

Construction of a Homonaphthazarin Skeleton and Synthesis of Hydroquinone-annelated Cycloheptatriene Derivatives

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1,4-Dihydroxy-7,8-dihydro-5*H*-benzo[*a*]cycloheptene-5,9(6*H*)-dione (**7**) was synthesised from hydroquinone and glutaric acid chloride via an acylation reaction. The reaction of dione (**7**) with bromine followed by treatment with NEt₃ gave homonaphthazarin **8** as well as the brominated derivatives **9** and **10**. Reduction of 1,4-dimethoxy-7,8-dihydro-5*H*-benzo[*a*]cycloheptene-5,9(6*H*)-dione (**16**) with LiAlH₄ gave 2 isomeric alcohols, **17** and **18**. Reaction of these alcohols with SOCl₂ followed by HCl elimination with NEt₃ afforded dimethoxybenzocycloheptatriene **19** as the sole product. For the synthesis of the isomeric cycloheptatriene **20**, the double bond in **19** was isomerised with KOt-Bu.

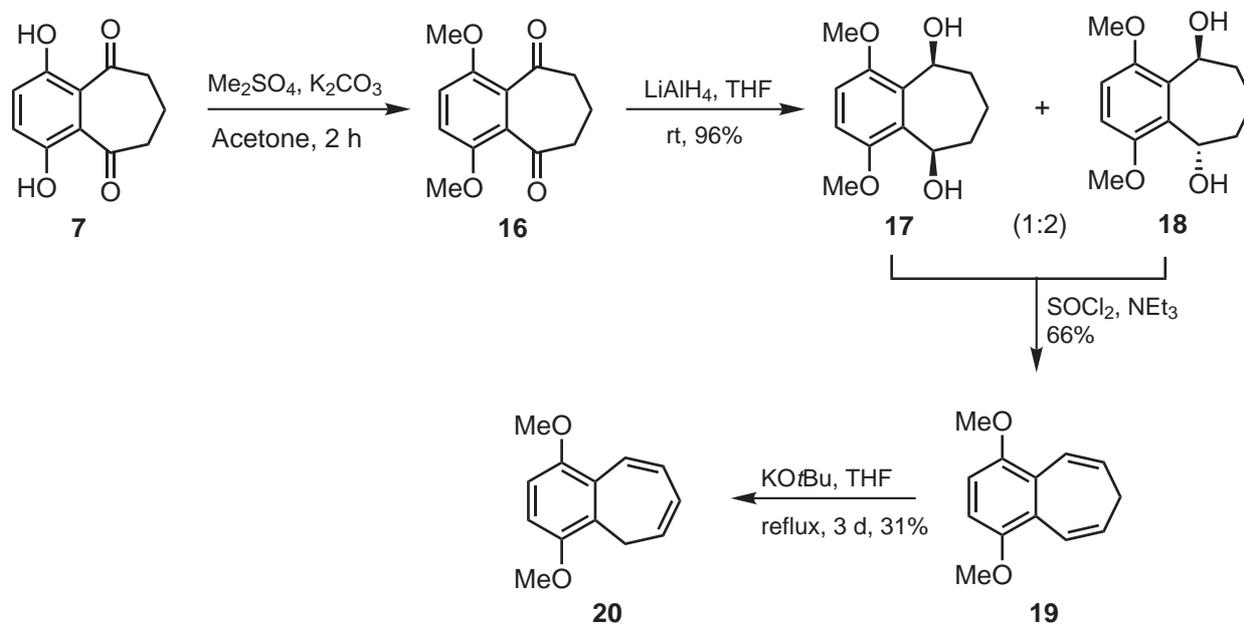
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Introduction

A large number of natural products containing 1,4-naphthoquinone moiety have been isolated and characterised¹. Such compounds have been found in a variety of organisms including lichens, fungi, echinoids and high plants. An interesting sub-group of naphthoquinones is the 5,8-dihydroxy-1,4-naphthoquinone **1**, known as naphthazarin², which shows very interesting biological and pharmacological activities³. Recently, a number of naturally occurring naphthoquinones have been isolated from various species of the family *Boraginaceae*. In particular, alkannin **2** and shikonin **3** (2 enantiomeric dyes extracted from *Alkanna tinctoria* and *Lithospermum erythrorhizon*, respectively), seem to have peculiar biological properties.⁴ The antimicrobial compound, 2-isopropenylnaphthazarin-2,3-epoxide **4**,^{5,6} which is actually a homonaphthazarin derivative, was isolated from the hairy roots of *Sesamum indicum*.

