

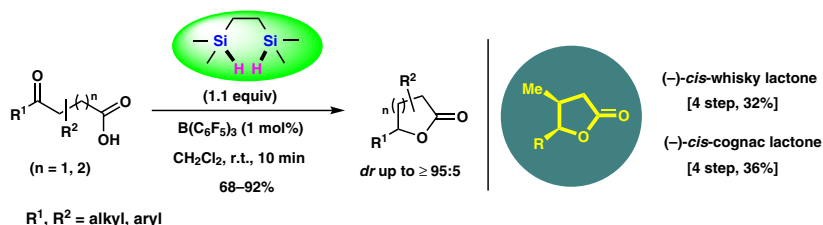
(HMe₂SiCH₂)₂: A Useful Reagent for B(C₆F₅)₃-Catalyzed Reduction–Lactonization of Keto Acids: Concise Syntheses of (–)-*cis*-Whisky and (–)-*cis*-Cognac Lactones

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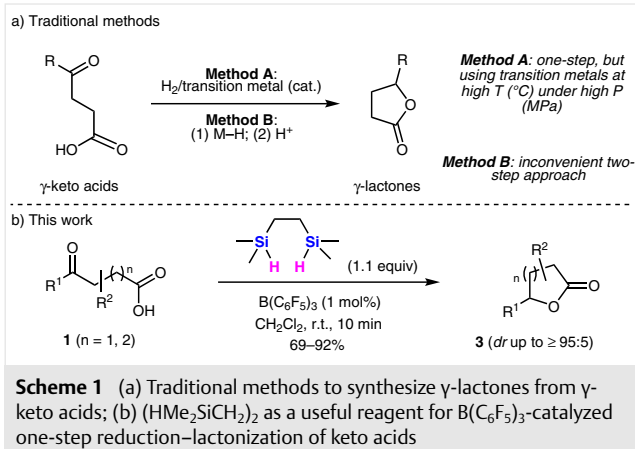
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Abstract (HMe₂SiCH₂)₂ has been utilized as a useful reagent for B(C₆F₅)₃-catalyzed reduction–lactonization of keto acids to synthesize γ - and δ -lactones. The process led concisely to (–)-*cis*-whisky and (–)-*cis*-cognac lactones in respective overall yields of 32% and 36%.

Key words lactonization, reduction, silanes, B(C₆F₅)₃, keto acids

The γ -lactone and its variants are important core structures that occur often in a broad range of natural products and biologically active compounds.¹ Therefore, it is highly demanded to develop efficient methods for constructing γ -lactones.² The simple substrates γ -keto acids are easily accessible and so are one of the most practical starting points to generate γ -lactones, usually via a sequential hydrogenation–lactonization process (Scheme 1, a, method A).³ The synthesis occurs in one step, but it requires a homo- or heterogeneous transition-metal catalyst as well as high temperature, high pressure and reaction time of several hours. An alternative approach is to first reduce the ketone using various hydride reagents, followed by an acid-promoted lactonization (Scheme 1, a, method B), but this two-step process is inconvenient.⁴ Therefore, one of the major challenges in this field is to develop a one-step synthesis of γ -lactones from γ -keto acids under mild reaction conditions.

The Lewis acid tris(pentafluorophenyl)borane [B(C₆F₅)₃]⁵ has recently emerged as an attractive catalyst because of its ability to activate H–H and Si–H bonds through η^1 coordination.⁶ This unique activation mechanism allows several transformations involving hydrosilane, such as C=X bond reduction (X = O, N, S, and C)^{5n,7} and C–O



bond cleavage.⁸ The B(C₆F₅)₃-catalyzed reaction has substantially expanded possibilities for transition-metal-free catalysis,⁹ making it compatible with both sustainable chemistry and pharmaceutical synthesis. Moreover, the approach using hydrosilanes is a safer and easier-to-handle process compared with traditional methods using H₂ or M–H reagents. Hydrosilanes exploited in this approach have so far been limited to those with only one silicon center (R_nSiH_{4–n}). Little attention has been paid to bis(silyl) species such as (HMe₂SiCH₂)₂¹⁰ or its analogues. As part of our continuing interest in bis(silyl) chemistry,¹¹ we are intrigued by the bifunctionality of (HMe₂SiCH₂)₂ and its potential in the discovery of unique transformations. Herein, we report a B(C₆F₅)₃-catalyzed reduction–lactonization process of keto acids **1** using (HMe₂SiCH₂)₂ (Scheme 1, b). The approach leads to an one-step synthesis of diverse γ - and δ -lactones **3**

