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Enantioselective Synthesis of (+)-Obolactone Based on a Symmetry-Breaking Wacker Monooxidation of a Diene

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ABSTRACT



A concise synthesis of the dihydro- α -pyrone/dihydro- γ -pyrone natural product (+)-obolactone (13) is disclosed. The dienediol acetonide 23 (\geq 97% ee) was obtained from 1,5-dichloropentane-2,4-dione in four steps. A Wacker monooxidation of 23 furnished the monoketone 24 in 64% yield. The OH group of the ensuing dihydro- γ -pyrone 31 was esterified under Mitsunobu conditions with cinnamic acid (\rightarrow 80% inversion and 20% retention of configuration). A ring-closing metathesis formed the dihydro- α -pyrone moiety of the target in the terminating step.

Ten years ago, a Gif-sur-Yvette team isolated the title compound (13) from the trunk bark of a tropical tree (*Cryptocarya obovata* R. Br.) indigenous to northern Vietnam.¹ Obolactone acts against nasopharyngeal carcinoma KB cells ($IC_{50} = 3 \mu M$) and against *Trypanosoma brucei brucei*, which causes African sleeping sickness ($IC_{50} = 5.3 \mu M$).² The asymmetric unit of crystalline 13 (mp 116 °C) contained four distinct conformers according to an X-ray analysis.¹ The latter revealed two stereocenters, either *R*,*R* or *S*,*S* configured, one dihydro- α -pyrone ring, and one dihydro- γ -pyrone moiety.¹ The CD spectrum showed that the correct assignment was *R*,*R*.¹

She et al. reported the first total synthesis of (+)-obolactone (11 steps).³ Total syntheses by Shabita et al. (17 steps)⁴ and Krishna et al. (16 steps)⁵ followed.

Scheme 1. Previous Total Syntheses³⁻⁵ of (+)-Obolactone (13)^{*a*}



 ${}^{a}\Sigma = \text{TBDPS} = tert$ -butyldiphenylsilyl; $\sigma = \text{TBS} = tert$ -butyldimethylsilyl; Bn = benzyl; PMB = *p*-methoxybenzyl; THP = tetrahydropyran-2-yl.

As Scheme 1 summarizes all approaches aimed at syn-1,3-diol monoethers first, i.e., the silyl ether 5, the tetrahydropyran 6, and the silyl ether 7. Another common

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⁽⁴⁾ Sabitha, G.; Prasad, M. N.; Shankaraiah, K.; Yadav, J. S. Synthesis 2010, 7, 1171–1175.

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feature was the use of styryl methyl ketone (10) for introducing the phenyl ring and establishing the dihydro- γ -pyrone moiety thereafter. The dihydro- α -pyrone stemmed either from a ring-closing metathesis of acrylate 11^{3,4} or from the lactonization of the silylated seco-ester 12.⁵

Scheme 2. Retrosynthetic Analysis of (+)-Obolactone (13). Identifying the *Anti*-Configured 1,3-Diol **15** as a Precursor and Preparing it via a Three-Step Route¹⁰ Rather than by a One-Step Access¹²



In our retrosynthetic analysis (Scheme 2, top row), (+)obolactone (13) was traced back to an *anti*-configured 1,3diol, namely compound 14. The latter also represents a methyl ketone. This feature suggested that it might be accessible from a Wacker oxidation.⁶ Ideally, the latter would act on the *anti*-configured dienediol 15. The challenge in transforming 15 into 14 was to oxidize one C=C bond while leaving the other C=C bond intact. This defined the key step of our approach. Converting *anti*-diol 14 into target 13 would entail cinnamoylation, dihydro- γ pyrone formation with retention of configuration, acryloylation with inversion of configuration, and dihydro- α pyrone formation by metathesis.