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in **7** as their methyl ethers. The dimethylether **16** was prepared by refluxing **7** with dimethyl sulphate-acetone-potassium carbonate. Reduction of dimethylether **16** with lithium aluminium hydride in tetrahydrofuran (rt, 20 h) furnished a mixture of separable diols, **17** and **18**, in a ratio of 1:2 where the *cis*-isomer was separated by fractional crystallisation of a mixture (Scheme 4).



Scheme 4

The *cis*-configuration of hydroxyl groups in **17** was unambiguously assigned on the basis of its ^1H NMR spectrum. The methylenic protons (H_7) resonate as an AB system, which can only be in agreement with the *cis*-orientation of the alcohol groups. In the case of the *trans*-orientation of alcohol functionalities as in the isomer **18**, the methylenic protons are equal and resonate as a quintet. Reaction of a mixture consisting of isomeric alcohols **17** and **18** with SOCl_2 followed by elimination in the presence of NEt_3 afforded dimethoxybenzocycloheptatriene **19** in 66% yield as the sole product. The 7-line ^{13}C NMR spectrum of **19** showed the presence of a symmetrical structure. Furthermore, ^1H NMR data also supported the proposed structure. For the formation of the isomeric cycloheptatriene derivative **20**, symmetrical cycloheptatriene **19** was reacted with KOt-Bu in refluxing tetrahydrofuran for 3 days to give **20**. The spectral data of **20** were in agreement with the expected cycloheptatriene derivative **20**. The driving force for the double bond isomerisation is the formation of the thermodynamically more stable isomer **20**. AM1 calculations show that isomer **20** is approximately 1.06 kcal/mol more stable than isomer **19**.

In conclusion, dione (**7**) was synthesised from the reaction of glutaric acid chloride with hydroquinone in the presence of H_2SO_4 and H_3BO_3 at high temperature in high yield. The reaction of **7** with bromine followed by treatment with NEt_3 provided the homonaphthazarin derivatives **8-10**. The reduction of carbonyl groups in **16** with LiAlH_4 gave isomeric alcohols **17** and **18**. Reaction of a mixture of alcohols **17** and **18** with SOCl_2 followed by NEt_3 -induced elimination opened up the possibility of synthesising dimethoxybenzocycloheptatriene derivatives such as **19** and **20**. Further functionalisation of the cycloheptatriene units would allow the synthesis of interesting tropone and tropolone derivatives.¹¹

Experimental

All chemicals and solvents are commercially available and were used after distillation or treatment with drying agents. M.p.: Thomas-Hoover cap. Melting apparatus. Melting points are uncorrected. IR spectra were obtained from solutions in 0.1 mm cells with a Perkin-Elmer spectrophotometer. The ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra were recorded on a 200 (50)-MHz Varian spectrometer; δ in ppm, with Me_4Si as the internal standard. Mass spectra were determined on a VG ZabSpec, range 1000 EI. All column chromatography was performed on silica gel (60-mesh, Merck).