in good yield at room temperature.¹² It also allowed us to synthesize (–)-*cis*-whisky and (–)-*cis*-cognac lactones in four steps.

Table 1 Screening of Reduction–Lactonization Conditions^a

levulinic acid (LA) $\xrightarrow[\text{B(C}_6\text{F}_5)_3 \text{ (1 mol\%), CH}_2\text{Cl}_2, \text{ r.t., } t]{\text{silane (equiv)}} \gamma\text{-valerolactone (GVL)}$

Entry	Silane (equiv)	Time (min)	GVL (conv., %) ^c
1	Ph ₃ SiH (2.1)	60	N.R.
2 ^b	Et ₃ SiH (2.1)	60	34 (78)
3 ^b	Ph ₂ SiH ₂ (1.1)	60	44 (68)
4 ^b	Et ₂ SiH ₂ (1.1)	60	34 (88)
5	PhSiH ₃ (0.7)	300	N.R.
6	HMe ₂ SiSiMe ₂ H (1.1)	300	N.R.
7	HMe ₂ SiOSiMe ₂ H (1.1)	20	67 (100)
8	(1.1)	300	N.R.
9 ^d	(1.1)	10	86 (100)

^a Reaction conditions: 0.34 mmol of LA, B(C₆F₅)₃ (1 mol%), and hydrosilane in dry CH₂Cl₂ at r.t.

^b 15–20% of the hydroxyl product was obtained in these cases, indicating that the reaction stopped at the reduction step without further lactonization.

^c Isolated yields after purification by silica gel column chromatography.

^d 2,2,5,5-Tetramethyl-1-oxa-2,5-disilacyclopentane was isolated in 56% yields as byproduct.

Our model scaffold was levulinic acid (LA), an important platform molecule among lignocellulosic biomass-based chemicals.¹³ Reduction–lactonization of LA would generate γ -valerolactone (GVL), which has been proposed as feed-stock for producing alkenes and transportation fuels.¹⁴ The reaction was initially examined using monohydrosilane and 1 mol % of B(C₆F₅)₃ as catalyst in CH₂Cl₂ at room temperature. Et₃SiH proved more efficient than Ph₃SiH in the reduction–lactonization, yet GVL was still obtained in only 34% yield after one hour (Table 1, entries 1 and 2). In addition, a

substantial amount of hydroxyl product formed from the reduction (17% yield), without undergoing subsequent lactonization. Since the ketone moiety in the reduction is activated by silicon rather than boron,⁶ we reasoned that the reaction with a monohydrosilane could only proceed via an intermolecular silicon–ketone coordination. This mechanistic consideration led us to envision that switching to intramolecular silicon–ketone coordination might improve the reduction, and that the switch could occur if the initially formed silyl ester served as a linkage. To this end, we tested a range of dihydro- and trihydrosilanes containing one silicon center (Table 1, entries 3–5). Unfortunately, these reactions led to yields that were comparable or even lower than those obtained using Et₃SiH. While no reaction occurred using disilane HMe₂SiSiMe₂H (Table 1, entry 6), HMe₂SiO–SiMe₂H was partially effective to generate GVL in 67% yield (Table 1, entry 7). Next we tested disilanes, respectively, containing a phenyl ring (Table 1, entry 8) and a –CH₂CH₂– group (Table 1, entry 9) as linkage. To our delight, the conformationally more flexible (HMe₂SiCH₂)₂ led to complete consumption of LA within ten minutes and generated GVL in 86% yield.

