

Thermal oxidation of tetracyclones (2,3,4,5-tetraarylcyclopentadienones)

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Tetracyclones are transformed to a mixture of diacylstilbenes and α -pyrones, when they are heated in diphenylether saturated with oxygen.

Keywords: tetracyclones, tetraarylcyclopentadienones, oxidation, diacylstilbenes, α -pyrones, Diels–Alder reaction

Tetracyclones¹ (2,3,4,5-tetraarylcyclopentadienones) are valuable dienes for Diels–Alder reactions and can be used as substrates for the preparation of branched oligoarenes.^{2–5} Due to the aryl groups at C2 and C5, the molecules often necessitate high temperatures³ for the cycloaddition reactions to be successful. The corresponding tetraarylthiophene *S*-oxide show a much better reactivity in Diels–Alder reactions under normal electron demand. They are thermally less stable, however.⁶ Typical solvents used in the transformations are dichlorobenzene and diphenyl ether.^{7–9} The authors have noted that when tetracyclones are treated with poorly reactive ones, such as with *estra*-1,3,5(10),16-tetraenes (unpublished results), in diphenyl ether at higher temperatures and under a normal atmosphere, products can be isolated stemming from an oxidation of the tetracyclones. That tetracyclones can be oxidised easily in diphenyl ether at elevated temperatures can also be seen in the Diels–Alder reaction with benzo[*b*]thiophene *S,S*-dioxide, where the primary cycloadduct sulfone oxidises excess tetracyclone.¹⁰ In the following contribution, the authors report on the composition of these products.

The redox behaviour of tetracyclones has been studied in some detail, although the reductive behaviour of the molecules leading to its radical anion is much better known than the oxidative behaviour. In particular, while there are numerous reports on the electrochemical reduction of the systems, there is no report on the direct preparative electrooxidation of tetracyclones. Analytically, the electrochemical redox behaviour of tetracyclone has been studied to some degree, but no product analysis has been undertaken for the electro-oxidative process.^{11,12} Our interest in an electrochemical

oxidation of these compounds, especially in view of a comparative analysis to the electrooxidative behaviour of the related tetraarylthiophene *S*-oxides,^{13,14} led us to a preliminary study of the behaviour of tetracyclones towards oxygen under non-photolytic conditions. These experiments found further encouragement by our identification of oxidation products of tetracyclone (tetraphenylcyclopentadienone) itself, when the molecule was reacted with sterically hindered steroidal dienophiles in Diels–Alder reactions at high temperatures (unpublished results and ref.15).

The reactions of tetracyclone (**1a**) and its derivatives with a number of oxidants have been reported, such as with peroxides, especially with hydrogen peroxide (in pyridine¹⁶ or acetic acid/acetic anhydride¹⁷ reaction systems),^{16,17} with peracids,¹⁸ and with nitric acid.¹⁹ Also, tetracyclone (**1a**) has been reacted with iodosylbenzene (PhIO) and catalytic tetraphenylporphyrinato manganese (III) chloride (TPPMnCl),²⁰ with bis(trimethylsilyl) monoperoxysulfate,²¹ and with chromium pentoxide etherate as well as with chromium trioxide (see ref. 22 and refs cited therein). Furthermore, tetracyclone (**1a**) has been reacted with superoxide anion.^{23–26}

Also, the reaction of tetracyclone (**1a**) with photochemically^{27–32} and chemically^{33,34} generated singlet oxygen has been studied in some detail.

The oxidation of tetracyclone (**1a**) and of similar cyclopentadienones can follow a number of pathways, depending on the oxidant. The most important routes, though, are an initial epoxidation of the tetracyclone as is witnessed in the case of the reaction of tetracyclone with H₂O₂^{16,17} and with PhIO and catalytic TPPMnCl.²⁰ The epoxide **2** has been isolated, but it has also been shown that there are routes

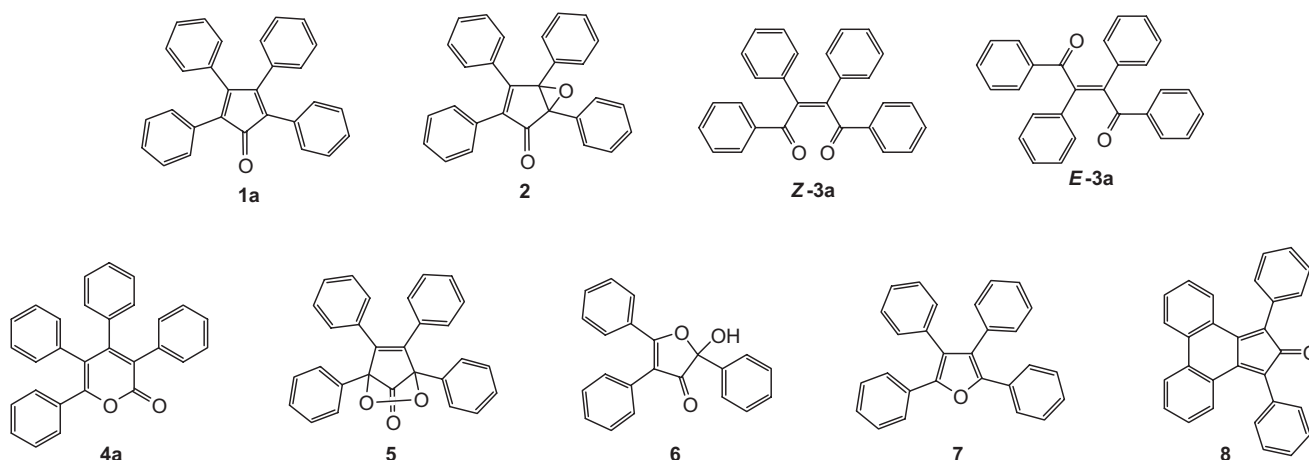


Fig. 1 Tetracyclone (**1a**) and some of its known oxidation products **2–7** and phencyclone **8**.

