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Asymmetric Synthesis, Structure, and Reactivity of Unexpectedly Stable Spiroepoxy- β -Lactones Including Facile Conversion to Tetronic Acids: Application to (+)-Maculalactone A

Richard J. Duffy[‡], Kay A. Morris, Ravikrishna Vallakati, Wei Zhang[†], and Daniel Romo^{*}

Department of Chemistry, Texas A&M University, P. O. Box 30012, College Station, Texas 77842-3012

Abstract

A novel class of small spirocyclic heterocycles, spiroepoxy- β -lactones (1,4-dioxaspiro[2.3]-hexan-5-ones), is described that exhibit a number of interesting reactivity patterns. These spiroheterocycles, including an optically active series, are readily synthesized by epoxidation of ketene dimers (4-alkylidene-2-oxetanones) available from homo- or heteroketene dimerization. An analysis of bond lengths in these systems by X-ray crystallography and comparison to data for known spirocycles and those determined computationally, suggest that anomeric effects in these systems may be more pronounced due to their rigidity and may contribute to their surprising stability. The synthetic utility of spiroepoxy- β -lactones was explored and one facile rearrangement identified under several conditions provides a 3-step route from acid chlorides to optically active tetronic acids, ubiquitous heterocycles in bioactive natural products. The addition of various nucleophiles to these spirocycles leads primarily to addition at C5 and C2. The utility of an optically active spiroepoxy- β -lactone was demonstrated in the concise, enantioselective synthesis of the anti-fouling agent, (+)-maculalactone A, which proceeds in 5 steps from hydrocinnamoyl chloride by way of a tetronic acid intermediate.

Introduction

Small, strained heterocyclic rings have proven extremely useful in synthetic endeavors and continue to fascinate chemists due to their unusual structure, hybridization, and unique reactivity patterns. Historically, of the small, oxygen-containing heterocyclic rings,¹ epoxides are the most widely used and explored primarily due to their relevance in synthetic endeavors toward polyketide structures, however recently oxetanes and β -lactones (2-oxetanones)² are being increasingly targeted due to their presence in natural products, their potential as enzyme inhibitors, and their versatility as synthetic intermediates. The inherent strain associated with these heterocycles has led to interesting and sometimes unexpected modes of reactivity. One example is illustrated by the dual reactivity of β -lactones toward nucleophiles (Scheme 1).³ Nucleophiles can add to either the acyl carbon to give β -hydroxy carbonyl derivatives **3** typically observed with “hard” nucleophiles or to the β -carbon to provide β -substituted carboxylic acids **2** with “soft” nucleophiles.⁴

romo@tamu.edu.

[‡]Current Address: Dept. of Chemistry, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 20742

[†]AMRI, Albany, NY, 12203

Supporting Information Available: Synthetic procedures and characterization data including ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra for compounds **10b-c**, **11c**, **29**, **45-52** and **58-61**, HPLC traces of triflate **46** and maculalactone, and x-ray crystallographic data including CIF files for spiro-epoxy- β -lactone **10b**, butenolide **29**, and triflate **46**. This material is available on the Web at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

The utility of small, strained heterocyclic rings has also been extended to spiroheterocyclic systems that include oxa- and dioxaspiro[2.2]pentanes **4** as well as oxa- and dioxaspiro[2.3]hexanes **5** and **6** (Figure 1).⁵ As part of a total synthesis effort toward the haterumalides,⁶ we required access to anti- γ -hydroxy-*cis*- β -lactones *e.g.* **9** to be used in a reductive cyclization route⁷ to the tetrahydrofuran fragment of this natural product target (Scheme 2). However, existing diastereoselective methods for β -lactone synthesis from chiral α -oxy aldehydes provided only *syn-cis* or *syn-trans* selectivity.⁸ This led us to consider the utility of heretofore unknown 1,4-dioxaspiro[2.3]hexan-5-ones (**7**, X = Y = O) that could potentially be accessed by epoxidation of known optically active ketene dimers **11**.⁹ A subsequent and likely required *in situ* regio- and facially selective C-O reductive bond cleavage, due to the expected instability of spiroepoxy- β -lactones **10**, might allow access to the desired *anti-cis*- γ -hydroxy- β -lactone **9**. We previously reported in preliminary form, the first synthesis of the dioxaspiro[2.3]hexan-5-one ring system (spiroepoxy- β -lactones) **7**¹⁰ which demonstrated several interesting modes of reactivity. Herein, we provide a full account of our studies of these novel spiroheterocycles including further details regarding their unique reactivity including a propensity to generate tetronic acids under a number of conditions. In addition, the accessibility of optically active ketene dimers by the method of Calter enabled a concise, 5-step, organocatalytic, asymmetric synthesis of (+)-maculalactone proceeding via an optically active tetronic acid derived from a spiroepoxy- β -lactone intermediate.

Results and Discussion

The spiroepoxy- β -lactone moiety incorporates three potentially reactive sites into a highly strained ring system by possessing both an epoxide and a β -lactone. Four possible modes of reactivity with nucleophiles can be envisioned upon consideration of the functionalities present in this ring system (Scheme 3). The first mode involves addition of nucleophiles to the distal epoxide C-O bond, pathway 'a', which would lead to an intermediate γ -substituted β -keto-carboxylate. Subsequent facile decarboxylation would yield a α -substituted ketone **13**. The second mode, pathway 'b', involves nucleophilic addition to or reduction of an oxocarbenium derived from cleavage of the epoxide ring at the spiroketal center resulting in a γ -hydroxy- β -lactone **14**, which was the desired reaction manifold toward the requisite β -lactone for a proposed synthesis of the tetrahydrofuran of haterumalide (Scheme 2). Alternatively, a nucleophile could add to an oxocarbenium derived from cleavage of the β -lactone ring at the spirocenter instead of the epoxide (pathway 'c'), which would result in the formation of an epoxy acid **15**. The final possible mode, pathway 'd', involves nucleophilic addition at the β -lactone carbonyl leading to cleavage of both rings to initially yield a γ -hydroxy- β -ketoacid derivative **16**. The reactivity of these systems has been explored and the findings to date indicate that pathways 'a' and 'd' predominate, however some unexpected pathways were also uncovered.

