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Synthesis of (±)-Eusynstyelamide A

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Abstract

The synthesis of (±)-eusynstyelamide A has been accomplished in six steps in 13% overall yield from 6-bromoindole, methyl glycidate, and Boc-protected agmatine. If oxygen is carefully excluded from the reaction, the key NaOH-catalyzed aldol dimerization of the α -ketoamide proceeded efficiently to give Boc-protected eusynstyelamide A.

Tapiolas and co-workers recently reported the isolation of eusynstyelamides A (**1**), B (**2**), and C (**3**) from the Great Barrier Reef ascidian *Eusynstyela latericius* and assigned their structures from analysis of the spectral data (see Figure 1).¹ The spectral data for **1** are virtually identical to those reported for eusynstyelamide (**4**), isolated from *E. misakiensis*,² indicating that the structure of **4** should be reassigned as **1**, rather than the acyclic ketone dihydrate.

Eusynstyelamides A–C (**1**–**3**) inhibit neuronal nitric oxide synthase (nNOS), with IC₅₀ values

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Supporting Information Available: Complete experimental procedures, comparison of the NMR spectral data of natural and synthetic eusynstyelamide A, and copies of

¹H and ¹³C NMR spectral data. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

of 41.7, 4.3, and 5.8 μM , respectively, and show slight antibiotic activity against *Staphylococcus aureus*.

We were intrigued by these structures because the dihydroxybutyrolactam core is identical to that of anchinopeptolide D (**7b**), which we synthesized several years ago (see Scheme 1).³ α -Ketoamide **5** underwent an aldol dimerization on treatment with KOH in THF/MeOH. The amide nitrogen of the initially formed aldol adduct cyclized to the remaining ketone to form a dihydroxybutyrolactam. The phenol acetate was also hydrolyzed under these reaction conditions. We isolated three of the four possible diastereomeric products. The major product was anchinopeptolide D precursor **7a**, which was formed in 58% yield. Lactam **6a**, which was isolated in 19% yield, has the opposite stereochemistry at the hemiaminal center, but was formed from the same aldol adduct **10** (see Scheme 2) as **7a**. The third product **8a**, which was isolated in <5% yield, was formed from the diastereomeric aldol product. Cleavage of the four Boc groups of **6a** and **7a** in 1:1 TFA/CH₂Cl₂ for 1 h at 25 °C afforded **6b** (94%) and anchinopeptolide D (**7b**, 91%), respectively.

The stereochemistry of the major aldol adduct **10** can be rationalized by consideration of a chelated transition state for the aldol reaction. Enolization should give the Z-enolate to avoid steric interactions between the amide and the R¹ substituent. Transition state **9**, which leads to aldol product **10**, might be favored for the aldol reaction since the metal can bind to all four oxygens. The amide nitrogen of adduct **10** can then add to either face of the ketone carbonyl group to give products **6** or **7**.

As expected, equilibration occurred readily at the hemiaminal center. Heating either **6a** or **7a** at reflux in CD₃OD for 1 h afforded an equilibrium 2:1 mixture of **6a** and **7a**, presumably by ring opening to give the aldol adduct **10**. Equilibration of either **6a** or **7a** with KOH in THF/MeOH for 17 h at 25 °C afforded a 6:3:1 mixture of **6a**, **7a**, and **8a**, respectively. Isomer **8a** can be formed from **6a** and **7a** by a retro-aldol/aldol sequence or by base-catalyzed epimerization of **10**.

The synthesis of eusynstyelamide A (**1**) is shown in Scheme 3. 6-Bromoindole (**11**) was prepared by the Batcho-Leimgruber indole synthesis from 4-bromo-2-nitrotoluene.⁴ Coupling of **11** with methyl glycidate (**12**)⁵ by the procedure of Omura⁶ using 0.16 equiv of Yb(OTf)₃ at 100 °C for 15 minutes in a microwave oven or at reflux for 1.5 h afforded the desired indolepropionate ester **13a** in 32% yield (56% based on recovered **11**) in only one step. Omura reported that reaction of indole, methyl glycidate, and Yb(OTf)₃ (0.1 equiv) in 1,2-dichloroethane at 80 °C for 24 h afforded 52% of the hydroxy ester. The reaction with 6-bromoindole (**11**) proceeded in lower yield, even with more Yb(OTf)₃, because the bromine is electron withdrawing and makes the indole less nucleophilic.⁷ Hydrolysis of the ester of **13a** with LiOH in 3:1:1 MeOH/THF/H₂O afforded hydroxy acid **13b** in 94% yield. Coupling of acid **13b** with protected agmatine **14**⁸ using DCC and HOBt in CH₃CN for 16 h at 25 °C afforded hydroxyamide **15** in 68% yield. Removal of dicyclohexylurea from **15** was difficult, but initial attempts at amide formation with either EDCI and HOBt or HATU and Et₃N were not promising. α -Ketoamide **5** was prepared by oxidation of the hydroxy amide with Dess-Martin reagent. This procedure didn't work well for the conversion of **15** to **16**. Use of PCC or TEMPO and NaOCl was also unsuccessful. Finally, we found that oxidation⁹ of **15** with IBX¹⁰ in 10:1 CH₂Cl₂/DMSO afforded **16** cleanly. α -Ketoamide **16** is surprisingly unstable, decomposing on flash chromatography, in contrast to α -ketoamide **5** which is stable.