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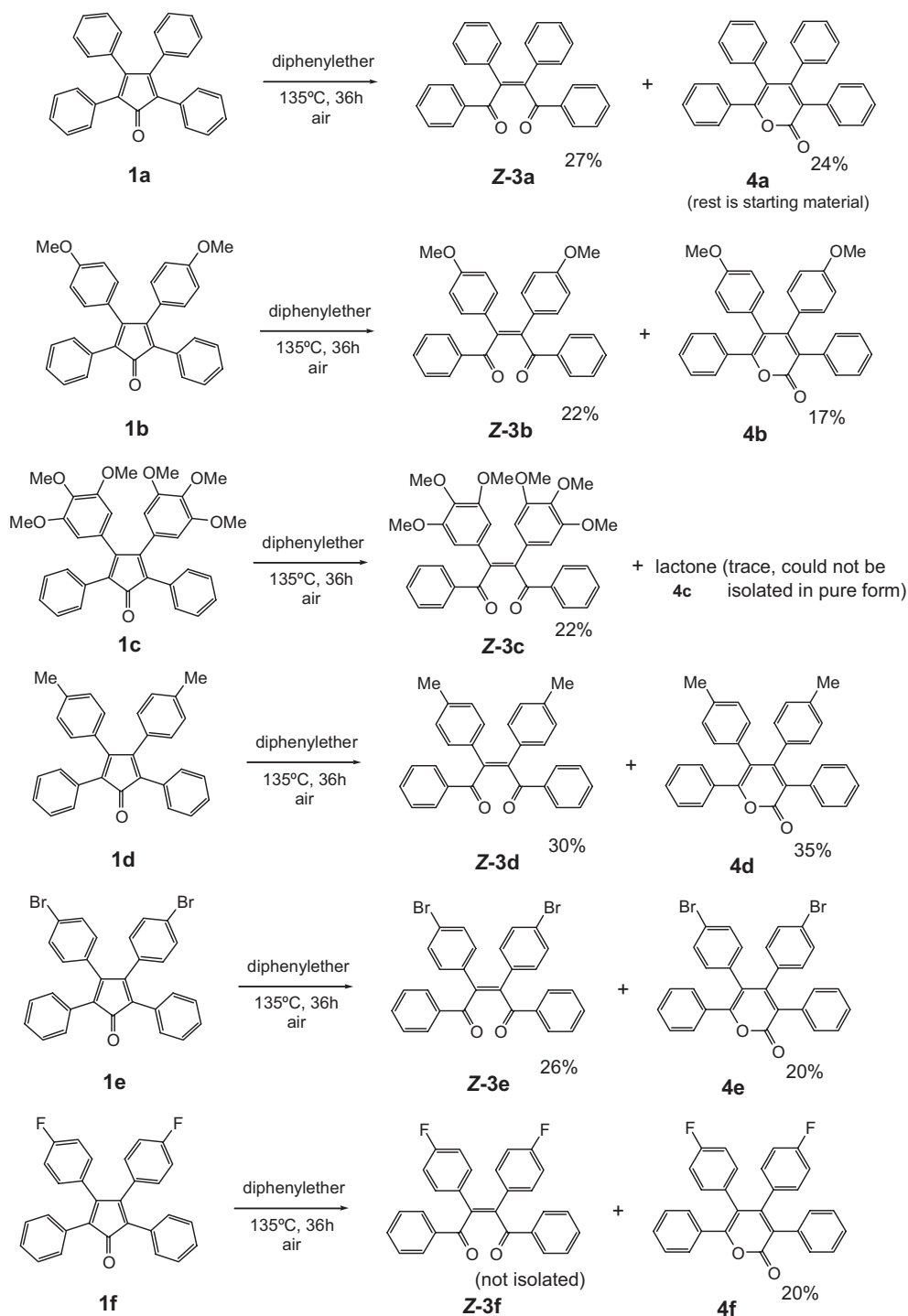
from the epoxide to the tetraphenyl- α -pyrone. A Baeyer Villiger type rearrangement leading from the tetracyclone (**1a**) to the α -pyrone **4a** has been observed in the reaction with bis(trimethylsilyl) monoperoxysulfate.²¹ Also, the oxidation of tetraarylcyclopentadienones with cerium ammonium nitrate (CAN)³⁵ in aqueous 75% THF has been reported to yield the lactones directly and to give tetraphenyl- α -pyrones **4a** and derivatives in fair yield.

Different products, namely 2-hydroxyfuran-3-one **6** and tetraphenylfuran (**7**), are obtained by the reaction of tetracyclone with superoxide, where the reaction is thought to be initiated by a one-electron transfer from the superoxide to tetracyclone (**1a**) with subsequent addition of oxygen to the tetracyclone radical anion and follow-up reactions.²³⁻²⁶

The photoirradiation of tetracyclone in the presence of oxygen is thought to proceed via an epidioxide **5**, stemming from a 1,4-cycloaddition of singlet oxygen to the tetracyclone (**1a**). The epidioxide **5** then loses carbon monoxide to form (*Z*)-diacylstilbenes, **Z-3a**, which under the photolytic conditions can partly isomerise to the (*E*)-diacylstilbenes, **E-3a**.

Also, the photoreaction of other substituted tetracyclones in diethyl ether is known to give (*Z*)- α,α' -diacylstilbenes **3**. Often, tetraphenyl substituted α -pyrone **4a** is also formed in the reaction.

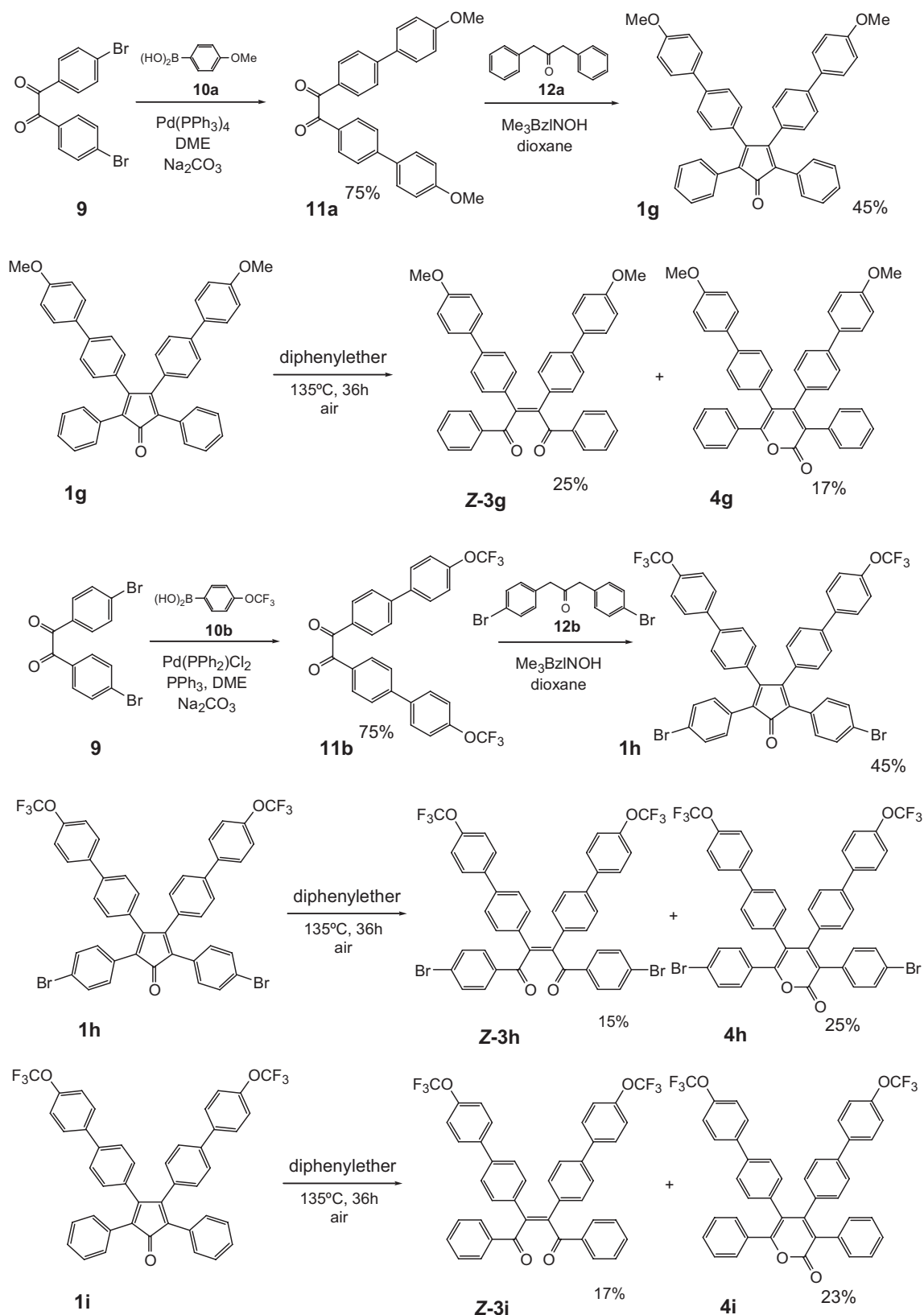
We have found that both (*Z*)-diacylstilbenes **3** as well as α -pyrones **4**, being products of most of the oxidation reactions of tetracyclone (**1a**) mentioned above, are formed in significant amounts, when tetracyclone or its derivatives