Epoxidation of Homoketene Dimers: Synthesis of Unexpectedly Stable Spiroepoxy- β -Lactones

To access the proposed spiroepoxy- β -lactones, we set out to develop appropriate epoxidation conditions for ketene dimers that would leave the β -lactone nucleus intact (Scheme 4). At the outset, the stability of the desired spiroepoxy- β -lactones **10** was unknown and we anticipated that *in situ* reduction to give β -lactone **18** might be necessary if perhaps oxocarbenium intermediate **17** formed spontaneously. Based on ring strain considerations,¹¹ we expected formation of the β -lactone oxocarbenium **17** rather than the epoxide-containing oxocarbenium derived from ring opening of the β -lactone (pathway 'c', Scheme 3). This mode of reactivity would enable the desired C-O reductive cleavage to give the desired *anti*- γ -hydroxy- β -lactone **18** if successful.

Previously, we reported that ketene homodimers **11** including the optically active series available by the method of Calter,¹² were stable to silica gel chromatography.^{9,13} and we employed these methods to access both racemic and optically active ketene dimers utilized in this study. Our initial epoxidation studies involved the use of *m*-CPBA, which gave multiple products even under buffered conditions with added NaHCO₃ and pointed to the likely sensitive nature of the targeted spiroepoxy- β -lactones. These results led us to consider a mild, non-nucleophilic, neutral oxidant such as dimethyldioxirane.¹⁴ Exposure of ketene dimer **11** to excess, freshly prepared DMDO at low temperatures (-78 °C) gave no reaction. However, exposure of dimer **11** to DMDO at ambient temperature (23 °C) for 5 hours led to the production of a single product whose spectral characteristics supported the structure of spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10**. Surprisingly, these novel spirocyclic heterocycles could be isolated and purified by silica gel chromatography under standard conditions. However, the shelf-life of these strained intermediates is ~7 days when stored neat at low temperature *i.e.* -20 °C. Therefore, it is best to purify and then directly utilize spiroepoxy- β -lactones in subsequent transformations within ~5 days. Storing frozen in benzene can extend the shelf life of the spiroepoxide. The scope of this epoxidation was explored with several other homoketene dimers leading to a number of spiroepoxy- β -lactones **10/19** in moderate to good yields (Table 1). Generally high diastereoselectivities were observed, as expected, due to steric interactions with the α -substituent leading to preferred approach of the oxidant to the opposite face of the alkene (see inset, Table 1). Enrichment of the major diastereomer to >19:1, as determined by ¹H NMR (500 MHz), was achieved upon silica gel purification. Phenyl groups, silyl ethers, and azides were tolerated with appropriate chain lengths to avoid intramolecular interactions of functional groups and unfavorable inductive effects but overall led to reductions in yields (Table 1, entries 3-5). Chain lengths < 4 carbons led to diminished yields and multiple side-products during the epoxidation step and also led to difficulties during ketene dimer substrate synthesis and purification as previously described.^{13a}

Structural Analysis of a Spiroepoxy- β -Lactone by X-ray Analysis: Comparison to Related Small Heterocyclic Rings and Other Spirocyclic Hetero- and Carbocycles

The cyclohexyl-substituted, spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10b** could be recrystallized from pentane (slow evaporation at -20 °C) to provide crystals suitable for X-ray analysis (Figure 2). The derived crystal structure revealed several interesting structural features of these novel spiro systems and most intriguing was that both the epoxide C4-O6 and the β -lactone C4-O1 bonds were significantly shortened compared to average values for the parent systems derived from a search of the Cambridge Structural Database, by $\Delta 0.055 \text{ \AA}$ ¹⁵ and $\Delta 0.044 \text{ \AA}$ respectively (Table 2).¹⁶ As a direct consequence, the C5-O6 bond is slightly lengthened to 1.486 Å compared to the average bond length of 1.446 Å for β -lactones¹⁵ while the C4-C5 bond of the epoxide is significantly shortened to 1.380 Å from an average C-C bond length of 1.446 Å for epoxides. Finally, the C4-O1 bond is shortened to 1.448 Å from the more typical 1.492 Å of a β -lactone. These observations can be rationalized based on expected hybridization changes that occur in small rings leading to increased p-orbital character in order to relieve ring strain and results in concomitant increased σ -orbital character in exocyclic bonds leading to shorter bonds. Alternatively, bond shortening could be rationalized by $n \rightarrow \sigma^*$ overlap of an epoxide (O5) and a β -lactone (O1) lone pair with the σ^* orbitals of the C4-O1 and C4-O5 bond of the epoxide and β -lactone, respectively, indicative of a double anomeric effect. Calculations performed on spiroepoxyoxetanes, spirocyclopropyl oxetanes, and spiroepoxy cyclobutanes suggest that while hybridization effects play a role in bond shortening (Table 2), this is insufficient to explain the degree of bond shortening observed thus pointing to a greater role of anomeric effects.¹⁷ The observed anomeric effects may be more pronounced in these systems due to the rigidity of the spirocycle and may contribute to the unexpected stability of these systems. The C5-O6 bond of the epoxide is also lengthened predictive of the greater reactivity of this bond (*vide infra*).

Reactivity of Spiroepoxy- β -Lactones Toward Nucleophiles

When spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10b** was exposed to nucleophilic reagents such as tetrabutylammonium chloride (TBACl), the major isolated product was α -chloroketone **20** in low yield (Scheme 5). Similarly, when the same spiro-compound was exposed to sodium azide in a THF/H₂O mixture, α -azidoketone **21** was obtained in low yield. Highly polar products and multiple other unidentifiable by-products, some of which appeared polymeric based on solubility characteristics, accompanied these addition products. A plausible mechanism for these nucleophilic additions involves attack with inversion of configuration at the distal epoxide C-O bond to deliver hemiketal **22** which undergoes subsequent decarboxylation providing ketone **20** or **21** (Scheme 6).