Initial attempts at carrying out the aldol dimerization of **16** with K₂CO₃ in acetone,¹¹ DBU in DMF, or KOH in THF or MeOH were unsuccessful, again in contrast to the facile aldol dimerization of **5**. There are significant differences between arylpyruvic acid derivatives such as **16** and saturated α -ketoacid derivatives such as **5**. Saturated α -ketoacid derivatives exist

only in the keto form. Conjugation with the aryl group stabilizes the enol form of arylpyruvic acid derivatives. Methyl indol-3-ylpyruvate exists as the keto form in CD₃OD and mainly as the enol in CDCl₃.¹² Methyl phenylpyruvate exists as the enol in CDCl₃ and as mixture of enol and keto forms in CD₃CN.¹³ Other methyl arylpyruvates exist mainly in the enol form in MeOH.¹⁴ Simpkins reported that amide formation from an indol-3-ylpyruvic acid was presumably thwarted by the intervention of the enol form of the α -ketoacid.¹⁵ In contrast, α -ketoamide **16** exists in the keto form, as has been previously noted for other arylpyruvamide, ¹⁶ possibly because intramolecular hydrogen bonding between the ketone and amide NH stabilizes the keto form **16K** (see Scheme 4).

However, the enol form **16E** is readily accessible and it, or the enolate, is readily oxidized by oxygen to 3-hydroperoxy-3-(indol-3-yl)pyruvamide **19**, especially under the basic conditions needed for the aldol dimerization. The mass spectrum of fresh **16** shows a strong M⁺. After storage, the sample showed an M⁺ and an MO₂⁺ for the hydroperoxide of equal intensity. There is limited precedent for this facile autoxidation in the literature. Autoxidation of 3-(4-hydroxy-3-iodophenyl)pyruvic acid gave 3-(4-hydroxy-3-iodophenyl)-2-hydroxy-3-hydroperoxycinnamic acid (the enol tautomer of the 3-hydroperoxyarylpyruvic acid).¹⁷ Radical initiated autoxidation of the enol tautomer of 3-(4-hydroxyphenyl)pyruvic acid provided 3-hydroperoxy-3-(4-hydroxyphenyl)pyruvic acid.¹⁸ Hydroperoxide **19** decomposed to give a complex mixture of products including 6-bromoindole-3-carboxaldehyde (**20**), a natural product¹⁹ that may be derived by a similar mechanism from 6-bromotryptophan.

Having established that the unexpected sensitivity of **16** to oxygen was causing side reactions, especially under basic conditions, we were able to successfully carry out the desired aldol dimerization under carefully controlled oxygen-free conditions. A solution of **16** in THF was carefully degassed and aqueous 0.25 M NaOH solution was added. The solution was stirred for 2 days under nitrogen to give Boc-protected eusynstyelamide A **17** in 37% yield from **15** and impure Boc-protected eusynstyelamide B **18** in <4% yield from **15**). Cleavage of the four Boc groups of **17** in 1:1 TFA/CH₂Cl₂ for 1 h at 25 °C afforded eusynstyelamide A (**1**) in ~95% yield. The ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra of synthetic **1** in CD₃OD and the ¹H NMR spectrum in DMSO-*d*₆ are identical to those reported for the natural product.¹

Protected anchinopeptolide D (**7a**), which has the same stereochemistry as eusynstyelamide B (**2**), readily equilibrates with **6a**, which has the same stereochemistry as eusynstyelamide A (**1**), in CD₃OD at reflux for 1 h (see Scheme 2). In contrast, Tapiolas and co-workers reported that eusynstyelamide A (**1**) does not equilibrate on heating in CD₃OD or during prolonged storage. They also isolated mixtures of all three isomers **1–3** from some samples of *E. latericius*, but only eusynstyelamide A (**1**) from other samples. Ireland reported the isolation of only a single compound, to which he assigned the structure eusynstyelamide (**4**), but which is actually eusynstyelamide A (**1**).¹ Therefore, the formation of eusynstyelamide A precursor **17** as the major isomer from **16** is consistent with the isolation of **1** as the sole isomer from some samples of *E. latericius* and from *E. misakiensis*. Eusynstyelamide A (**1**) does not equilibrate under the strongly acidic conditions needed to cleave the Boc groups. It also does not equilibrate on storage in CD₃OD. Extensive decomposition occurs in basic (NaOD) CD₃OD.

Protected anchinopeptolide D **7a** and **6a** equilibrate readily, but eusynstyelamide A (**1**) and B (**2**) do not. The aldol dimerization of both **16** and **5** gave adduct **10** with high selectivity. However, hemiaminal formation afforded mainly eusynstyelamide A precursor **17** from **16** and mainly anchinopeptolide D precursor **7a**, which has the same stereochemistry as eusynstyelamide B (**2**), from **5**. The different side chains must be responsible for the differences in both the rates of equilibration and the stereochemistry of hemiaminal formation, but it is not clear why.

In conclusion, we have developed an efficient six-step route to eusynstyelamide A (**1**) from 6-bromoindole (**11**), methyl glycidate (**12**), and protected agmatine **14** in 13% overall yield. If oxygen is carefully excluded from the reaction, the key NaOH-catalyzed aldol dimerization of **16** proceeded efficiently to give Boc-protected eusynstyelamide A **17**.

Supplementary Material

Refer to Web version on PubMed Central for supplementary material.

Acknowledgments

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Figure 1. Structures of eusynstyelamides A (1), B (2), and C (3) and the proposed structure of eusynstyelamide (4).

Scheme 1.
Synthesis of Anchinopeptolide D (**7b**)

Scheme 2.

Mechanistic Considerations and Equilibration Studies

Scheme 3.
Synthesis of Eusynstyelamide A (**1**)

Scheme 4.
Autoxidation of α -Ketoamide **16**