The desired Wacker monooxidation of nona-1,8-dienediol **15** had little literature precedence (Scheme 3). The monooxidation of the parent diene **19** succeeded in 40%yield⁷ under nonclassical⁸ conditions. In a Wacker-type etherification/methoxycarbonylation, nona-1,8-dienediol *ent*-**15** gave the THP-containing methyl ester **21** in twice the yield.⁹ This gradation is plausible expecting that **20** should be as susceptible as **19** to C=C oxidation whereas **21**, due to an increase of ring strain, should not. **Scheme 3.** Modified Wacker Monooxidation of Nona-1,8-diene **19**⁷ and a Wacker-Type Monooxidation/Methoxycarbonylation of Nona-1,8-dienediol *ent*-**15**⁹



Following a three-step sequence by Rychnovsky et al.,¹⁰ the *anti*-configured 1,3-diol **15** was synthesized from 1,5dichloropentane-2,4-dione (**16**) in 60% overall yield (lit.¹⁰ 51%) and with \geq 97% ee¹¹ (Scheme 2). Krische et al. published an intriguing one-step synthesis of the same 1,3-diol enantiomer **15** from propane-1,3-diol.¹² We reproduced their reaction but abandoned it upon scale-up because of the high costs for the catalyst (5 mol % of [Ir(cod)Cl]₂) and the ligand [10 mol % of 2,2'-bis(diphenylphosphino)-5,5'-dichloro-6,6'-dimethoxy-1,1'-biphenyl].

Scheme 4. Nona-1,8-diene-4,6-diol 15 and the Corresponding Acetonide (23) in Symmetry-Breaking Wacker Monooxidations



Attempted Wacker monooxidations of the unprotected dienediol **15** under an atmosphere of O_2 in the presence of PdCl₂(10 mol %) and CuCl(1.0 equiv) failed (Scheme 4).¹³ They delivered neither the monoketone-containing 1,3-diol **14** nor the corresponding hemiketal **22**. Protecting the hydroxy groups of dienediol **15** with dimethoxypropane provided the acetonide **23** in 95% yield.¹⁴ Under the

⁽⁶⁾ Reviews: (a) Henry, P. M. In Handbook of Organopalladium Chemistry for Organic Synthesis; Negishi, E.-i., Ed.; Wiley & Sons: New York, 2002; pp 2119–2139. (b) Takacs, J. M.; Jiang, X.-t. Curr. Org. Chem. 2003, 7, 369–396. (c) Hintermann, L. In Transition Metals for Organic Synthesis, 2nd ed.; Beller, M., Bolm, C., Eds.; Wiley-VCH: Weinheim, 2004; Vol. 2, pp 379–388. (d) Hintermann, L. In Handbook of C-H Transformations: Applications in Organic Synthesis; Dyker, G., Ed.; Wiley-VCH: Weinheim, 2005; pp 287–298. (e) Cornell, C. N.; Sigman, M. S. Inorg. Chem. 2007, 46, 1903–1909.

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⁽⁸⁾ Review: Michel, B. W.; Sigman, M. S. Aldrichimica Acta 2011, 44, 55–62.

⁽⁹⁾ Yang, Z.; Zhang, B.; Zhao, G.; Ynag, J.; Xie, X.; She, X. Org. Lett. **2011**, 13, 5916–5919.

 ^{(10) (}a) Rychnovsky, S. D.; Griesgraber, G.; Zeller, S.; Skalitzky, D.
 J. Org. Chem. 1991, *56*, 5161–5169. (b) Rychnovsky, S. D.; Yang, G.;
 Hu, Y.; Khire, U. R. *J. Org. Chem.* 1997, *62*, 3022–3023.

⁽¹¹⁾ Initially, the enantiopurity of diol **17** was assessed by comparing its specific rotation $[[\alpha]^{2^0}{}_D = +23.0 \ (c = 0.88, \text{CHCl}_3)]$ to the published value $[[\alpha]^{2^4}{}_D = +21.1 \ (c = 1.13, \text{CHCl}_3)^{10a}]$. The specific rotation of diol **15** $[[\alpha]^{2^0}{}_D = +27.7 \ (c = 0.32, \text{CHCl}_3)]$ is missing in refs 10a and 12; $[\alpha]^{2^4}{}_D = +35.0 \ (c = 1.00, \text{CHCl}_3)$ is published in the Supporting Information of: Lu, Y.; Krische, M. J. Org. Lett. **2009**, 11, 3108–3111. The absolute value of the specific rotation of follow-up product (+)-obolactone (**13**) superceded that of other synthetic specimens²⁻⁴ but lagged that of natural **13**.¹ This led us to believe that our ee was in the upper 90% percentile rank.