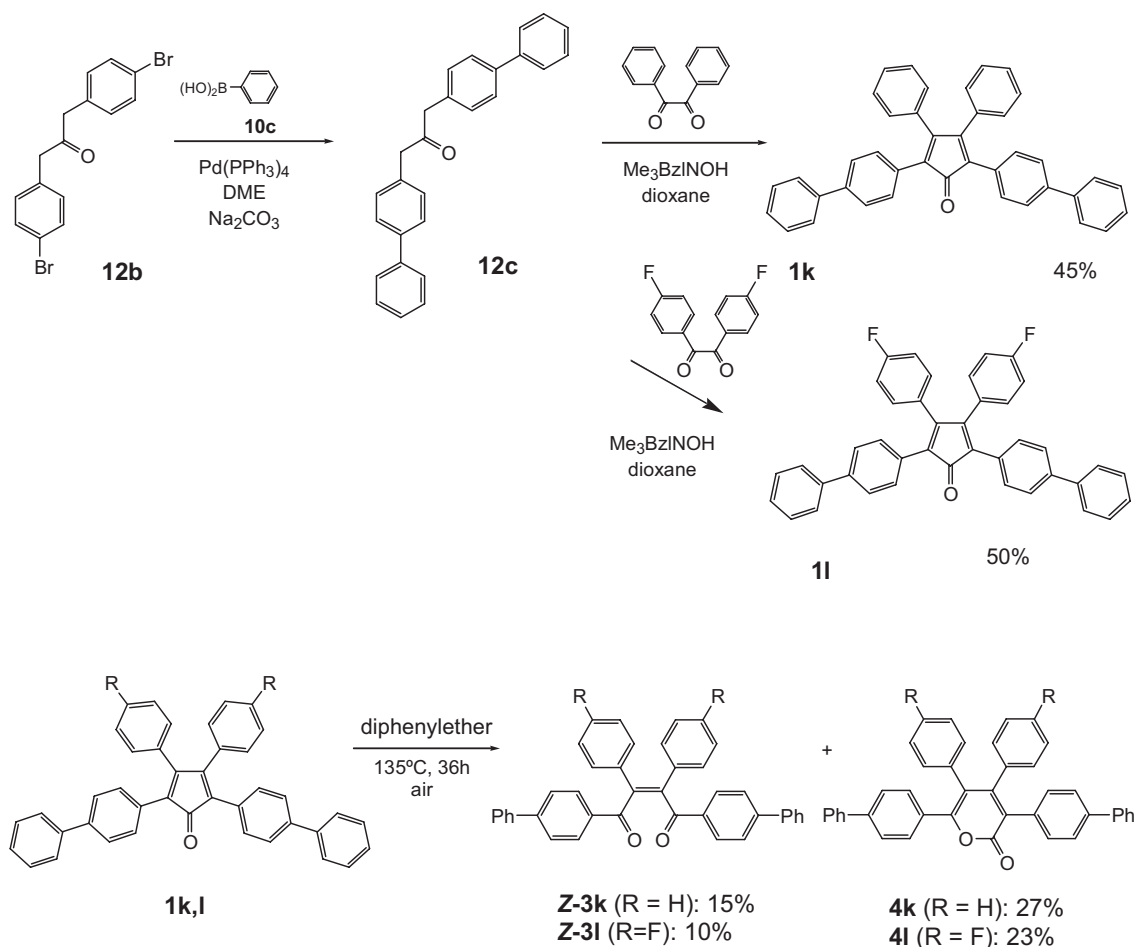
Scheme 1 Thermal oxidation of tetracyclones **1** in diphenyl ether in the presence of oxygen.

are heated in a solvent that contains oxygen. Thus, when tetracyclone (**1a**) in diphenylether is heated at 135°C for 35 h (under non-photolytic conditions), (*Z*)-1,2-dibenzoyl-1,2-diphenylethene (**Z-3a**) and tetraphenyl α -pyrone (**4a**) can be isolated in 27% and 24%, respectively, the remainder being unreacted starting material. A number of substituted tetraarylcyclopentadienones were subjected

to the same procedure yielding the corresponding (*Z*)-diacylstilbenes and α -pyrones, where (*Z*)-diacylstilbene and α -pyrone are formed in varying amounts (Schemes 2 and 3). The reaction of **1c** with electron rich and sterically exacting methyl substituents led to reduced formation of the α -pyrone, while in the case of **1f**, a tetracyclone with fluoro substituents, no (*Z*)-diacylstilbenes could be isolated.



Scheme 2 Synthesis and reaction of expanded tetracyclones **1g** – **1i**.

Scheme 3 Synthesis and reaction of expanded tetracyclones **1k**, **1l**.

To our knowledge, this thermal oxidative reaction of cyclopentadienones with oxygen under non-photolytic conditions has only been commented upon once, namely in the work of Dilthey *et al.*,³⁶ who have studied the non-photolytic oxidation of phenacyclone (**8**) in toluene and in pyridine. Thus, the authors reported that passing oxygen through a solution of phenacyclone [1,3-diphenyl-2*H*-cyclopenta-[1]phenanthren-2-one] in pyridine gives 9,10-dibenzoylphenanthrene.

As the high reaction temperatures preclude the isolation of reaction intermediates, the mechanism of the reaction could not yet be ascertained. We feel, however, that this oxidative 'degradation' of cyclopentadienones is important to take into account when subjecting the molecules to cycloaddition reactions with sluggish dienophiles or to other reactions at higher temperatures in the presence of oxygen.

Within this context, it may be noted that solventless cycloaddition of tetracyclones with relatively low melting or liquid dienophiles can lead to a significant lowering of reaction temperature at which the cycloaddition reactions are successful (for further examples of solventless cycloaddition of tetracyclone see refs 37 and 38). Thus, reaction of tetracyclone (**1a**) itself with phenylacetylene (**13a**) can be performed at 135°C within 10 min., with diphenylacetylene [tolane] (**13b**) at 175°C within 5 h (Scheme 4). Otherwise, the reaction solutions need to be deaerated with care.