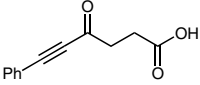
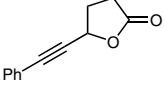
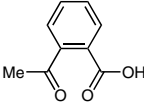
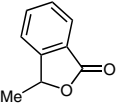
With the optimal reaction conditions in hand, the scope of our approach was explored. The reaction tolerated γ -keto acid **1a** with a branched *i*-Pr group and **1b** with a cyclohexyl ring (Table 2, entries 1 and 2). However, substitution with the sterically more hindered *t*-Bu group completely inhibited reduction of ketone and the subsequent formation of **3c** (Table 2, entry 3). Lewis basic functionalities, such as Br and PhO groups, were tolerated. No debromination or deoxygenation occurred during formation of the desired γ -lactones **3d** and **3e** (Table 2 entries 4 and 5). The reaction of 1,4-diketo acid **1f** generated **3f** in 83% yield as an 8:1 mixture of two diastereomers, and competitive eight-membered lactonization was not observed (Table 2, entry 6). The approach was also suitable for keto acids **1g–i** containing a phenyl group or an electron-deficient or electron-rich phenyl ring (Table 2, entries 7–9). It is noteworthy that Lewis basic MeO group, which generally undergoes facile Me–O bond cleavage,^{7j} did not interfere with the reaction, giving **3i** in 68% yield (Table 2, entry 9). For α,β -unsaturated keto acids, 1,2-reduction proceeded regioselectively to afford **3j** and **3k** in good yields (Table 2, entries 10 and 11). In addition, reaction of γ -keto acid **1l**, in which the ketone and carboxyl groups are tethered to a phenyl ring, gave bicyclic lactone **3l** in 75% yield (Table 2, entry 12).

Table 2 Scope of γ -Keto Acids with Terminal Substituents^a

Reaction scheme showing the conversion of γ -keto acid **1** to γ -lactone **3** using a cyclic silane reagent (1.1 equiv) and $B(C_6F_5)_3$ (1 mol%) in CH_2Cl_2 at r.t. for 10 min.

Entry	γ -Keto acid		γ -Lactone		Yield (%) ^b
1		1a		3a	82
2		1b		3b	90
3		1c		3c	– ^f
4		1d		3d	80
5		1e		3e^c	80
6		1f		3f^d	83
7		1g		3g	92
8		1h		3h	71
9		1i		3i^e	68
10		1j		3j	70

Table 2 (continued)

Entry	γ -Keto acid	γ -Lactone	Yield (%) ^b
11		1k 	3k 75
12		1l 	3l 75

^a Reaction conditions: 0.34 mmol of keto acid, 0.38 mmol of (HMe₂SiCH₂)₂, and B(C₆F₅)₃ (1 mol%) in 4 mL of dry CH₂Cl₂ at r.t. for 10 min.

^b Isolated yields after purification by silica gel column chromatography.

^c 0.58 mmol of (HMe₂SiCH₂)₂.

^d 0.61 mmol of (HMe₂SiCH₂)₂. **3f** was an 8:1 mixture of two diastereomers.

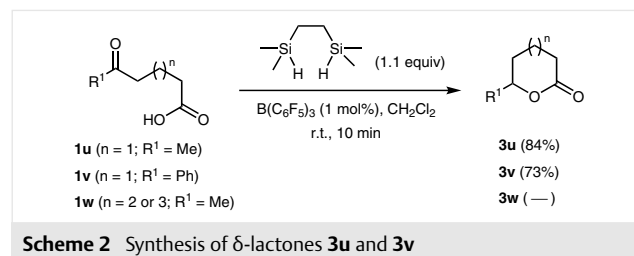
^e 0.34 mmol of (HMe₂SiCH₂)₂ and B(C₆F₅)₃ (3 mol%).

^f The initially formed γ -keto silyl ester of **1c** is easy to hydrolyze. Thus, **1c** was recovered nearly completely based on the crude ¹H NMR analysis.

