0.8 Hz, 1 H), 3.30 (br. s, 1 H), 2.61 (s, 3 H),2.23 (br. s, 1 H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 175.8, 140.6, 134.2, 130.0, 128.6, 128.2, 127.8, 126.7, 71.9, 71.8, 65.8, 47.5, 29.6. HRMS (FAB): m/z [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₁₈H₂₀NO₃: 298.1443; found: 298.1473.

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