Experimental

General

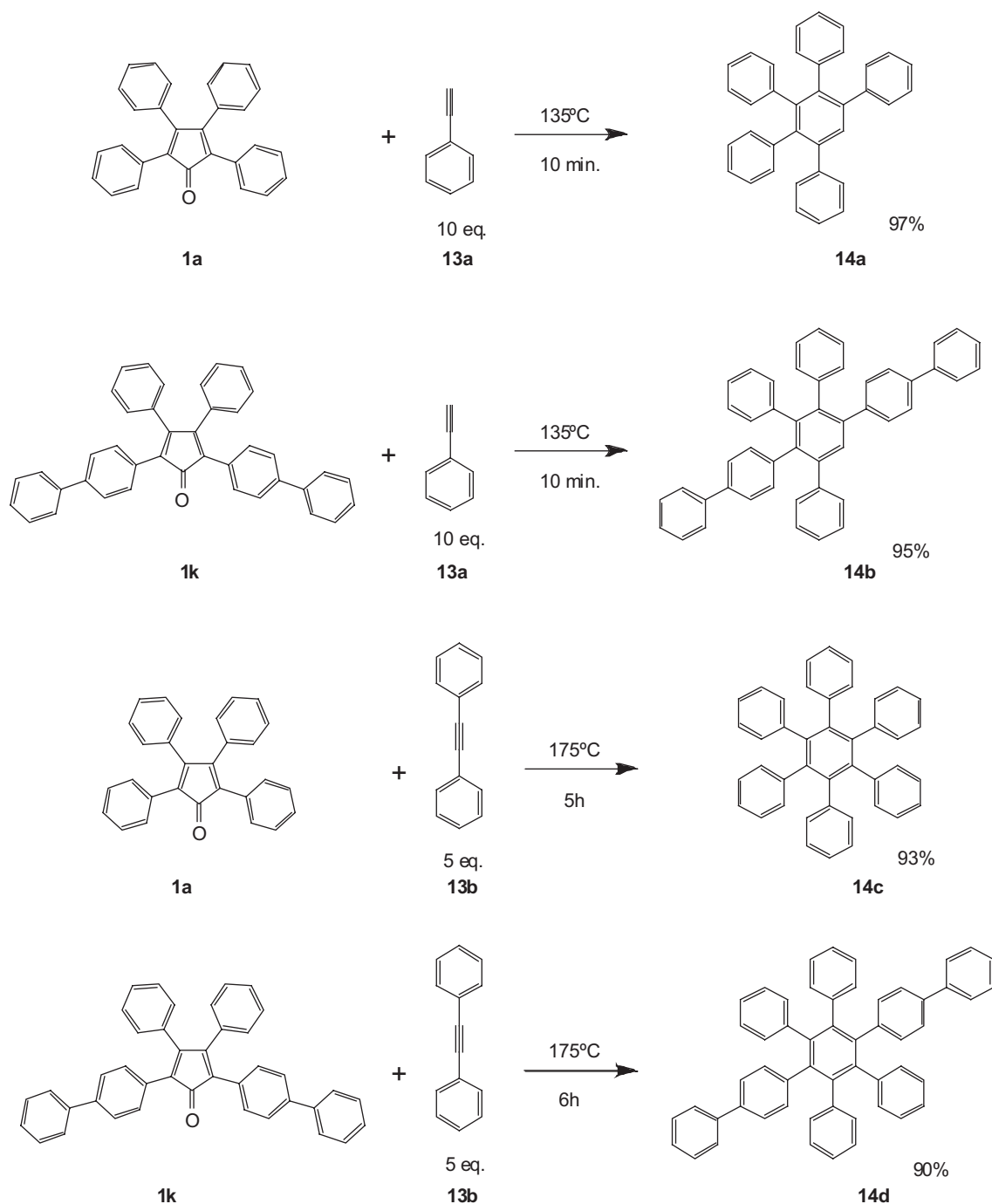
Tetracyclone (**1a**) was obtained commercially (TCI) as well as by known synthesis.³⁹ Hexamethoxytetracyclone (**1c**) was prepared according to a procedure by Müllen *et al.*,⁴⁰ which was slightly modified (dioxane, trimethylbenzylammonium hydroxide, 1 h, reflux,

25% yield). **1b**,⁴¹ **1d**,⁴² **1e**⁴³ and **1f**⁴⁴ were synthesised accordingly from the respective 4,4'-substituted benzils and diphenylacetone. 4,4'-Dibromodiphenylacetone (**12b**) was obtained from 4-bromophenylacetic acid (DCC, DMP, CH_2Cl_2).⁴⁵

Melting points were measured on a Yanaco microscopic hotstage and are uncorrected. IR spectra were measured with JASCO IR-700 and Nippon Denshi JIR-AQ20M machines. ^1H - and ^{13}C NMR spectra were recorded with a JEOL EX-270 spectrometer. The chemical shifts are relative to TMS (solvent CDCl_3 , unless otherwise noted). J^* = denotes the coupling constant of an AA'XX' system, in the present case for *p*-substituted arenes as listed below, where the apparent J value is $J^* = J_{23} + J_{25}$. Mass spectra were measured with a JMS-01-SG-2 spectrometer (EI, 70 eV). Column chromatography was carried out on Wakogel 300. All experiments leading to the preparation of the tetracyclones were purged with argon at the start.

Tetracyclone **1f** was prepared from the commercially available *p,p'*-dibromobenzil (**9**) (Acros) which was transformed to bis(*p*-methoxyphenyl)benzil (**10**) by Suzuki coupling (Scheme 2). The subsequent reaction of the benzil **10** with diphenylacetone was carried out by the usual procedure.

Preparation of tetracyclone derivative **1g**: A deaerated mixture of commercially available *p,p'*-dibromobenzil (**9**) (700 mg, 1.90 mmol), *p*-methoxyphenylboronic acid (1.0 g, 6.58 mmol) and $\text{Pd(PPh}_3)_4$ (30 mg, 2.6×10^{-5} mol) in DME (6.0 ml) and 2M Na_2CO_3 (2.6 ml) was held at 70°C for 12 h. Thereafter, the cooled reaction solution was diluted with water (10 ml) and extracted with chloroform (3×20 ml). The organic phase was dried and concentrated under reduced pressure. Column chromatography of the residue on silica gel gave *p,p'*-bis(*p*-methoxyphenyl)benzil (**11a**) (see ref. 46) (600 mg, 75%) as pale yellow needles m.p. 208°C ; [Found: MH^+ , 423.1595. $\text{C}_{28}\text{H}_{23}\text{O}_4$ requires (MH^+) 423.1596; FAB mode]; ν_{max} (KBr/cm^{-1}) 1660, 1597, 1525, 1495, 1297, 1249, 1172, 1038, 883, 852, 818, 694; δ_{H} (270 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 3.85 (6H, s, 2 OCH_3), 6.99 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.6$ Hz), 7.58 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.6$ Hz), 7.69 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.2$ Hz), 8.03 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.2$ Hz); δ_{C} (67.8 MHz, CDCl_3) 55.4 (OCH_3), 114.5 (CH), 126.9 (CH), 128.5 (CH), 130.6 (CH), 131.2 (C_{quat}), 131.8 (C_{quat}), 147.1



Scheme 4 Solventless cycloaddition of tetracyclones to phenyl-substituted alkynes.

(C_{quat}), 160.2 (C_{quat}), 194.2 (C_{quat} , C=O); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 423 (MH^+ , 4), 211 ($MeO-C_6H_4-C_6H_4CO^+$, 43).

To **11a** (575 mg, 1.36 mmol) in a mixed solution of dioxane (2 ml) and trimethylbenzylammonium hydroxide (40% aq., 1.2 ml) was added diphenylacetone (295 mg, 1.40 mmol). The reaction mixture was held at 65°C for 6 h. Then the reaction mixture was diluted with chloroform (20 ml) and washed with water (2 $\times$ 10 ml). The organic phase was dried over anhydrous $MgSO_4$ and concentrated. Column chromatography of the residue on silica gel (chloroform/ether/hexane 1: 1: 1 eluting two smaller fractions, then changed to chloroform to elute **1g**) gave 3,4-bis(*p*-methoxybiphenyl)-2,5-diphenylcyclopentadienone (**1g**) (363 mg, 0.61 mmol, 45%) as purple-brownish crystals, m.p. 199°C; (Found: MH^+ 597.2432. $C_{43}H_{33}O_3$ requires $M[H]$, 597.2430); ν_{max} (KBr/ cm^{-1}) 2956, 2832, 1703, 1601, 1495, 1248, 1175, 1116, 1039, 828; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 3.84 (6H, s, 2 OCH_3), 6.95 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.6$ Hz), 7.01 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.3$ Hz), 7.24–7.29 (10H, m), 7.40 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.3$ Hz), 7.52 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.6$ Hz); δ_C (67.8 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 55.4 (OCH_3), 114.3

(CH), 125.4 (C_{quat}), 125.9 (CH), 127.4 (CH), 128.0 (CH), 128.1 (CH), 130.1 (CH), 130.2 (CH), 131.0 (C_{quat}), 131.3 (C_{quat}), 132.6 (C_{quat}), 140.6 (C_{quat}), 154.1 (C_{quat}), 159.5 (C_{quat}), 200.2 (C_{quat} , C=O). MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 597 (MH^+ , 9).