⁽¹²⁾ Lu, Y.; Kim, I. S.; Hassan, A.; Del Valle, D. J.; Krische, M. J. *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.* **2009**, *48*, 5018–5021. Lu, Y.; Kim, I. S.; Hassan, A.; Del Valle, D. J.; Krische, M. J. *Angew. Chem.* **2009**, *121*, 5118–5121.

⁽¹³⁾ Procedure: Li, D.-R.; Zhang, D.-H.; Sun, C. Y.; Zhang, J.-W.; Yang, L.; Chen, J.; Liu, B.; Su, C.; Zhou, W.-S.; Lin, G.-Q. *Chem.*—*Eur. J.* **2006**, *12*, 1185–1204.

previously sketched conditions, this substrate underwent a Wacker monooxidation furnishing the monoketone **24** in 64% yield (Scheme 4). An 18% yield of the undesired diketone **25** resulted as well. These percentages arose after the reaction was monitored by TLC and the reaction mixture worked up when the monoketone was deemed to be the most prominent constituent. Compound **25** eluted later than **24** during purification by column flash chromatography on silica gel.¹⁵

Scheme 5. Elaborating the Wacker Monooxidation Product 24 into the Dihydro- γ -pyranone Moiety of (+)-Obolactone (13)



In order to establish the dihydro- γ -pyranone moiety of (+)-obolactone (13), we had to cinnamoylate the kinetic enolate of monoketone 24 (Scheme 5). However, treatment of 24 with LDA or LiHMDS followed by addition of cinnamoyl chloride (27)¹⁶ or of the Weinreb amide 28 of cinnamic acid provided none of the desired diketone *keto*-30 or a tautomeric enol. We avoided this difficulty by an aldolization/oxidation sequence. The dibutylboron enolate of monoketone 24 formed with the desired regioselectivity upon exposure to 1.1 equiv of both Bu₂BOTf and

(14) Krische et al. synthesized the acetonide **23** from the 1,3-diol **15**, $Me_2C(OMe)_2$ (15 equiv), and pyridinium *p*-toluenesulfonate (10 mol %) in CH₂Cl₂ in 91% yield.¹²

(15) Still, W. C.; Kahn, M.; Mitra, A. J. Org. Chem. 1978, 43, 2923–2925.

(16) Diketone formation from lithium enolates and acyl chlorides has been rarely described, e.g.: (a) Mayweg, A. V. W.; VanDeusen, C.; Wender, P. A. *Org. Lett.* **2003**, *5*, 277–279. (b) Koehler, M. F. T.; Sendzik, M.; Wender, P. A. *Org. Lett.* **2003**, *5*, 4549–4552.

(17) Procedure: Cote, B.; Coleman, P. J.; Connell, B. T.; Evans, D. A. J. Am. Chem. Soc. 2003, 125, 10893–10898.

(18) Reviews: (a) Zhdankin, V. V. Curr. Org. Synth. 2005, 2, 121–145.
(b) Satam, V.; Harad, A.; Rajule, R.; Pati, H. Tetrahedron 2010, 66, 7659–7706. (c) Kirsch, S. F.; Duschek, A. Angew. Chem., Int. Ed. 2011, 50, 1524–1552. Kirsch, S. F.; Duschek, A. Angew. Chem. 2011, 123, 1562–1590.

(19) The isolated enol ($\delta_{CH=C(OH)} = 5.70$, $\delta_{OH} = 15.3$ ppm; $\delta_{CH=C(OH)} = 175.9$, $\delta_{CH=C(OH)} = 99.6$, $\delta_{C=O} = 196.7$ ppm) possessed structure *enol-***30** rather than *iso-enol-***30** because HMBC cross-peaks related 4'-H ($\delta = 4.31$ ppm) to $\delta_{C=O}$ (C-2) and 6-H ($\delta = 7.60$ ppm) to $\delta_{CH=C(OH)}$ (C-4). 6'-H ($\delta = 3.89$ ppm) and these ¹³C nuclei entertained no cross-peak.