Next we tested γ -keto acids substituted with a range of internal R² groups. Substitution such as Me, Ph, allyl, or propargyl group at the α -position of the ketone led to complete 1,2-*cis* diastereoselectivity in the formation of **3m–p** (Table 3, entries 1–4). Moreover, the reaction of **1q** and **1r** efficiently generated *cis*-fused 5,5- and 5,6-bicyclic lactones **3q** and **3r** (Table 3, entries 5 and 6). In a similar manner, substitution of R² group at the β -position of ketone resulted in 1,3-*cis* selectivity, although *cis/trans* ratios were moderate (Table 3, entries 7 and 8). This lower diastereoselectivity of the reduction probably reflects that 1,3-induction is generally less effective than 1,2-induction.

We attempted to use our approach to synthesize lactones with larger rings (Scheme 2). The δ -lactones **3u** and **3v** formed readily in good yields within ten minutes, but

the reaction of **1w** led only to slow ketone reduction, with no subsequent lactonization to **3w** observed. The failure to form **3w** probably reflects the greater strain in seven- or eight-membered rings, which are therefore more difficult to construct than five- and six-membered rings.

Table 3 Scope of γ -Keto Acids with Internal Substituents^a

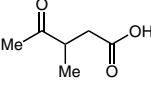
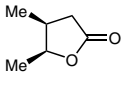
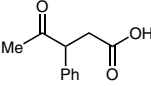
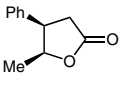
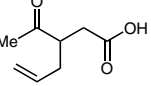
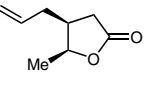
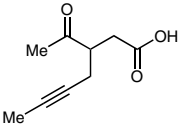
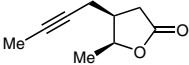
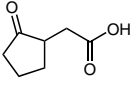
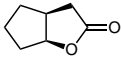
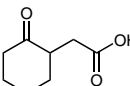
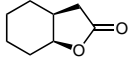
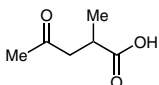
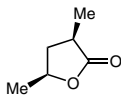
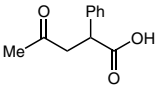
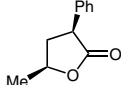
Entry	γ -Keto acid	γ -Lactone ^b	Yield (%) ^c	dr ^d
1		1m 	3m 83	$\geq 95:5$
2		1n 	3n 68	$\geq 95:5$
3		1o 	3o 77	$\geq 95:5$

Table 3 (continued)

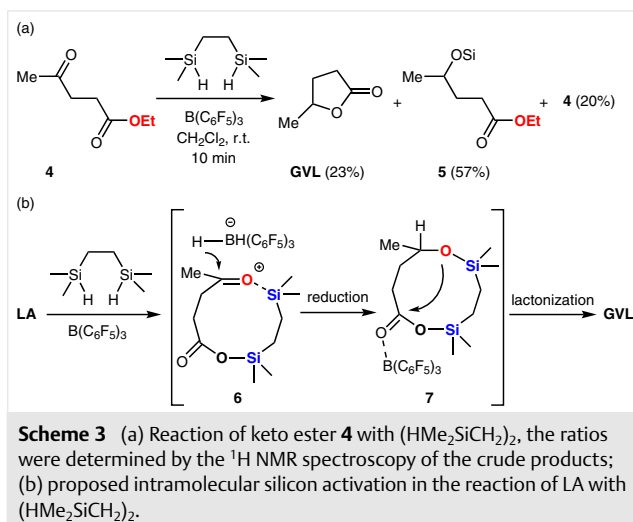
Entry	γ -Keto acid	γ -Lactone ^b	Yield (%) ^c	dr ^d
4			79	$\geq 95:5$
5			81	$\geq 95:5$
6			80	$\geq 95:5$
7			78	75:25
8			75	80:20

^a Reaction conditions: 0.34 mmol of keto acid, 0.38 mmol of $(\text{HMe}_2\text{SiCH}_2)_2$, and $\text{B}(\text{C}_6\text{F}_5)_3$ (1 mol%) in 4 mL of dry CH_2Cl_2 at r.t. for 10 min.