Synthesis of 1,4-dihydroxy-7,8-dihydro-5H-benzo[a]cycloheptene-5,9(6H)-dione (7): In a 1-L 2-necked flask, fitted with a dropping funnel and reflux condenser, were placed hydroquinone **5** (30 g, 272 mmol), boric acid (H_3BO_3 , 16.86 g, 272 mmol) and sulphuric acid (H_2SO_4 , 200 mL). To the resulting solution was added glutaric acid chloride **6** (46 g, 272 mmol) at 135 °C dropwise over 30 min and the temperature was raised to 160 °C. After 30 min additional stirring the mixture was cooled to room temperature, and it was poured into water (500 mL) and then extracted with CHCl_3 (3 x 200 mL). The combined organic extracts were washed and dried (Na_2SO_4) and evaporated. The product, **7** (22 g, 85%), was obtained as the sole product and crystallised from CHCl_3 /hexane to give pale yellow crystals. M.p. 146-148 °C (Lit. m.p. 149 °C^{7,8}); ^1H -NMR (200 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 11.49 (s, OH, 2H), 7.12 (s, aromatic, 2H), 2.89 (t, $J=7.5$ Hz, methylenic, 4H), 2.16 (qui., $J=7.5$ Hz, methylenic, 2H); ^{13}C -NMR (50 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 206.3 (CO), 156.9 (C-OH), 129.3 (CH), 120.1 (CH), 43.9 (CH_2), 21.2 (CH_2); MS, m/z : 208.0/207.0/205.9 (2/10/100), 179.9/178.9/177.9 (2/8/80), 160.9/159.9 (3/17), 149.9 (20), 136.9 (8), 129.1/120.9 (8/42), 107.9 (12). Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_{11}\text{H}_{10}\text{O}_4$: C, 64.07; H, 4.89. Found: C, 64.24; H, 4.61.

Synthesis of homonaphthazarin derivatives 8-10: To a stirred solution of dione **7** (670 mg, 3.25 mmol) in CHCl_3 (40 mL) was added a solution (10 mL) of Br_2 (1.0 g, 5.56 mmol) in one portion at room temperature. After stirring for 1 day, the solvent and excess Br_2 were removed by evaporation. The residue was dissolved in CHCl_3 (40 mL) and cooled to 0 °C, and then a solution of NEt_3 (1.0 g) in 5 mL was added dropwise over 5 min. After stirring for 30 min, the cold bath was removed and the mixture was stirred at room temperature for 20 h. The reaction mixture was poured into a cold solution of 10% HCl (100 mL, 0 °C) and it was stirred for 5 min. After separation of the organic phase, the water phase was extracted with CHCl_3 (2 x 30 mL). The combined organic extracts were washed with water (50 mL), dried (CaCl_2), and then the solvent was evaporated. The residue was submitted to column chromatography (silica gel, 50 g), eluting with ethyl acetate/hexane (5:95). The unreacted starting material, **7** (41 mg, 0.2 mmol, 6.2%), was separated as the first fraction followed by dibromide **10** (42 mg, 0.12 mmol, 3.7%), monobromide **9** (276 mg, 0.98 mmol, 30.2%) and **8** (275 mg, 1.35 mmol, 41.5%). On the other hand, dibromide **10** was also separated from a mixture consisting of **9** and **10** by crystallisation from methanol.

3,6-Dihydroxy-1a,7a-dihydro-1H-cyclopropa[b]naphthalene-2,7-dione (8). M.p. 172-174 °C (Lit. m.p. 173 °C¹⁰), pale yellow crystals from CHCl_3 ; ^1H -NMR (200 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 11.96 (s, OH, 2H), 7.23 (s, aromatic, 2H), 2.69 (dd, $J=9.1, 5.2$ Hz, cyclopropane, 2H), 1.90 (dt, $J=9.1, 5.2$ Hz, cyclopropane, 1H), 1.55 (q, $J=5.2$ Hz, cyclopropane, 1H); ^{13}C -NMR (50 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 200.6 (CO), 158.1 (C-OH), 130.4 (CH), 113.1 (C), 29.8 (CH), 21.9 (CH_2).