NEt₃ for 30 min.¹⁷ Addition to cinnamaldehyde (**26**) led to the β-hydroxyketone(s) **29** in 70% yield. Oxidation with IBX¹⁸ rendered the *enol*-**30**¹⁹ of the desired diketone *keto*-**30** (99% yield).²⁰ The dihydro- γ -pyranone **31** was completed in 75% yield by a *p*TsOH · H₂O-induced cyclodehydration.

Scheme 6. Converting the Homoallyl Alcohol Moiety of Intermediate 31 into the Dihydro- α -pyranone Moiety of (+)-Obolactone (13). Competition between Mitsunobu Inversion (\rightarrow 33) and "Mitsunobu Esterification" (\rightarrow *epi*-33) in the Cinnamate-Forming Step



In order to ensure the *syn*-orientation of the C,O bonds in (+)-obolactone (13), the *anti*-configured homoallylic alcohol 31 was to be combined with an α,β -unsaturated carboxylic acid under Mitsunobu conditions²¹ (Scheme 6, top). The standard inducers PPh₃/DEAD or PPh₃/DIAD

(20) Procedure: More, J. D.; Finney, N. S. Org. Lett. 2002, 4, 3001–3003.

(21) Reviews: (a) But, T. Y. S.; Toy, P. H. *Chem. Asian J.* **2007**, *2*, 1340–1355. (b) Kumar, N. N. B.; Balaraman, E.; Kumar, K. V. P. P.; Swamy, K. C. K. *Chem. Rev.* **2009**, *109*, 2551–2651.

(22) ADDP (azodicarboxylic acid dipiperidide) was prepared as described byMakriyannis, A.; Swissman, E. E. J. Org. Chem. **1973**, 38, 1652-1557.

(23) Conditions from Yamamiya, Y.; Kuwamura, Y.; Ito, S.; Tsunoda, T. *Tetrahedron Lett.* **1995**, *36*, 2529–2530. Note that we employed ADDP (ref 22) instead of TMAD (*N*,*N*,*N*',*N*'-tetramethylazodicarboxamide).

(24) This eluent was found abandoning efforts to separate the mixture of diastereomeric crotonates, which we had obtained from a condensation of the homoallylic alcohol **31** and *trans*-crotonic acid under Mitsunobu conditions. The analogous acrylates did not result under similar conditions.

(25) Grynkiewicz, G. Rocz. Chem. 1976, 50, 1449-1451.

(26) Farina, V. Tetrahedron Lett. 1989, 30, 6645–6648.

(27) β -Hydroxylactones are amenable to competing OH and CO₂H activations in the presence of PPh₃ and DEAD, too: Brüntrup, G.; Chucholowski, A.; Mulzer, J. *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed. Engl.* **1979**, *18*, 622–623. Brüntrup, G.; Chucholowski, A.; Mulzer, J. *Angew. Chem.* **1979**, *91*, 654–655.

(28) Recent reviews: (a) Vougioukalakis, G. C.; Grubbs, R. H. Chem. Rev. 2010, 110, 1746–1787. (b) Majumdar, K. C.; Chattopadhyay, B.; Ray, K. Curr. Org. Synth. 2010, 7, 153–176. (c) Cossy, J.; Arseniyadis, S.; Meyer, C. Metathesis in Natural Product Synthesis; Wiley-VCH: Weinheim, 2010. (d) Prunet, J. Eur. J. Org. Chem. 2011, 3634–3647. (e) Kotha, S.; Dipak, M. K. Tetrahedron 2012, 68, 397–421. of such a transformation were unable to join **31** and cinnamic acid (**32**), though. In contrast the combination $PBu_3/ADDP^{22}$ gave the desired cinnamate **33** in 59% yield.²³ Surprisingly, the diasteromeric cinnamate *epi-33* was obtained, too (15% yield). **33** and *epi-33* were separated by flash chromatography on silica gel.¹⁵ Employing toluene/ EtOAc as the mobile phase²⁴ **33** eluted first.