^b The compounds **3m**, ^{15d} **3n**, ^{15b} **3q**, ^{15b} **3r**, ^{15c} and **3s** ^{15a} with *cis* stereochemistry are known, and the spectroscopic data of our samples were in accordance with the data reported in ref. 15a–d.

^c Isolated yields after purification by silica gel column chromatography.

^d The ratios were determined based on crude ^1H NMR analysis of the products.

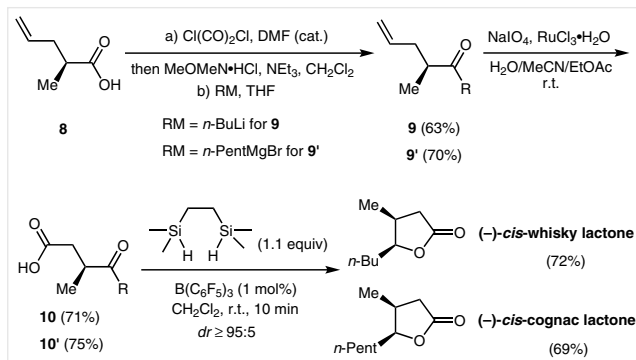


To gain a deeper insight into the mechanism of the approach, we performed a control experiment using **4**, in which the carboxyl group was masked as an ethyl ester (Scheme 3, a). In sharp contrast to that of LA, reaction of **4** afforded 23% of GVL together with 57% of the reduced product **5** and 20% of unreacted **4**. These contrasting results suggest that in the reaction of LA with $(\text{HMe}_2\text{SiCH}_2)_2$, while the

intermolecular silicon–ketone coordination is still involved, the initially formed silyl ester **6** might serve as a linkage, allowing an intramolecular silicon–ketone coordination to promote the reduction step (Scheme 3, b). It is also possible that this intramolecular silicon–ketone coordination benefits subsequent lactonization, since in the predicted cyclic intermediate **7**, the carboxyl and hydroxyl groups, tethered to a bis(silyl) moiety, lie close to each other. Lactonization by transannular nucleophilic attack should therefore proceed smoothly to give GVL.

This methodology allowed us to achieve a concise synthesis of (–)-*cis*-whisky lactone and (–)-*cis*-cognac lactone from the known acid **8**¹⁶ (Scheme 4). Although many syntheses of *trans* isomers have been achieved,¹⁷ far fewer reports of enantioselective syntheses of *cis* isomers have been published.¹⁸ Transformation of **8** into the corresponding Weinreb amide¹⁹ followed by addition with *n*-BuLi or *n*-PentMgBr led, respectively, to **9** in 63% yield or **9'** in 70% yield. Direct cleavage of the terminal alkene using $\text{NaIO}_4/\text{RuCl}_3 \cdot 3\text{H}_2\text{O}$ ²⁰ generated the key precursor acids **10** and **10'** in respective yields of 71% and 75%. Finally, reduction–lactonization mediated by $\text{B}(\text{C}_6\text{F}_5)_3/(\text{HMe}_2\text{SiCH}_2)_2$ generated (–)-*cis*-whisky lactone in 72% yield, and (–)-*cis*-cognac lactone in 69% yield with complete *cis* stereocontrol.

Spectroscopic data of our synthetic samples were in full accordance with those reported¹⁸ for the naturally occurring compounds.



Scheme 4 Total syntheses of (–)-cis-whisky and (–)-cis-cognac lactones

In summary, $(\text{HMe}_2\text{SiCH}_2)_2$ has been explored as a useful reagent for $\text{B}(\text{C}_6\text{F}_5)_3$ -catalyzed reduction–lactonization of keto acids to synthesize γ - and δ -lactones. $(\text{HMe}_2\text{SiCH}_2)_2$ -assisted intramolecular silicone–ketone coordination of ketone was proposed to facilitate both the reduction and lactonization steps. This one-step approach also led to a concise synthesis of (–)-cis-whisky and (–)-cis-cognac lactones in respective overall yields of 32% and 36%. More detailed studies and applications of this approach are currently under way.

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Supporting Information

Supporting information for this article is available online at <https://doi.org/10.1055/s-0036-1588488>.

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