1a-Bromo-3,6-dihydroxy-1a,7a-dihydro-1H-cyclopropa[b]naphthalene-2,7-dione (9): M.p. 132-134 °C (lit. m.p. 135 °C⁹), pale yellow needles from CHCl_3 ; ^1H -NMR (200 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 11.81 (s,

OH, 1H), 11.75 (s, OH, 1H), 7.26 (s, aromatic, 2H), 3.12 (dd, $J = 10.1, 6.2$ Hz, *exo*-cyclopropane, 1H), 2.31 (dd, $J = 10.1, 6.2$ Hz, cyclopropane, 1H), 2.03 (t, $J = 6.2$, Hz, *endo*-cyclopropane, 1H); $^{13}\text{C-NMR}$ (50 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 198.0 (CO), 194.5 (CO), 158.8 (C-OH), 158.4 (C-OH), 131.3 (CH), 130.9 (CH), 112.7 (C), 111.2 (C), 39.9, 36.6, 32.1; m/z (EI) 284/282 (34/40), 267 (10), 204/203 (14/100), 176/175 (10/90), 146 (34), 119 (22), 108 (16), 91 (42).

1a,7a-Dibromo-3,6-dihydroxy-1a,7a-dihydro-1H-cyclopropan[b]naphthalene-2,7-dione (10): M.p. 174-176 °C (lit. m.p. 174 °C⁹), pale yellow crystals from CHCl_3 ; $^1\text{H-NMR}$ (200 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 11.78 (s, OH, 2H), 7.32 (s, aromatic, 2H), 2.54 (d, A part of AB system, $J = 7.8$ Hz, cyclopropane, 1H), 2.41 (d, B part of AB system, $J = 7.8$ Hz, cyclopropane, 1H); $^{13}\text{C-NMR}$ (50 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 192.5 (CO), 159.2 (C-OH), 132.0 (CH), 110.1 (C), 47.4 (C), 41.0 (CH_2); m/z : 364/362/360 (20/38/19), 322 (7), 284/283/282/281 (19/99/19/100), 255 (37), 246 (14), 209 (8), 202 (48), 174 (22), 146 (19), 118.0 (11).

Synthesis of 6,8-dibromo-1,4-dihydroxy-7,8-dihydro-5H-benzo[a]cycloheptene-5,9(6H)-dione (12): To a stirred solution of diol **7** (532 mg, 2.58 mmol) in CHCl_3 (15 mL) was added a solution of Br_2 (1.0 g, 5.56 mmol) in 10 mL of chloroform in one portion at room temperature. After stirring for 3 days, the solvent and excess Br_2 were removed by evaporation. The residue was filtered through a short silica gel column (5 g silica gel), eluting with CHCl_3 to give dibromide **12** (520 mg, 1.43 mmol) in 55% yield, which was crystallised from CHCl_3 . M.p. 177-179 °C (lit. m.p. 180 °C¹⁰) pale yellow crystals from CHCl_3 ; $^1\text{H-NMR}$ (200 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 11.31 (s, OH, 2H), 7.26 (s, aromatic, 2H), 4.97 (t, $J = 7.3$ Hz, CH-Br, 2H), 3.17 (t, $J = 7.3$ Hz, methylenic, 2H); $^{13}\text{C-NMR}$ (50 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 197.7 (CO), 158.3 (C-OH), 130.9 (CH), 116.1 (C), 52.3 (CH), 42.6 (CH_2); m/z 366/364/362 (5/10/4), 283/281 (84/100), 255/253 (44/48), 207 (56), 201.9 (68), 173.5 (28), 146.0 (40), 118.0 (38), 89.0 (46).

Reaction of dibromide 12 with NEt_3 : A solution of **12** (500 mg, 1.37 mmol) in CHCl_3 (20 mL) was cooled to 0 °C, and then a solution of NEt_3 (415 mg) in 5 mL of CHCl_3 was added dropwise over 8 min. The ^1H NMR spectral studies indicated the formation of **9** (290 mg, 1.10 mmol, 80%) as the sole product.

1,4-Dimethoxy-7,8-dihydro-5H-benzo[a]cycloheptene-5,9(6H)-dione (16) was synthesised as described in the literature.⁷ Colourless crystals (86%) from CHCl_3 /ether, m.p. 137-139 °C, (lit. m.p. 148 °C⁷). $^1\text{H-NMR}$ (200 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 6.98 (s, aromatic, 2H), 3.77 (s, methoxide, 6H), 2.72 (t, $J = 6.2$ Hz, methylenic, 4H), 2.02 (qui, $J = 6.2$ Hz, methylenic, 2H); $^{13}\text{C-NMR}$ (50 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 204.3 (CO), 151.9 (C-OMe), 130.3 (CH), 117.6 (C), 59.1 (OMe), 45.2 (CH_2), 21.0 (CH_2); m/z : 236/235/233 (2/14/100), 208/207/206/205 (1/10/42/16), 177 (62), 163 (14), 148 (12), 135/134/131 (20/12/8), 105 (8), 85/83/82 (14/16/10).