Preparation of tetracyclone derivative 1h: A mixture of *p,p'*-dibromobenzil (**9**, 2.38 g, 6.4 mmol), *p*-trifluoromethoxyphenylboronic acid (**10b**, 4.26 g, 20.7 mmol), $Pd(PPh_3)_2Cl_2$ (110 mg, 0.16 mmol) and PPh_3 (84 mg, 0.32 mmol) in DME (15 ml) and aq. Na_2CO_3 (2.3 g Na_2CO_3 in 15 ml H_2O) was kept at 70°C for 14 h. The cooled reaction mixture was poured into water (100 ml) and extracted with chloroform (3 $\times$ 25 ml). The organic phase was dried over anhydrous $MgSO_4$ and concentrated under reduced pressure. The crude residue was submitted to column chromatography on silica gel (hexane/ $CHCl_3$ 2:3) to give 1,2-bis-(4'-trifluoromethoxybiphenyl-4-yl)ethane-1,2-dione (**11b**) as pale yellow needles, m.p. 215°C; [Found: MH^+ , 531.1025. $C_{28}H_{17}F_6O_4$ requires (MH^+), 531.1025]; ν_{max} (KBr/ cm^{-1}) 1653, 1603, 1563, 1530, 1493, 1408, 1282, 1004, 923, 890, 855, 830, 775, 751, 731, 698, 640, 626, 543, 514 cm^{-1} ; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$)

7.32 (4H, m), 7.65 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.9$ Hz), 7.70 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.9$ Hz), 8.09 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.9$ Hz); δ_C (67.8 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 120.5 (2C, q, $^1J_{C-F} = -257$ Hz), 121.4 (4C), 127.6 (4C), 128.8 (4C), 130.6 (4C), 132.1 (2C), 138.2 (2C), 146.1 (2C), 149.6 (2C, q, $J = 1.7$ Hz), 193.7 (2C, CO); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 531 (MH^+ , 9.4), 423 (5.9), 265 (100). (Found: C, 63.3; H, 3.1. $C_{28}H_{16}F_6O_4$ requires C, 63.40; H, 3.04).

To **11b**, column chromatography on silica gel (hexane/ $CHCl_3$ 4:1) provided **1h** as a deep 'metallic' purple solid; m.p. 269°C; (Found: M^+ , 861.9996. $C_{43}H_{24}O_3$ requires M , $^{79}Br^{81}BrF_6$: 861.9981); v_{max} (KBr/ cm^{-1}) 1704, 1488, 1263, 1211, 1165, 1072, 1007, 845, 809, 771; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 7.02 (4H, m, $J^* = 7.6$ Hz), 7.14 (4H, m, $J^* = 7.8$ Hz), 7.27 (4H, m, $J^* = 7.6$ Hz), 7.37–7.45 (8H, m), 7.59 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.4$ Hz); δ_C (67.8 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 118.1 (2C, q, $^2J = -251$ Hz), 121.3 (4C), 122.2 (2C), 124.2 (2C), 126.7 (4C), 128.3 (4C), 129.4 (2C), 129.9 (4C), 131.5 (4C), 131.6 (4C), 131.9 (2C), 138.6 (2C), 140.1 (2C), 149.0 (2C, q, $J = 2.2$ Hz), 199.1 (CO); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) = 864 ($^{81}Br_2$) M^+ , 25), 862 ($^{79}Br^{81}Br$) M^+ , 36), 860 ($^{79}Br_2$) M^+ , 17), 498 (14).

Further tetracyclones

Hexamethoxytetracyclone (1c): Red-brown needles, m.p. 175°C; (Found: MH^+ 565.2228. $C_{35}H_{33}O_7$ requires (MH^+), 565.2226); v_{max} (KBr/ cm^{-1}) 3070, 2996, 2926, 1712, 1579, 1411, 1351, 1240, 1128, 1004, 852; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 3.45 (12H, s, 4 OCH₃), 3.84 (6H, s, 2 OCH₃), 6.17 (4H, s), 7.24–7.28 (10H, m); δ_C (67.8 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 55.9, 61.0, 107.2, 125.3, 127.6, 128.1, 130.1, 130.8, 138.3, 152.6 (two sets of isochronous nuclei), 153.6, 199.9; MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 565 (MH^+ , 36), 564 (M^+ , 32). (Found: C, 74.1; H, 5.7. $C_{35}H_{32}O_7$ requires C, 74.45; H, 5.71).

3,4-Bis(4-trifluoromethoxybiphenyl)-2,5-diphenylcyclopentadienone (1i): Deep-purple solid, m.p. 208°C; (Found: MH^+ 705.1862. $C_{43}H_{27}O_3F_6$ requires: MH^+ , 705.1864); v_{max} (KBr/ cm^{-1}) 1704, 1490, 1267, 1219, 1164, 1005, 920, 841, 738, 693; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 7.04 (4H, d, $^3J = 8.6$ Hz), 7.24–7.29 (14H, m), 7.41 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.6$ Hz), 7.58 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.9$ Hz); δ_C (67.8 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 120.5 (q, 2C, $^1J_{CF} = -256$ Hz), 121.3 (4C), 125.8 (2C), 126.5 (4C), 127.6 (2C), 128.1 (4C), 128.3 (4C), 130.1 (4C), 130.2 (4C), 130.7 (2C), 132.4 (2C), 138.8 (2C), 139.7 (2C), 148.9 (q, $J = 1.7$ Hz), 153.6 (2C), 200.0 (CO); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 705 (MH^+ , 100), 676 (9.2), 587 (11), 498 (14), 338 (40), 265 (30).

2,5-Bis(biphenyl)-3,4-diphenylcyclopentadienone (1k):⁴⁷ Brown-black solid; m.p. 282°C; v_{max} (KBr/ cm^{-1}) 1709, 1485, 1301, 1115, 1084, 1026, 1006, 915, 850, 798, 761, 738, 708 cm^{-1} ; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 6.98 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.4$ Hz), 7.17–7.35 (12H, m), 7.41 (4H, m), 7.49 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.1$ Hz), 7.58 (4H, m, $J^* = 7.8$ Hz); δ_C (67.8 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 124.9 (2C), 126.7 (4C), 127.0 (4C), 127.3 (2C), 128.1 (4C), 128.6 (2C), 128.7 (4C), 129.3 (4C), 129.7 (2C), 130.5 (4C), 133.2 (2C), 140.0 (2C), 140.7 (2C), 154.6 (2C), 200.5; MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 536 (M^+ , 0.5).

2,5-Bis(biphenyl)-3,4-bis(4-fluorophenyl)cyclopentadienone (1l): Brown-black solid; 235°C; (Found: M^+ 572.1941. $C_{41}H_{26}OF_2$ requires: 572.1952); v_{max} (KBr/ cm^{-1}) 1702, 1540, 1531, 1529, 1507, 1223, 1158, 1122, 1006, 859, 843, 755, 700, 585, 569, 536, 516, 496; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 6.89–6.96 (8H, m), 7.24–7.60 (18H, m); δ_C (67.8 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 115.5 (4C, d, $J_{CF} = 20.7$ Hz), 125.2 (2C), 126.8 (4C), 127.0 (4C), 127.5 (2C), 128.8 (4C), 128.9 (2C), 129.4 (2C), 130.4 (4C), 131.3 (4C, d, $J_{CF} = 11$ Hz), 140.3 (2C), 140.5 (2C), 153.1 (2C), 164.0 (2C, d, $J_{CF} = -232$ Hz), 200.1; MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 572 (M^+ , 1.1).