Having a configurationally inverted C-O bond, the major cinnamate 33 must have formed after activation of the OH group of the homoallyl alcohol 31, the overall reaction being a Mitsunobu inversion. The minor cinnamate epi-33 retained the C-O bond configuration of its predecessor 31 (which became clear when esterification of 31 with cinnamoyl chloride, NEt3, and DMAP yielded epi-33, too). This meant that under Mitsunobu conditions cinnamate epi-33 formed after activation of the CO₂H group (of the carboxylic acid 31), the overall process representing a kind of "Mitsunobu esterification". There seems to be scarce precedence for such configurationally retentive esterifications. The acetate 35 formed from the secondary alcohol 34 without the epimer, which would have emerged from a "Mitsunobu inversion" (Scheme 7).²⁵ Acetate 37 emerged from a "Mitsunobu esterification" of the secondary alcohol 36 with a 70:30 preference over the Mitsunobu inversion product epi-37.^{26,27}

Scheme 7. Ester Formations under Mitsunobu Conditions with Retention of the Configuration of the C–O Bond: Precedents for the "Mitsunobu Esterification" $31 \rightarrow epi-33$ (Scheme 6)



The terminating step of our approach to (+)-obolactone (13) was a ring-closing metathesis²⁸ of the homoallylic cinnamate 33 (Scheme 6, bottom).²⁹ Employing 5 mol % of the Grubbs II catalyst 13 resulted in 71% yield. Under the same conditions the epimeric cinnamate *epi*-33 ring-closed to give 64% of the hitherto unknown (+)-*epi*-obolactone (*epi*-13). Starting from 1,5-dichloropentane-2,4-dione (16) our routes totaled 10 steps. The overall yields were 9% obolactone³⁰ (lit.³ 15%, lit.⁴ 2%, lit.⁵ 9%) and 9% *epi*-obolactone.

The *syn,anti*-pairs 13/*epi*-13 and 33/*epi*-33 reveal a ¹³C NMR difference shared by a variety of *O,O*-diprotected 1,3-diols RCH₂C¹H(OR¹)C²H₂C³H(OR³)CH₂R': The sum of the ¹³C NMR shifts of nuclei C-1 and C-3 is higher in the *syn*- than in the *anti*-isomer (Scheme 8). In 1,3-diols and *O*-monoprotected 1,3-diols the same ¹³C NMR criterion allows to distinguish *syn*- and *anti*-configurations safely.³¹ Hydrogen bonding between the 1-OH and the 3-OR or 3-OH group was considered a prerequisite for this NMR effect.³¹ This appeared plausible because it implies a clear conformational bias.³¹ While the protected 1,3-diols of Scheme 8 lack hydrogen bonds the gradient ($\delta_{C-1} + \delta_{C-3}$)_{*syn*} > ($\delta_{C-1} + \delta_{C-3}$)_{*anti*} persists, possibly because 1,3-spaced OR substituents favor different backbone conformers.³²

Mono-Wacker oxidations of $1,\omega$ -dienes have been rarely used synthetically. The success of our application should encourage other workers to consider it a worth-while option.³³





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Supporting Information Available. Experimental procedures, characterization data, copies of NMR spectra, Table Supplement to Scheme 8, and complete citation for ref 33. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

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⁽³⁰⁾ The specific rotation of our obolactone was $[\alpha]^{20}{}_{D} = +262 (c = 0.15, \text{ CHCl}_3)$. This equals the average value of the natural product $[[\alpha]^{20}{}_{D} = +286 (c = 1.12, \text{ CHCl}_3)]^1$ and the earlier synthetic specimens: $[\alpha]^{25}{}_{D} = +243 (c = 1.35, \text{ CHCl}_3),^3 [\alpha]^{25}{}_{D} = +252 (c = 1.20, \text{ CHCl}_3),^4$ and $[\alpha]^{25}{}_{D} = +260 (c = 0.16, \text{ CHCl}_3).^5$ Our obolactone exhibited mp 115–117 °C, which matches the previously reported values of 116 °C¹ and 116–118 °C.^{3,5}

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(32) Hoffmann, R. W. Angew. Chem., Int. Ed. 2000, 39, 2054–2070.
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The authors declare no competing financial interest.