Hydrolysis of Spiroepoxy- β -Lactone **10b**: Verification of the Site of Attack with H₂ ¹⁸O

The reaction of spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10b** with water at 23 °C slowly (19 h, pH 6.5) delivered α -hydroxy ketone **25** in 53% yield. There are two plausible mechanisms that would deliver this hydrolysis product, and the operative pathway was distinguished by performing the hydrolysis with isotopically enriched water containing 90% ¹⁸O. The two possible mechanisms are: (1) water addition at the distal epoxide C-O bond (pathway 'a') as observed with chloride and azide ions (see Scheme 5), leading to α -hydroxy ketone ¹⁸O-**25** incorporating the ¹⁸O label or (2) water addition to the β -lactone carbonyl (pathway 'd') leading to eventual loss of the ¹⁸O-label in the form of labeled carbon dioxide **24** via decarboxylation to provide unlabelled α -hydroxy ketone ¹⁶O-**25** (Scheme 7).

The outcome of the heavy water hydrolysis experiment was analyzed by both electrospray ionization MS and ¹³C NMR. When the hydrolysis was performed with H₂ ¹⁸O, MS analysis of the isolated α -hydroxy ketone product **25** clearly showed an increase of 2 mass units compared to the control experiment with H₂ ¹⁶O suggestive of heavy water incorporation by way of cleavage of the distal epoxide C5-O6 (pathway 'a') rather than initial β -lactone cleavage (pathway 'd'). However, ¹³C NMR analysis was also used to confirm the labeled position since it is well known that water exchanges with ketones by both acid and base catalysis,^{19,20} which could also account for the increased molecular weight. ¹³C NMR studies would reveal the actual site of ¹⁸O incorporation due to the known slight shielding effect on a ¹³C atom by an attached ¹⁸O isotope versus ¹⁶O,²¹ and this would unequivocally distinguish incorporation of ¹⁸O at the carbinol carbon (C5) by addition of H₂ ¹⁸O to the distal epoxide carbon or incorporation of ¹⁸O into the carbonyl carbon (C2) by simple exchange. The results of the ¹³C NMR analysis of the heavy water hydrolysis are shown in Figure 3a, and clearly show an upfield shift ($\Delta\delta$ 0.014, δ 74.443 (¹³C-¹⁸O) vs. δ 74.457 (¹³C-¹⁶O)) for the carbinol ¹³C (C5) with a small downfield shoulder corresponding to residual ¹⁶O incorporation. That the latter shoulder corresponds to the ¹⁶O-¹³C signal was confirmed by performing the hydrolysis reaction with a ~1:1 mixture of H₂ ¹⁸O/H₂ ¹⁶O (Figure 3b). On the other hand, expansion of the carbonyl region did not show chemical shift differences expected for incorporation of ¹⁸O at the carbonyl carbon again in comparison to the reaction with a ~1:1 mixture of H₂ ¹⁸O/H₂ ¹⁶O. Thus, ring cleavage of the spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10b** occurs via cleavage of the distal C5-O6 epoxide bond rather than via β -lactone cleavage and this is consistent with expected reactivity based on the relatively elongated C5-O6 bond (1.486 Å) determined by X-ray analysis. Interestingly, in hydrolysis reactions of β -propiolactone, a bifurcation of reactivity between the β -C-O bond and acyl C-O bond is observed.²²

Metal Hydride Reductions of Spiroepoxy- β -Lactones

Reduction of the spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10b** with lithium aluminum hydride gave the corresponding triol **26** in excellent yield and as a ~2:1 mixture of diastereomers, a result of initial reduction of the β -lactone carbonyl carbon (Scheme 8). Reductive C-O cleavage was not observed at C4 or C5, which is consistent with known reductions of β -lactones with metal

hydrides leading to exclusive acyl versus alkyl C-O cleavage.²³ The diastereoselectivity leading to triol **26** during reduction of the presumed α -hydroxy ketone intermediate is consistent with previous reports of reduction of α -hydroxy ketones with LiAlH_4 .²⁴ Other reducing agents were studied but typically led to mixtures of products. Treatment with DIBAL-H from $-78 \rightarrow 0^\circ\text{C}$ afforded multiple products with traces of triol **26**, and reaction with NaBH_4 in acetonitrile or tetrahydrofuran at 0°C led to complex mixtures.

Reaction of Spiro-Epoxy- β -Lactones with Amine Nucleophiles: Divergent Pathways Leading to Acyclic Amides or Tetrionic Acids

Three different products were obtained when spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10b** was exposed to amines with differing nucleophilicity and basicity. Reaction of a single diastereomer of the spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10b** with diethylamine resulted in a single diastereomer of β -ketoamide **27** that presumably arises from simple nucleophilic addition to the β -lactone carbonyl (Scheme 9a). The stereochemical fidelity of α -monosubstituted- β -keto tertiary amides is due to $A^{1,3}$ strain which severely retards the rate of epimerization²⁵ and this phenomena was employed by Calter to access optically active β -ketoamides from optically active ketene dimers.¹² Thus, the isolation of a single diastereomer of β -ketoamide **27** is expected for simple acyl substitution with Et_2NH attack at the β -lactone carbonyl carbon. However, when spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10b** was exposed to the more sterically hindered amine diisopropylamine, this led to a ~1:1 mixture of diastereomeric ketoamides **28** (Scheme 9b). This result suggested that reaction with the more hindered $i\text{-Pr}_2\text{NH}$ must proceed through an intermediate in which the α -stereocenter is lost prior to or as a result of nucleophilic addition of the amine due to the aforementioned known stereochemical stability of tertiary amides. Exposure of diastereomerically pure, diethyl amide **27** to deuterated diisopropylamine for 4 h under identical reaction conditions did not lead to epimerization nor deuterium incorporation, which suggests that epimerization of diisopropylamide **28** does not occur following amide formation but must occur at an earlier stage. Interestingly, when spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10b** was exposed to the nucleophilic, tertiary amine, diaza[5.4.0]bicycloundecane (DBU), the tetrionic acid derivative **29** was obtained as the sole product and its structure was confirmed by X-ray analysis³⁸ (Scheme 9c). In addition, the use of N -methyl, N -methoxy amine was studied in attempts to form the corresponding diastereomerically pure β -keto Weinreb amide *cf.* **27**, however this also gave tetrionic acid **29**. The use of 2-hydroxypyridine to facilitate amidation with this latter amine as employed by Calter with ketene dimers,⁹ also gave only tetrionic acid (51%).