Thermal reaction of tetracyclone (**1a**) with oxygen: Tetracyclone (**1a**) (450 mg, 1.17 mmol) in diphenylether (2.0 ml) was heated at 135°C for 36 h. Thereafter, the solution was subjected directly to column chromatography on silica gel with hexane as an initial eluant (to separate off diphenyl ether), thereafter with a solvent mixture of hexane/ $CHCl_3$ /ether (10:1:1) to give **Z-3a** (124 mg, 27%) and **4a** (112 mg, 24%).

Selected spectroscopic and analytical data of (Z)-1,2-diaroyl-1,2-diarylethenes **3** and α -pyrones **4**

(Z)-1,2-Dibenzoyl-1,2-bis(4-methoxyphenyl)ethene (Z-3b): Pale yellow needles; m.p. 189°C; (Found: MH^+ 449.1756. $C_{30}H_{25}O_4$ requires: MH^+ , 449.1753); v_{max} (KBr/ cm^{-1}) 3058, 2926, 1657, 1605, 1509, 1250, 1175, 1031, 835, 692; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 3.74 (6H, s, 2 OCH₃), 6.71 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.6$ Hz), 7.08 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.6$ Hz), 7.41 (2H, m), 7.28 (4H, m), 7.83 (4H, m, $J^* = 7.3$ Hz); δ_C (67.8 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 55.1, 114.1, 127.7, 128.2, 130.0, 131.3, 132.7, 136.6, 143.5, 159.4, 197.4; MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 449 (MH^+ , 100). (Found: C, 80.5; H, 5.4. $C_{30}H_{24}O$ requires C, 80.33; H, 5.39).

(Z)-1,2-Dibenzoyl-1,2-bis(3,4,5-trimethoxyphenyl)ethene (Z-3c): Slowly crystallising colourless solid; (Found: MH^+ , 569.2174. $C_{34}H_{33}O_8$ requires 569.2175); v_{max} (KBr/ cm^{-1}) 3056, 2928, 1581, 1504, 1450, 1413, 1341, 1243, 1128, 1006, 750; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 3.59 (12H, s, 4 OCH₃), 3.79 (6H, s, 2 OCH₃), 6.40 (4H, s), 7.26–7.48 (6H, m), 7.87 (4H, m, $J^* = 7.3$ Hz); δ_C (67.8 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 56.1, 60.9, 107.0, 128.4, 129.8, 130.5, 133.2, 136.4, 138.2, 144.3, 153.3, 197.4; MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 569 (57, MH^+).

(Z)-1,2-Dibenzoyl-1,2-bis(4-bromophenyl)ethene (Z-3e) (for **Z-3d**, see also refs 49, 50; **Z-3e** had been reported previously^{51,52}): Colourless solid; m.p. 228°C (Found: MH^+ , 558.9738. $C_{29}H_{19}O_2^{79}Br^{81}Br$ requires MH , 558.9734); v_{max} (KBr/ cm^{-1}) 2924, 1663, 1593, 1484, 1273, 1012, 829, 713; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 7.03 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.2$ Hz), 7.29–7.37 (8H, m), 7.43 (2H, m), 7.80 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.2$ Hz); δ_C (67.8 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 123.1, 128.4, 130.0, 131.2, 132.2, 133.3, 133.8, 135.9, 143.8, 196.2 (C=O); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 559 ($^{81}Br^{79}Br$) MH^+ , 12).

(Z)-1,2-Dibenzoyl-1,2-bis(4-methoxybiphenyl)ethene (Z-3g): Colourless solid; m.p. 233°C; (Found: MH^+ , 601.2377. $C_{42}H_{33}O_4$ requires MH , 601.2379); v_{max} (KBr/ cm^{-1}) 3032, 2924, 1653, 1602, 1495, 1289, 1246, 1178, 1037, 826, 809; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 3.82 (6H, s, 2 OCH₃), 6.92 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.9$ Hz), 7.23–7.49 (18H, m), 7.88 (4H, m, $J^* = 7.2$ Hz); δ_C (67.8 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 55.4 (OCH₃), 114.3 (CH), 126.7 (CH), 128.0 (CH), 128.4 (CH), 130.1 (CH), 130.3 (CH), 132.5 (C_{quat}), 133.0 (CH), 133.6 (C_{quat}), 136.5 (C_{quat}), 140.5 (C_{quat}), 144.1 (C_{quat}), 159.5 (C_{quat}), 197.1 (C_{quat} , C=O). MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 601 (MH^+ , 38).

(Z)-1,2-Bis(4-bromobenzoyl)-1,2-bis(4-trifluoromethoxybiphenyl)ethene (Z-3h): Slowly crystallising colourless solid; (Found: MH^+ , 867.0005. $C_{42}H_{25}O_4^{79}Br^{81}BrF_6$ requires MH , 867.0008). v_{max} (KBr/ cm^{-1}) 1654, 1584, 1494, 1397, 1259, 1165, 1068, 1003, 828; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 7.24 (4H, m, $J^* = 7.0$ Hz), 7.38–7.57 (16H, m), 7.72 (4H, d, $J^* = 8.4$ Hz); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 867 ($^{79}Br^{81}Br$) MH^+ , 13).

(Z)-1,2-Dibenzoyl-1,2-bis(4-trifluoromethoxybiphenyl)ethene (Z-3i): Slowly crystallising colourless solid; (Found: MH^+ , 709.1808. $C_{42}H_{27}O_4F_6$ requires MH , 709.1814); v_{max} (neat/ cm^{-1}) 3028, 2926, 2866, 1655, 1611, 1510, 1453, 1251, 1173, 1089, 1034, 1004, 838, 809, 755, 671; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 7.22–7.47 (14H, m), 7.35 (4H, m, $J^* = 7.8$ Hz), 7.53 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.6$ Hz), 7.88 (4H, m, $J^* = 7.6$ Hz); δ_C (67.8 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 120.5 (2C, $^1J_{CF} -256$ Hz), 121.2 (4C), 127.3 (4C), 128.3 (4C), 128.4 (4C), 130.1 (4C), 130.4 (4C), 133.1 (2C), 134.6 (2C), 136.3 (2C), 138.7 (2C), 139.6 (2C), 144.1 (2C), 148.9 (q, 2C, $J = 1.7$ Hz), 196.7 (2C, CO); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 709 (MH^+ , 24), 265 (29), 105 (100).

(Z)-1,2-Bis(biphenylcarbonyl)-1,2-bis(phenyl)ethene (Z-3k): Colourless needles; m.p. 234°C; (Found: MH^+ , 541.2159. $C_{40}H_{28}O_2$ requires MH^+ , 541.2168); v_{max} (neat/ cm^{-1}) 1663, 1603, 1486, 1442, 1404, 1263, 1178, 1072, 1029, 1004, 849, 768, 728, 695, 579; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 7.22 (10H, m), 7.33–7.43 (6H, m), 7.52–7.60 (8H, m), 7.93 (4H, m, $J^* = 8.4$ Hz); δ_C (67.8 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 127.02 (4C), 127.26 (4C), 128.10 (2C), 128.41 (2C), 128.71 (4C), 128.83 (4C), 129.85 (4C), 130.63 (4C), 135.17 (2C), 135.31 (2C), 139.99 (2C), 144.48 (2C), 145.66 (2C), 196.48 (2C, CO); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 541 (MH^+ , 4.6). (Found: C, 88.9; H, 5.15. $C_{40}H_{28}O_2$ requires C, 88.86; H, 5.22).

