A Concise Asymmetric Total Synthesis of Aspidophytine
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The structure of the dimeric indole alkaloid haplophytine (1, Figure 1) was first disclosed in 1973 by the groups of Cava and Yates,1 having been isolated from the dried leaves of Haplophyton cimicidum over 20 years previously.2 Acid-mediated degradation of haplophytine led to the isolation of its right-hand constituent, aspidophytine (2), an aspidospermine-type alkaloid distinguished by a C,D-ring-fused lactone.3 Owing both to its appealing structure and importance as a probable biosynthetic (and thus potential synthetic) precursor to haplophytine, a number of total syntheses of aspidophytine have been reported,4 beginning with Corey’s memorable conquest in 1999.4a As part of ongoing studies in our laboratory toward a total synthesis of haplophytine, for which we have recently reported the construction of a left-hand domain fragment,5 we now wish to disclose a concise stereocontrolled approach to the accompanying aspidophytine domain.

Our approach is outlined retrosynthetically in Scheme 1. We envisaged that the congested aspidophytine skeleton could arise through sequential annulation of the D-ring to a suitably substituted indole, exploiting varying modes of reactivity. Thus, oxidative lactonization6a (3,a, Scheme 1) would be carried out at a late stage, subsequent to closure of the E-ring through a 5-exo-trig radical process (3,b, Scheme 1), designed to exploit the C-ring olefin and indoline nitrogen as an effective radical trap.6b Formation of the C-ring itself would exploit the nucleophilicity of the electron-rich indole through a reductive Vilsmeier–Haack-type process (4,c, Scheme 1),7 while the final bond adjoining the key building blocks 5 and 6 was to be forged by Suzuki coupling (4,d, Scheme 1).8 Notably, substrate-based stereocontrol would be relied upon throughout, templated for by the chiral vinyl iodide 5.

A straightforward chiral auxiliary approach was developed for the preparation of 5, which commenced with N-alkylation of δ-valerolactam (7) with iodide 8a (Scheme 2). Acylation with the methyl-(R)-lactate derivative 9b,9 then afforded the chiral β-ketoamide 10 in high yield (89%). Installation of the crucial quaternary stereocenter was then effected by alkylation of 10 with bromide 11, which furnished a 4:1 mixture of adducts, from which the desired product 12 could be isolated in good yield (66%) after chromatographic purification. The stereochemical outcome of this reaction was confirmed by X-ray crystallographic analysis of the lactone derivative 13 (see ORTEP drawing, Figure 2)11 and is in accord with that observed for the aldol reactions of related lactate-derived ketones.12 Following hydrogenolysis of the benzyl ether,13 the lactate auxiliary could be efficiently cleaved through a reduction/oxidative glycol cleavage process to deliver aldehyde 14 (65%, two steps). Finally, Stork–Wittig homologation14 of 14 afforded the targeted vinyl iodide 5 as a single geometric isomer in excellent yield (88%; 23% over six steps from 7). This short sequence proved most robust and made multigram quantities of this pivotal building block readily accessible.

The coupling partner for vinyl iodide 5, boronic acid 6, was itself prepared from the known indole 15a–b (69%, Scheme 3). Smooth union of the key fragments 5 and 6 was brought about through Suzuki coupling, which furnished the targeted amide 16 in excellent yield (86%). Treatment of 16 with Tf2O initiated a rapid 6-exo-trig cyclization to generate the C-ring and, following rearomatization, the isolable iminium species 17, which was reduced with NaBH4 to provide the tetracyclic piperidine 18 as essentially a single diastereomer in excellent yield (88%). While exposure of the

[Figure 1. Structures of haplophytine (1) and aspidophytine (2).]

[Scheme 1. Retrosynthetic Analysis of Aspidophytine]

[Scheme 2. Preparation of Vinyl Iodide 5a]

[Table 1. Reagents and conditions: (a) NaH, DMF, 25 °C; 8, 4 h, 68%; (b) LDA, THF; 9, −78 °C, 2 h, 89%; (c) KHMDS, 11, DME, −78 °C to −30 °C, 12 h, 66%; (d) H2, Pd(OH)2 (cat.), EtOAc, 25 °C, 4 h, 82%; (e) NaBH4, MeOH, 0 °C, 15 min; NaOMe, MeOH/pH 7 buffer (3:1), 25 °C, 2 h, 79%; (f) NaH, DM, THF, −78 °C, 30 min, 88%]

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Figure 2. ORTEP view of 13 (Thermal ellipsoids at 30% probability).\textsuperscript{11}

**Scheme 3. Fragment Coupling and Elaboration to Aspidophytine\textsuperscript{a}**

\textsuperscript{a} Reagents and conditions: (a) t-BuLi, THF, 25 °C, 1 h; B(OMe)\textsubscript{3}, 30 min, 69%; (b) 5, PdCl\textsubscript{2}(dpdp), Cs\textsubscript{2}CO\textsubscript{3}, DMF/H\textsubscript{2}O (10:1), 25 °C, 12 h, 86%; (c) TBAF, THF, 25 °C, 2 h; TBSCI, imid, CH\textsubscript{2}Cl\textsubscript{2}, 25 °C, 1 h; NH\textsubscript{4}Cl (5%); (d) Tf\textsubscript{2}O, DTBMP, CH\textsubscript{2}Cl\textsubscript{2}, 25 °C, 69%; (b) corresponding alcohol, which was converted to the alkyl radical rich indole with the rather sensitive natural product, presumably due to the interaction of the electron-process, this compound proved too labile to be advanced to the lactone 20 directly (via 21) through a tandem cyclization process, this compound proved too labile to be advanced to the natural product, presumably due to the interaction of the electron-rich indole with the rather sensitive N,O-acetal.

Chemoselective desilylation of 18 with HF-py provided the corresponding carboxylic acid (19) to analogous conditions provided the lactone 20 directly (via 21) through a tandem cyclization process, this compound proved too labile to be advanced to the natural product, presumably due to the interaction of the electron-rich indole with the rather sensitive N,O-acetal.

In benzene for 2 h effected smooth $E$-ring closure, providing a 3:1 mixture of pentacyclic, allyl-radical reduction regioisomers,\textsuperscript{12} from which the desired product 22 was isolated as a single diastereomeric in a respectable 58% yield. With the requisite aspidospermine core now in place, all that remained to complete the total synthesis of aspidophytine was installation of the lactone. Significant improvement to reported yields for this type of transformation\textsuperscript{4b} was realized by employing a single-pot TBAF-mediated ester hydrolysis/oxidative lactonization\textsuperscript{4a} protocol, which furnished synthetic aspidophytine in good yield (63%). All spectral data for the synthetic material were identical to those published.\textsuperscript{4}

In summary, we have accomplished a concise and efficient total synthesis of aspidophytine, proceeding in 5% yield over the longest linear sequence of 12 steps, which compares most favorably with previous syntheses. Notably, the rapid assembly of the pentacyclic aspidospermine framework through sequential annulation of the D-ring to the indole nucleus imparts a high degree of convergency to this approach, which should make it particularly amenable to a total synthesis of haplophytine. Further studies toward this end will be reported in due course.

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**Supporting Information Available:** Experimental procedures, abbreviations, and compound characterization (PDF, CIF). This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

**References**

(9) Qin, Y.; Bakker, E. Anal. Chem. 2003, 75, 6002.
(11) See the Supporting Information for the preparation of 13. CDCC 67919 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for 13 and is available free of charge from The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif.
(13) ‘H NMR analysis of the Mosher ester derivative of this alcohol indicated stereochemical purity of 91% ee (see the Supporting Information).
(15) See the Supporting Information for further details.

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