These disparate results with hindered amines suggest competitive pathways leading to the observed products. One possible mechanism leading to amide **33** involves an E_2 -elimination of spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10** leading to direct cleavage of the epoxide to provide the strained unsaturated β -lactone **31** (Scheme 10). The highly strained intermediate **31** then undergoes a retro-electrocyclization to form ketoketene intermediate **32**, which rationalizes the loss of stereochemistry at the α -stereocenter observed during generation of β -tertiary amide **33** upon addition of $i\text{-Pr}_2\text{NH}$. The use of DBU as base also raises the possibility of formation of acyl ammonium intermediate **34** from the ketoketene intermediate **32**, which can then cyclize and tautomerize to the tetrionic acid **36**.

In order to provide support for the intermediacy of an ketoketene **32**, reactions leading to tetrionic acid **36** were monitored by *in situ* infrared spectroscopy in attempts to detect the diagnostic ketene absorption at $\sim 2100\text{ cm}^{-1}$. Ketene was not detected when this reaction was run at either ambient or low temperature (-78°C), however this does not exclude the possibility of a short-lived, ketene intermediate. An alternative method for trapping ketene intermediates was also studied involving performing the reactions in the presence of TEMPO, a reagent known to react rapidly with ketenes to provide esters containing two TEMPO molecules.²⁶ To compete with the intramolecular cyclization leading to tetrionic acid, a large excess of TEMPO

was employed. Several attempts led only to the expected rearrangement to the tetronic acid along with small quantities of the hydrolysis product, α -hydroxy ketone **25**, likely due to adventitious water.

Reactions of Spiroepoxy- β -Lactone **10b** with Lewis Acids

A number of conditions were studied to induce reductive cleavage via pathway 'b' (see Scheme 3) to provide access to the desired anti- γ -hydroxy-*cis*- β -lactone **9** (Scheme 2). Lewis and protic acids or Lewis acid/base combinations including ZnCl_2 , $\text{BF}_3 \cdot \text{OEt}_2$, SmCl_3 , LiClO_4 , $\text{TESOTf}/2,6\text{-lutidine}$, $\text{TIPSOTf}/2,6\text{-lutidine}$, $\text{TiCl}_4/2,6\text{-lutidine}$, AlCl_3 , Amberlyst 15, silica gel, TFA were studied in combination with excess Et_3SiH and gave either no reaction or complex mixtures of products. The only isolable product from these studies was the α , β -unsaturated ketone **39** albeit in very low yield when spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10b** was treated with trimethylsilyl triflate (TMSOTf) and Hunig's base (Scheme 11) and it formed in the presence or absence of a reductant, *e.g.* Et_3SiH . This represents an alternative reaction manifold from pathways 'a-d' (Scheme 3), however, such an E_2 -elimination is known for epoxides.²⁷ A proposed mechanism for this process involves activation of the β -lactone carbonyl by Lewis acid complexation and E_2 -elimination by the hindered amine leading to sequential opening of both rings to yield α , β -unsaturated ketone **39** following decarboxylation. On the other hand, treatment of spiroepoxylactone **10b** with TMSOTf in the presence of the more hindered base, 2,6-lutidine, gave only tetronic acid with no enone detected as might be expected for a hindered base unable to promote an E_2 -elimination that solely acts as a proton scavenger.

We also studied addition of sulfur nucleophiles, which might lead to a trans-ketalization of the ketal center of spiroepoxy- β -lactones under the influence of Lewis acids. When spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10b** was treated with benzyl thiol at low temperature ($-78 \rightarrow -20^\circ\text{C}$) in CH_2Cl_2 , no reaction was observed even after warming to 23°C for extended periods. However, treatment with benzyl thiol and $\text{BF}_3 \cdot \text{OEt}_2$ at -78°C led to rapid conversion to the previously characterized tetronic acid **29** (Scheme 12). A control experiment with only Lewis acid also gave tetronic acid **29** in good yield (79%) indicating that benzyl thiol was not involved in this process. Milder Lewis acids including $\text{Zn}(\text{OTf})_2$, $\text{Sn}(\text{OTf})_2$, and $\text{In}(\text{OTf})_3$ were also studied and also led to tetronic acid but in reduced yields compared to $\text{BF}_3 \cdot \text{OEt}_2$. Furthermore, addition of Normant reagents,²⁸ which were expected to add to C5, instead also led to tetronic acids consistent with the mounting results that these spiroheterocycles have a disposition to rearrange to tetronic acids under a variety of conditions (*vide infra*).

Two mechanisms leading to tetronic acid from spiroepoxy- β -lactones under Lewis acidic conditions can be envisioned (Scheme 13). Initial coordination of the Lewis acid to the epoxide oxygen could lead to complex **40** and subsequent formation of oxycarbenium ion **41** following epoxide cleavage (Pathway A). Ring cleavage to the acylium ion **42** could then lead to cyclization of the pendant alkoxide to the acylium carbon leading to tetronic acid **29** with retention of configuration at C5. Alternatively, Lewis acid coordination to the β -lactone carbonyl oxygen would give complex **43**, and ring opening would lead to carboxylate **44** that could attack the distal epoxide C-O bond leading to observed tetronic acid **29** with inversion of configuration at C5 (Pathway B).