(Z)-1,2-Bis(biphenylcarbonyl)-1,2-bis(4-fluorophenyl)ethene (Z-3l): Colourless needles; m.p. 227°C; (Found: MH^+ , 577.1984. $C_{40}H_{27}O_2F_2$ requires 577.1979); v_{max} (neat/ cm^{-1}) 1651, 1599, 1504, 1404, 1236, 1006, 847, 818, 760, 690; δ_H (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) 6.90–6.96 (4H, m), 7.17–7.44 (10H, m), 7.52–7.60 (8H, m), 7.89 (4H, m, $J^* = 7.8$ Hz); δ_C 116.1 (4C, J_{CF} 21.2 Hz), 127.1 (4C), 127.3 (4C), 128.2 (2C), 128.9 (4C), 130.6 (4C), 131.2 (2C, d, J_{CF} 3.4 Hz), 131.7 (4C, d, J_{CF} 7.9 Hz), 134.9 (2C), 139.9 (2C), 143.6 (2C), 145.9 (2C), 162.6 (2C, d, $J_{CF} -250$ Hz), 196.1 (2C, CO); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) m/z (%) 577 (MH^+ , 8.5).

4,5-Bis(4-methoxyphenyl)-3,6-diphenyl- α -pyrone (4b):¹⁸ Colourless solid; m.p. 246°C (Lit¹⁸ 234°C; 1H NMR (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) δ 3.66 (3H, s, OCH₃), 3.72 (3H, s, OCH₃), 6.49 (2H, m, $J^* = 8.6$ Hz), 6.61 (2H, m, $J^* = 8.6$ Hz), 6.63 (2H, m, $J^* = 8.6$ Hz), 6.75 (2H, m, $J^* = 8.6$ Hz), 7.11–7.34 (10H, m).

4,5-Bis(4-methylphenyl)-3,6-diphenyl- α -pyrone (4d):¹⁸ Colourless solid; m.p. 198°C; [HRMS Found: 429.1852. Calcd. for $C_{31}H_{25}O_2$: 429.1855 (MH^+ , FAB)]; 1H NMR (270 MHz, $CDCl_3$) δ 2.13 (3H, s, CH₃), 2.21 (3H, s, CH₃), 6.59 (2H, m, $J^* = 8.1$ Hz), 6.72 (2H, m, $J^* = 8.1$ Hz), 6.74 (2H, m, $J^* = 8.1$ Hz), 6.85 (2H, m, $J^* = 8.1$ Hz), 7.10–7.33 (10H, m); ^{13}C NMR (67.8 MHz, $CDCl_3$) δ 21.1 (CH₃), 119.7 (C_{quat}), 124.9 (C_{quat}), 127.1 (CH), 127.6 (2C, CH), 127.8 (2C, CH), 128.0 (2C, CH), 128.8 (2C, CH), 129.2 (CH), 129.3 (4C,

CH), 130.6 (2C, CH), 131.1 (2C, CH), 131.9 (C_{quat}), 132.9 (C_{quat}), 133.1 (C_{quat}), 134.5 (C_{quat}), 136.7 (C_{quat}), 136.8 (C_{quat}), 155.6 (C_{quat}), 156.4 (C_{quat}), 162.4 (C_{quat}, CO); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) *m/z* (%) 429 (MH⁺, 100), 400 (36), 295 (33), 105 (20).

4,5-Bis(4-bromophenyl)-3,6-diphenyl- α -pyrone (4e):¹⁴ Slowly crystallising colourless solid; (Found: M⁺, 545.9658. C₂₈H₁₈O₂⁷⁹Br⁸¹Br requires M, 545.9655); $\nu_{\max}$ (KBr/cm⁻¹) 1717, 1485, 1072, 1011, 696; δ_{H} (270 MHz, CDCl₃) 6.59 (2H, m, *J** = 8.6 Hz), 6.73 (2H, m, *J** = 8.5 Hz), 7.07–7.36 (14H, m); δ_{C} (67.8 MHz, CDCl₃) 118.0, 121.8, 121.9, 125.5, 127.7, 128.0, 128.1, 128.3, 129.3, 129.8, 130.5, 130.9, 131.6, 132.2, 133.0, 133.6, 133.8, 134.8, 153.4, 157.5, 162.2; MS (70 eV) *m/z* (%) 548 ([⁸¹Br₂]M⁺, 6), 546 ([⁷⁹Br⁸¹Br]M⁺, 12), 544 ([⁷⁹Br₂]M⁺, 6), 105 (100).

4,5-Bis(4-fluorophenyl)-3,6-diphenyl- α -pyrone (4f): Colourless solid, m.p. 193°C; (Found: M⁺, 436.1277. C₂₉H₁₈O₂F₂ requires M, 436.1275); $\nu_{\max}$ (KBr/cm⁻¹) 1715, 1647, 1506, 1440, 1223, 1157, 929, 836, 759, 697; δ_{H} (270 MHz, CDCl₃) 6.67–6.70 (4H, m), 6.78–6.82 (4H, m), 7.09–7.32 (10H, m); δ_{C} (67.8 MHz, CDCl₃) 114.7 (2C, d, *J*_{CF} = 21.7 Hz), 115.4 (2C, d, *J*_{CF} = 21.7 Hz), 118.4, 125.5, 127.5, 127.9 (2C), 128.0 (2C), 129.3 (2C), 129.6, 130.5 (2C), 130.8 (d, *J*_{CF} = 3.9 Hz), 131.2 (2C, d, *J*_{CF} = 8.4 Hz), 132.0 (d, *J*_{CF} = 3.3 Hz), 132.4, 133.0 (2C, d, *J*_{CF} = 8.4 Hz), 133.9, 154.0, 157.0, 161.7 (d, *J*_{CF} = -248 Hz), 161.8 (d, *J*_{CF} = -248 Hz), 161.9; MS (EI, 70 eV) *m/z* (%) 436 (M⁺, 1.2), 199 (100).

3,6-Diphenyl-4,5-bis(4-methoxybiphenyl)- α -pyrone (4g): Slowly crystallising colourless solid; (Found: MH⁺, 613.2390. C₄₃H₃₃O₄ requires MH, 613.2379); $\nu_{\max}$ (KBr/cm⁻¹) 2924, 1713, 1607, 1495, 1246, 826; δ_{H} (270 MHz, CDCl₃) 3.80 (3H, s, OCH₃), 3.82 (3H, s, OCH₃), 6.78 (2H, m, *J** = 8.4 Hz), 6.86–6.94 (6H, m), 7.15–7.45 (18H, m); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) *m/z* (%) 613 (MH⁺, 84), 584 (15), 479 (15).

3,6-Bis(p-bromophenyl)-4,5-bis(4-trifluoromethoxybiphenyl)- α -pyrone (4h): Slowly solidifying colourless oil, (Found: MH⁺, 879.0002. C₄₃H₂₅O₄⁷⁹Br⁸¹BrF₆ requires MH, 879.0008); $\nu_{\max}$ 1710, 1500, 735, 707; δ_{H} (270 MHz, CDCl₃) 6.82 (2H, m, *J** = 7.3 Hz), 6.95 (2H, m, *J** = 7.3 Hz), 7.00–7.37 (16H, m), 7.46 (2H, m, *J** = 8.9 Hz), 7.51 (2H, m, *J** = 8.6 Hz).

3,6-Diphenyl-4,5-bis(4-trifluoromethoxybiphenyl)- α -pyrone (4i): Colourless solid, m.p. 204°C; (Found: MH⁺, 721.1814. C₄₃H₂₇O₄F₆ requires MH, 721.1814); $\nu_{\max}$ (KBr/cm⁻¹) 1712, 1497, 1273, 1005, 928, 832, 808, 780, 751, 696; δ_{H} (270 MHz, CDCl₃) 6.84 (2H, m, *J** = 8.4 Hz), 6.97 (2H, m, *J** = 8.4 Hz), 7.17–7.27 (14H, m), 7.29 (2H, m, *J** = 8.1 Hz), 7.37 (2H, m), 7.43 (2H, m, *J** = 8.6 Hz), 7.49 (2H, m, *J** = 8.6 Hz); δ_{C} (67.8 MHz, CDCl₃) 118.9, 120.0 (q, *J*_{CF} -258 Hz), 120.6 (q, *J*_{CF} -255 Hz), 121.2 (2C), 121.3, 125.9 (2C), 126.6 (2C), 127.5, 127.8 (2C), 128.0 (2C), 128.1 (4C), 129.4 (2C), 129.6, 130.2 (2C), 130.6 (2C), 132.0 (2C), 132.6, 134.1, 134.5, 135.6, 138.4, 138.4, 138.6, 138.8 (d, *J* 1.7 Hz), 148.8, 154.5, 157.0, 162.1, 168.4; MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) *m/z* (%) 721 (MH⁺, 100), 692 (42), 587 (43), 265 (28), 105 (95).