The two mechanistic scenarios in Scheme 13 were distinguished by analysis of the absolute configuration of the tetronic acids derived from Lewis acid and base-mediated rearrangement of the optically active spiroepoxy β -lactone (-)-**10c**, prepared in the context of maculalactone A synthesis (*vide infra*). Epoxidation of the known optically ketene dimer derived from hydrocinnamyl chloride in the presence of *OTMS*-quinine according to the literature procedure⁹ gave the optically active spiroepoxy β -lactone (-)-**10c**. The absolute configuration of this intermediate at C5 is assigned as *S* based on the precedents of Calter using *O*-TMS-quinine in ketene dimerizations,²⁹ the (*Z*)-olefin geometry,³⁰ and the established facial

selectivity during epoxidation of ketene dimer **11b** (see Figure 2). Following rearrangement with *N*-methoxy-*N*-methyl amine, tetronic acid (+)-**45** was also found to possess the *S* absolute configuration at C5 based on single crystal X-ray analysis of the derived crystalline triflate (+)-**46** (Scheme 14) and further confirmation of retention of configuration at C5 came from conversion to (+)-maculalactone (*vide infra*). Rearrangement with $\text{BF}_3 \cdot \text{OEt}_2$ also afforded the tetronic acid (+)-**45** with overall retention at C5 via a putative acylium ion (Pathway A, Scheme 13). In addition, the tetronic acid **45** prepared under Lewis base (e.g. HNMe(OMe)) or Lewis acid catalysis gave similar optical rotations, $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{20} +20.0$ ($c = 1.00$, CH_3OH) and $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{20} +28.0$ ($c = 1.00$; CH_3OH) respectively, providing support for mechanistic pathways under both reaction conditions involving retention of configuration at C5 (see Scheme 13, Pathway A).

Spiroepoxy- β -Lactone Derived from Heteroketene Dimer

To further expand the scope of accessible tetronic acids, functionalized heteroketene dimer **49** was prepared by dimerization of propionyl chloride and 4-chlorobutyryl chloride leading to the expected mixture of homo- and heteroketene dimers in a ratio of ~7:1:1 (**47:48:49**) which were readily separated by flash chromatography (Scheme 15). The low yields (~30%) appear to be due to competitive polymerization or alternative reaction manifolds during the dimerization process due to the resident alkyl chloride leading to intractable polar by-products. Epoxidation of heteroketene dimer **49** by the usual procedure afforded the spiroepoxy- β -lactone **50** with good diastereoselectivity (7:1 mixture). Spiroepoxy- β -lactone **50** was subjected to *N,O*-methyl methoxy amine to give tetronic acid **51** in low yield (30%), however Lewis acid catalysis proceeded more efficiently to provide tetronic acid **51** in 79% yield. Tetronic acid **51** possesses an additional functional handle (*i.e.* an alkyl chloride) for further elaboration. However, further efforts to optimize ketene dimerizations³¹ are clearly warranted to improve the practicality of this process despite the ready availability and low cost of such simple acid chlorides.

Total Synthesis of (+)-Maculalactone A via Rearrangement of a Spiroepoxy- β -Lactone to a Tetronic Acid

The facile conversion of spiroepoxy- β -lactones to tetronic acids under a variety of conditions led us to explore the application of these spiroheterocycles to tetronic acids and derivable butenolides which are common motifs found in drug candidates³² and bioactive natural products.³³ One such example is maculalactone A, which possesses an interesting tribenzyl butenolide structure. The butenolide-containing maculalactones were isolated from the marine cyanobacterium *Kyrtuthrix maculans* and maculalactone A (**52**) is the simplest member of this family with greater complexity found in more oxidized (**53-55**) and cyclized versions such as maculalactone K (**56**) (Figure 4).³⁴ Maculalactone A (**52**) has been synthesized in both racemic and enantioselective manner in addition to maculalactones B-C;^{35,36} however, only maculalactone A (**52**) was found to possess biological activity namely inhibition of the growth of marine bivalves on rock surfaces ($\text{LD}_{50} = 4.2 \mu\text{g mL}^{-1}$) where *Kyrtuthrix maculans* grows thus suggesting potential use as an anti-fouling agent.³⁷

Our retrosynthesis of (+)-maculalactone A (**52**) began with disconnection of the C4 benzyl group, which we envisioned could be appended by a transition metal coupling or by nucleophilic organometallic reagents with an appropriate activated tetronic acid derivative **57** (Scheme 16). However, a mild procedure for addition of the final benzyl group which maintains the integrity of the potentially stereochemically labile tetronic acid derivative **57** would be required. The tetronic acid would be prepared via the described facile rearrangement of a dibenzyl spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10c**, which in turn could be derived from a facially selective epoxidation of optically active ketene dimer **11c**. The proposed synthesis would also enable us to further define reaction conditions that maintain stereochemical fidelity during conversion of the optically active diphenyl ketene dimer **11c** to tetronic acid **45**.

As described briefly above, the required optically active ketene dimer **11c** was prepared from 4-phenyl butanoyl chloride employing OTMS-quinine (OTMS-QN) as nucleophilic promoter (Scheme 17).¹² Purification of the ketene dimer was performed, as previously described,^{13a} and subsequent epoxidation gave spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10c** (dr, 24:1, crude reaction mixture) which following column chromatography could be obtained in 57% yield as a single diastereomer. Our previous efforts to prepare a Weinreb amide from a spiroepoxy- β -lactone using *N,O*-dimethylhydroxylamine (*vide infra*) led us to utilize this weak base (pK_a = 4.75, H₂O) rather than DBU to promote the rearrangement to the optically active tetronic acid (+)-**45** in order to minimize the potential for base-induced epimerization via furan formation following rearrangement. This provided the tetronic acid **45** in 86% yield following purification by recrystallization. The enantiomeric purity of this intermediate was determined by conversion to Mosher ester **58** and comparison to the racemic series by ¹⁹F NMR, which indicated that the tetronic acid (+)-**45** was obtained in high optical purity (dr, >20:1).³⁸

A number of derivatives of tetronic acid **45** were prepared and studied as possible substrates for installation of the required benzyl group at C4 (Scheme 18). Tosylation gave the tetronic acid derivative **59** while use of Meerwein's salt gave enol ether **60**³⁹ in high yield (97%). The latter substrate was prepared to study direct nucleophilic addition to the ketone and subsequent elimination to provide the desired butenolide. However, treatment of these substrates with a variety of benzyl metal reagents, including lithium, magnesium, and cerium reagents led to tetronic acid likely due to competing α -deprotonation to the aromatic furan intermediate and hydrolysis during work-up. Tetronic acid **45** was also converted to the corresponding vinyl bromide **61** in low yield (17%) upon treatment with oxalyl bromide.⁴⁰ However, no reaction occurred when either cuprate or boron reagents were utilized with this substrate.

Ultimately, the previously described triflate (+)-**46** (see Scheme 14) proved to be a suitable substrate for coupling however several initial conditions studied proved unsuccessful. Hypervalent tin reagents, which have been successfully employed in sterically hindered settings, only resulted in hydrolysis of the triflate **46** described previously.⁴¹ Further coupling attempts with copper or iron catalysts also failed to provide the desired product. However, Negishi cross-coupling finally gave the first promising results by furnishing trace amounts of the natural product. An alternative benzyl cuprate addition protocol using an oxazoline ligand⁴² provided (+)-maculalactone A (**52**) in 30% yield (Scheme 19).⁴³ The measured optical rotation of synthetic maculalactone A was lower than that of values reported for the natural product (synthetic: [α]_D²⁰ +54.1 (CH₂Cl₂, *c* = 0.37); natural: [α]_D²⁰ +70.2 (CH₂Cl₂, *c* = 0.37).⁴⁴ However, the high enantiopurity of the initial dimerization and subsequent Mosher ester analysis of the tetronic acid intermediate **45** verified that the reduced enantiopurity of maculalactone was due to the triflation step when (*i*-Pr)₂NEt was used (see Scheme 14). Epimerization could be avoided during triflation by use of pyridine as base to give triflate (+)-**46** in high optical purity (97% ee, chiral HPLC) and improved yield. However, epimerization during the final coupling step was not easily suppressed. Indeed, the enantiomeric excess of synthetic maculalactone was determined to be 75% ee by chiral HPLC, which is consistent with measured rotation values. Interestingly, (+)-maculalactone is isolated as a partially racemized natural product (85-95% ee), and Brown and coworkers rigorously determined that this was not due to the isolation procedure.³⁵

Conclusions

Epoxidation of several functionalized ketene dimers leading to novel spiroepoxy- β -lactones, oxaspiro[2.3]hexan-5-ones, was accomplished by using the mild, neutral, and non-nucleophilic oxidizing agent DMDO in moderate to good yields. An X-ray crystal structure of a bis-cyclohexyl spiroepoxy- β -lactones revealed several interesting physical characteristics and suggested that a double anomeric effect may be operative, which may explain the unexpected

stability of these spirocycles. In general, we found that cleavage of spiroepoxy- β -lactones proceeds via two principal pathways involving attack at the distal epoxide C-O bond and the β -lactone acyl C-O bond with no evidence to date for nucleophilic additions to the ketal carbon. Although the initial reaction manifold that was sought for spiroepoxy- β -lactones has remained elusive to date, we found a number of interesting reactions that reveal the unique reactivity of these novel spiroheterocycles. We demonstrated the utility of spiroepoxy- β -lactones as intermediates towards a number of functional arrays but most notably the propensity of these systems to rearrange to tetronic acids. The latter reaction was applied to the enantioselective total synthesis of (+)-maculalactone A and this synthesis demonstrated the ability to maintain stereochemical integrity during this concise 3-step sequence to a tetronic acid from an acid chloride, however a final challenging coupling step led to erosion of enantiopurity of the final product. Given the demonstrated rich reactivity of these spiroheterocycles, further utilization of these novel intermediates will likely continue to expand in the future and even more so if practical methods for heteroketene dimer synthesis can be developed.

Experimental Section

(*R,Z*)-3-benzyl-4-(2-phenylethylidene)oxetan-2-one (**11c**)

To a solution of OTMS-quinine (413 mg, 1.00 mmol) and diisopropylethylamine (3.30 mL, 20.0 mmol) in CH_2Cl_2 (185 mL, 0.1 M) at 22 °C was added hydrocinnamoyl chloride (3.52 g, 20.0 mmol) over 10 min via syringe. After stirring for 6 h the light yellow solution was concentrated *in vacuo* to 35 mL (~1/5th original volume) and 200 mL pentane was added to precipitate the ammonium salts. After filtration through Whatmann filter paper the solution was concentrated and purified by flash chromatography on SiO_2 elution with 1:50 EtOAc:Hexanes gave dimer **11c** (1.70 g, 60%) as a pale yellow oil. R_f 0.40 (1:9 EtOAc:Hexanes); $[\alpha]_D^{19} +13.5$ ($c = 1.2$, CH_2Cl_2); IR (thin film) ν_{max} 1859, 1723, 1353, 1217 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR (500 MHz, benzene- d_6) δ 7.15-7.11 (m, 2H), 7.07-6.97 (m, 6H), 6.88-6.86 (m, 2H), 4.36 (t, $J = 10$ Hz, 1H), 3.47 (t, $J = 5.0$ Hz, 1H), 3.24 (d, $J = 5.0$ Hz, 2H), 2.54 (dd, $J = 14.5$ Hz, 6.5 Hz, 1H), 2.45 (dd, $J = 14.5$ Hz, 7.5 Hz, 1H); ^{13}C NMR (125 MHz, benzene- d_6) δ 167.9, 145.8, 140.0, 136.5, 129.1 (2), 128.7 (2), 128.6 (2), 128.5, 128.2, 127.1, 126.4, 101.0, 54.8, 33.0, 31.0. LRMS Calcd. for $\text{C}_{18}\text{H}_{16}\text{O}_2\text{Li}$ [M+Li] 271, found 271. (Satisfactory HRMS could not be obtained for ketene dimers).