3,6-Bis(biphenyl)-4,5-diphenyl- α -pyrone (4k): Pale yellow solid, m.p. > 300°C; $\nu_{\max}$ (KBr/cm⁻¹) 1704, 1485, 926, 848, 829, 764, 731, 700; δ_{H} (270 MHz, CDCl₃) 6.70–6.80 (2H, m), 6.91–6.99 (6H, m), 7.08–7.11 (3H, m), 7.20–7.25 (2H, m), 7.27–7.56 (15H, m); δ_{C} (67.8 MHz, CDCl₃) 119.7, 124.6, 126.3 (2C), 126.4 (2C), 126.9 (2C), 127.0 (2C), 127.2, 127.3 (2C), 127.4 (2C), 127.8, 128.2 (2C), 128.6 (2C), 128.8 (2C), 129.5 (2C), 129.8 (2C), 131.1 (2C), 131.4 (2C), 131.5, 133.2, 135.1, 136.2, 139.8, 139.9, 140.6, 142.0, 155.3, 156.2, 162.3; MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) *m/z* (%) 553 (MH⁺, 1.5).

3,6-Bis(biphenyl)-4,5-bis(4-fluorophenyl)- α -pyrone (4l): Grey-greenish solid, m.p. 323°C; (Found M⁺, 589.1976. C₄₁H₂₇O₂F₂ requires M, 589.1979); $\nu_{\max}$ (KBr/cm⁻¹) 1712, 1603, 1510, 1230, 1163, 923, 835, 768, 752, 696, 568; δ_{H} (270 MHz, CDCl₃) 6.71–6.74 (4H, m), 6.83–6.89 (4H, m), 7.19 (2H, m, *J** = 7.6 Hz), 7.31–7.58 (16H, m); δ_{C} (67.8 MHz, CDCl₃) 114.9 (2C, d, *J*_{CF} 21.2 Hz), 115.6 (2C, d, *J*_{CF} 21.3 Hz), 118.5, 125.1, 126.5 (2C), 126.6 (2C), 127.0 (2C), 127.1 (2C), 127.4, 127.9, 128.7 (2C), 128.9 (2C), 129.7 (2C), 130.9, 131.0, 131.1 (2C), 131.2, 131.3 (2C, d, *J*_{CF} 7.9 Hz), 132.0, 133.1 (2C, d, *J*_{CF} 8.1 Hz), 139.8, 140.3, 140.5, 154.1, 156.6, 161.7 (d, *J*_{CF} -246 Hz), 161.9, 162.0 (d, *J*_{CF} -249 Hz); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) *m/z* (%) 589 (MH⁺, 8.1), 588 (M⁺, 4.1).

Diacylstilbenes **Z-3a**,⁵³ **Z-3d**⁴⁹ and **Z-3f**⁴⁹ are known compounds.

Cycloaddition of tetracyclone 1a to phenylacetylene (13a): A mixture of **1a** (113 mg, 0.29 mmol) and phenylacetylene (**13a**, 1.39 g, 13.6 mmol) was heated at 135°C for 10 min. Thereafter, the colourless solution was cooled and the mixture was subjected directly to column chromatography on silica gel (initially hexane to remove excess phenylacetylene, then hexane/chloroform/ether 2:1:1) to give

pentaphenylbenzene (**14a**) (129 mg, 97%), colourless solid; m.p. 248°C;²⁹ δ_{H} (270 MHz, CDCl₃) 6.76–6.93 (15H, m), 7.17 (10H, bs), 7.60 (1H, s); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) *m/z* (%) 458 (M⁺, 15).

Analogously, tetracyclone **1k** was reacted with phenylacetylene (**13a**) to give 2,3,5-triphenyl-*p*-quinquephenyl (**14b**): Colourless solid, m.p. 277°C;³⁰ (Found M⁺, 610.2658. C₄₈H₃₄ requires M, 610.2661); $\nu_{\max}$ (KBr/cm⁻¹) 1490, 1440, 1118, 1073, 1006, 908, 841, 763, 734, 697; δ_{H} (270 MHz, CDCl₃) 6.84–6.94 (12H, m), 7.15–7.45 (21 H, m), 7.64 (1H, s); δ_{C} (67.8 MHz, CDCl₃) 125.4, 125.5 (2C), 125.7, 126.2 (2C), 126.3, 126.7 (5C), 126.9 (2C), 127.0, 127.1 (2C), 127.2, 127.7 (2C), 128.6 (2C), 128.7 (2C), 130.0 (2C), 130.4 (2C), 131.5 (2C), 131.6 (2C), 132.0 (2C), 137.9, 138.9, 139.0, 139.1, 139.4, 140.0, 140.3, 140.4, 140.7 (2C), 140.8, 140.9, 141.7, 141.9; MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) *m/z* (%) 610 (M⁺, 2.6).

Cycloaddition of tetracyclone 1a to diphenylacetylene (tolane, 13b): A mixture of tetracyclone **7a** (384 mg, 1.0 mmol) and tolane (**13b**) (890 mg, 5.0 mmol) was heated at 175°C for 6 h. Thereafter a mixture of ether-hexane (1:1, 5 ml) was added to the cooled reaction solution. The formed precipitate was filtered off and washed with cold ether-hexane to give hexaphenylbenzene⁵⁶ (**14c**) (497 mg, 93%) as a colourless solid; m.p. > 300°C (Lit.⁵⁵ > 300°C); $\nu_{\max}$ (KBr/cm⁻¹) 1600, 1494, 1440, 1401, 1072, 1027, 906, 780, 728, 697, 554; δ_{H} (270 MHz, CDCl₃) 6.82–6.86 (30H, m); δ_{C} (67.8 MHz, CDCl₃) 125.2 (6C), 126.5 (12C), 131.4 (12C), 140.3 (6C), 140.6 (6C); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) *m/z* (%) 534 (M⁺, 0.2).

Analogously, tetracyclone **1k** was reacted with tolane (**13b**) to give 2,3,5,6-tetraphenyl-*p*-quinquephenyl (**14d**) as a beige coloured solid, m.p. > 300°C, $\nu_{\max}$ (KBr/cm⁻¹) 1486, 1440, 1398, 1070, 1025, 1006, 911, 843, 740, 697, 566; δ_{H} (270 MHz, CDCl₃) 6.85–6.89 (22H, m), 7.12 (4H, m, *J** = 8.4 Hz), 7.20–7.32 (8H, m), 7.43 (4H, m, *J** = 7.3 Hz); δ_{C} (67.8 MHz, CDCl₃) 125.1 (4C), 125.4 (4C), 126.6 (8C), 126.7 (4C), 126.9 (2C), 128.5 (4C), 131.5 (8C), 131.8 (4C), 137.4 (2C), 139.8 (2C), 140.0 (2C), 140.5 (4C), 140.6 (4C), 140.8 (2C); MS (FAB, 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol) *m/z* (%) 686 (M⁺, 12), 307 (22).

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