(*2S,3R,6R*)-2,6-dibenzyl-1,4-dioxaspiro[2.3]hexan-5-one (**10c**)

To a solution of (*R,Z*)-3-benzyl-4-(2-phenylethylidene)oxetan-2-one (112 mg, 0.424 mmol) in CH_2Cl_2 (30 mL) at 0 °C was added MgSO_4 (25.0 mg, 0.83 mmol, ~0.50 equiv) and an acetone solution of DMDO¹⁴ (14 mL, 0.076 M, ~2.5 equiv) in one portion to give a pale yellow slurry which was warmed to 23 °C and stirred for 5 h. The reaction mixture was then filtered through a pad of MgSO_4 and the volatiles were removed by rotary evaporation. Purification by flash chromatography (1:5 Et₂O/hexanes) afforded spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10c** (68 mg, 57%, 24:1) as a clear oil: R_f 0.25 (1:5 Et₂O/hexanes); $[\alpha]_D^{23} -26.6$ ($c = 1.0$, CH_2Cl_2); IR (thin film) ν_{max} 1854 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR (500 MHz, benzene- d_6) δ 7.09-7.00 (m, 3H), 6.99-6.89 (m, 5H), 6.71-6.67 (m, 2H), 3.46 (dd, $J = 6.5$, 8.0 Hz, 1H), 2.87 (app. t, $J = 6.5$ Hz, 1H), 2.72 (dd, $J = 6.5$, 14.5 Hz, 1H), 2.55 (dd, $J = 6.5$, 14.5 Hz, 1H), 2.41 (dddd, $J = 6.5$, 8.0, 8.0, 15.5 Hz, 2H); ^{13}C NMR (125 MHz, benzene- d_6) δ 166.5, 136.1, 136.0, 129.1, 129.0(2), 128.8, 128.6(2), 127.2(2), 127.2 (2), 90.8, 59.2, 54.3, 34.6, 31.0; HRMS (ESI) Calcd. for $\text{C}_{18}\text{H}_{16}\text{O}_3\text{Li}$ [M+Li] 287.1259, found 287.1262.

(*S*)-(+)-3,5-dibenzyl-4-hydroxyfuran-2(*5H*)-one (**45**)

To a solution of spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10c** (0.60 g, 2.1 mmol) in CH_2Cl_2 (40 mL, 0.05 M) was added *N,O*-dimethylhydroxylamine (0.23 mL, 3.1 mmol) and stirred at 23 °C for 6 h at which time the solution had copious amounts of white solid. The suspension was concentrated to give

tetronic acid **45** as a white solid. Purification by recrystallization (1:10 EtOAc/Et₂O) provided tetronic acid **45** (86%, 0.49 g) as white crystals: m.p. (159-162 °C); *R_f* 0.10 (8:2 EtOAc:Hexanes); [α]_D²⁰ +20.0 (*c* = 1.00, CH₃OH); IR (thin film) $\nu_{\max}$ 1715, 1650 cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CD₃OD) δ 7.25-7.20 (m, 5H), 7.13-7.05 (m, 3H), 6.76 (d, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 2H), 5.05 (t, *J* = 4.3 Hz, 1H), 3.43-3.28 (obs, 2H), 3.01 (dd, *J* = 5.0, 14.5 Hz, 1H); ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, CD₃OD) δ 176.3, 175.8, 138.8, 134.8, 129.8(2), 128.1(2), 128.0(2), 127.7(2), 126.9, 125.6, 100.5, 78.3, 36.8, 26.3; HRMS (ESI) Calcd. for C₁₈H₁₆O₃Na [M+Na] 303.0997, found 303.0989.

(S)-2,4-dibenzyl-5-oxo-2,5-dihydrofuran-3-yl trifluoromethanesulfonate (**46**)

To a solution of tetronic acid **45** (31 mg, 0.11 mmol) in CH₂Cl₂ (1.1 mL, 0.10 M) was added pyridine (0.13 mL, 0.12 mmol) and Tf₂O (0.19 mL, 0.11 mmol) at -78 °C. After 2 h of stirring, the reaction was quenched at -78 °C with pH 7 buffer and extracted with CH₂Cl₂ (3 × 5 mL). The solution was dried (MgSO₄), filtered and concentrated in vacuo. The crude residue was purified by column chromatography (3:10 Et₂O/hexanes) to give triflate **46** (30.0 mg, 70%) as a white solid. m.p. (64.2-67.7 °C); *R_f* 0.50 (3:7 Et₂O/hexanes); IR (thin film) $\nu_{\max}$ 1779 cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.26-7.13 (m, 8H), 6.76-6.74 (m, 2H), 5.40 (t, *J* = 5.0 Hz, 1H), 3.50 (s, 2H), 3.41 (dd, *J* = 15.0, 4.0 Hz, 1H), 3.03 (dd, *J* = 15.0, 5.0 Hz, 1H); ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, benzene-*d*₆) δ 167.9, 161.4, 135.3, 132.9, 129.8, 128.9, 128.8, 128.6, 128.3, 128.2, 128.1, 127.7, 127.0, 122.6, 119.9, 117.3, 77.7, 36.8, 28.3; HRMS (ESI) Calcd. for C₁₉H₁₆O₅F₃S [M+H] 413.0671, found 413.0677.

(S)-(+)-Maculalactone (**52**)

In a degassed round-bottomed flask was added copper iodide-2,4,4-trimethyloxazoline complex⁴² (0.09 mL, 0.03 mmol) in THF (0.18 mL). To this solution benzyl magnesium chloride (0.10 mL, 0.22 mmol) was added dropwise at -78 °C. The reaction was warmed slowly from -78 °C to 0 °C and stirred an additional 30 min. The reaction was then cooled back to -78 °C and then triflate **46** (23 mg, 0.05 mmol) in THF (0.18 mL) was added dropwise over 5 min. After 2.5 h of stirring at -78 °C, the reaction mixture was quenched with NH₄Cl (3 mL). After warming to ambient temperature the mixture was extracted with ethyl acetate (3 × 5 mL), dried (Na₂SO₄), and concentrated in vacuo. The crude residue was purified by column chromatography (3:7 EtOAc:hexanes) to yield (+)-maculalactone **52** (5.7 mg, 30%): *R_f* 0.53 (2:8 EtOAc:Hexanes); [α]_D²⁰ +54.1 (*c* = 1.0, CH₂Cl₂); IR (thin film) $\nu_{\max}$ 1752, 1494 cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.34-7.13 (m, 11H), 7.03 (m, 2H), 6.88 (m, 2H), 4.93 (t, *J* = 5.0 Hz, 1H), 3.94 (d, *J* = 15.5 Hz, 1H), 3.64 (d, *J* = 15.5 Hz, 1H), 3.56 (d, *J* = 15.0 Hz, 1H), 3.47 (d, *J* = 15.5 Hz, 1H), 3.25 (dd, *J* = 14.5, 4.0 Hz, 1H), 2.81 (dd, *J* = 14.5, 6.0 Hz, 1H). ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 173.6, 161.8, 137.7, 136.0, 134.9, 129.62(2), 129.22(2), 128.78(2), 128.72(5), 128.31(2), 127.4, 127.2, 126.4, 81.6, 38.0, 33.3, 29.4. HRMS (ESI) Calcd. for C₂₅H₂₃O₂ [M+H] 355.1698, found 355.1693.

Supplementary Material

Refer to Web version on PubMed Central for supplementary material.

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Scheme 1.
Dual Reactivity of β -Lactones

Figure 1.
Known Small, Spiroheterocyclic Ring Systems 4-7

Scheme 2.

Synthesis of β -lactone **9** via Reductive Cleavage of Proposed Spiroepoxy- β -Lactone **10**
Toward Haterumalide Tetrahydrofuran Synthesis

Scheme 3.
Potential Modes of Nucleophilic Addition to Spiroepoxy-β-lactones **12**

Scheme 4.

Epoxidation of Ketene Homodimers **11** and Possible *In Situ* Reduction of Derived Oxocarbenium **17**

Figure 2.
X-ray structure (ORTEP) of spiroepoxy-β-lactone **10b** showing selected bond lengths

Scheme 5.
Addition of Soft Nucleophiles to Spiroepoxy-β-Lactone **10b** (pathway `a')

Scheme 6.
Proposed Mechanism for Addition of Soft Nucleophiles to Spiroepoxy-β-Lactones

Scheme 7.
Possible Pathways for Hydrolysis of Spiroepoxy- β -Lactone **10b**

Figure 3. ^{13}C NMR spectral expansion of the carbinol region of α -hydroxy ketone **25** following: (a) hydrolysis of spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10b** with H_2^{18}O (90% ^{18}O atom enriched); (b) with a ~1:1 mixture of $\text{H}_2^{18}\text{O}/\text{H}_2^{16}\text{O}$ (δ 74.443 (^{13}C - ^{18}O) vs. δ 74.457 (^{13}C - ^{16}O)).

Scheme 8.
Metal Hydride Reduction of Spiroepoxy- β -Lactone **10b**

Scheme 9.
Reaction of Spiroepoxy- β -Lactone with Various Amines

Scheme 10.

Proposed Mechanistic Pathways Leading to Disparate Products from Spiroepoxy-β-lactone **10** Induced by Amines

Scheme 11.
Elimination of Spiroepoxy- β -Lactone **10b** Leading to Enone **39**

Scheme 12.

Rearrangement of Spiroepoxy-β-Lactone **10b** with Lewis Acids to Tetronic Acid **29**

Scheme 13.
Possible Lewis Acid Mediated Rearrangement Pathways for Spiroepoxy- β -Lactones

Scheme 14.

Comparison of Lewis Acid and Base-Mediated Rearrangement of Optically Active Spiroepoxy- β -lactone **(-)-10c** (inset, ORTEP of Triflate **(+)-46**)

Scheme 15. Use of a Heteroketene Dimer Leading to a Chloro-Substituted Tetronic Acid **51**

Figure 4.
Structures of Representative Maculalactones.

Scheme 16. Retrosynthesis of Maculalactone A via Spiroepoxy-β-lactone **10c**

Scheme 17. Asymmetric Synthesis of Tetronic Acid **45** via Spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10c**

Scheme 18. Tetronic Acid Derivatives **59-61** Prepared from Tetronic Acid **(+)-45**

Scheme 19.
Total Synthesis of (+)-Maculalactone (**45**)

Table 1Diastereomeric Spiroepoxy- β -lactones **10/19** Obtained via Facially-selective Epoxidation of Ketene Dimers **11**.^a

entry	R	compd. no.	dr ^b (10:19)	% yield ^c
1	n-Bu	10a	14:1	80
2	CyCH ₂	10b	10:1	76
3	PhCH ₂	10c	24:1	57
4	TTPSO(CH ₂) ₄	10d	17:1	40
5	N ₃ (CH ₂) ₄	10e	16:1	61

^aEpoxidations were performed at ~0.1 M concentration using isolated, purified ketene dimers **11a-e**.^bRatios determined by analysis of crude reaction mixtures by ¹H NMR (500 MHz).^cRefers to isolated, purified (SiO₂) yields.

Table 2

1,467

1,487

1,445

1,527

^a All bond lengths were calculated (B3LYP/6-31+G**+zpe) unless noted otherwise.

^b X=O or C.

^c From x-ray structure of spiroepoxy- β -lactone **10b** reported herein.

^d Average x-ray structure derived C-O bond lengths for β -lactones¹⁵ and epoxides.¹⁶

^e From x-ray structure of spirodiepoxide.¹⁸