Reduction of 16 with LiAlH_4 : To a stirred solution of **16** (4.3 g, 18.4 mmol) in dry tetrahydrofuran (40 mL) was added LiAlH_4 (2.5 g, 65.79 mmol) in portions over 30 min at 0 °C. After stirring at the same temperature for 1 h, the cold bath was removed and the mixture was stirred at room temperature for 20 h, cooled to 0 °C, and hydrolysed by the addition of methanol and water (1:1). After the removal of inorganic salts by filtration, the solution was filtered through a short silica gel (5 g) column, eluting with methanol/THF (1:1). The solvent was evaporated and a mixture (96% , 4.2 g, 17.66 mmol) of alcohols **17** and **18** was obtained in a ratio of 1:2. Fractional crystallisation afforded *cis*-alcohol **17** (177 mg, 0.74 mmol) as white crystals.

5*S*(*R*),9*R*(*S*)-1,4-dimethoxy-6,7,8,9-tetrahydro-5*H*-benzo[*a*]cycloheptene-5,9-diol (17):

M.p. 180-182 °C from methanol, ¹H-NMR (200 MHz, CD₃OD) δ 6.90 (s, aromatic, 2H), 5.64 (bd, CH-OH, *J* = 6.9 Hz, 2H), 4.9 (s, -OH, 2H), 3.77 (s, methoxide, 6H), 2.61-2.41 (qt, A part of AB system, *J* = 13.8 and 3.2 Hz, methylenic, 1H), 2.22-2.10 (m, methylenic, 2H), 1.71-1.61 (m, methylenic, 3H), 2.69 (dd, B part of AB system, *J* = 13.8 and 2.7 Hz, methylenic 1H); ¹³C-NMR (50 MHz, CD₃OD) δ 154.3 (C-OMe), 136.9 (C), 115.5 (CH), 67.4 (CH-OH), 59.3 (OMe), 36.7 (CH₂), 20.8 (CH₂); *v*_{max} (KBr) 3316, 3247, 3185, 3116, 3085, 2954, 2923, 2838, 1596, 1442, 1265, 1211, 1064, 948, 910, 802, 717, 663 cm⁻¹.

5*R*(*S*),9*R*(*S*)-1,4-Dimethoxy-6,7,8,9-tetrahydro-5*H*-benzocycloheptene-5,9-diol (18):

The NMR data for **18** were extracted from a mixture of **17** and **18** where the isomer **18** was enriched. ¹H-NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 6.78 (s, aromatic, 2H), 5.50 (d, CH-OH, *J* = 5.1 Hz, 2H), 3.80 (s, OCH₃, 6H), 2.95 (m, OH, 2H), 2.19-1.57 (m, methylenic, 4H), 2.07 (qui. *J* = 6.9 Hz, methylenic, 2H); ¹³C-NMR (50 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 154.1 (C-OMe), 134.5 (C), 113.0 (CH), 69.3 (CH-OH), 58.4 (OMe), 33.8 (CH₂), 21.1 (CH₂).

1,4-Dimethoxy-7*H*-benzo[*a*]cycloheptene (19): A mixture of diols **17** and **18** (3.48 g, 14.6 mmol) in CHCl₃ (40 mL) was cooled to -10 °C (NaCl/ice mixture). To the resulting solution was added dropwise a solution of SOCl₂ (10 mL) in CHCl₃ (10 mL) over 10 min. The colour of the reaction mixture slowly changed to black. After stirring for 30 min, the cold bath was removed, followed by further stirring for 1 h. Excess SOCl₂ and CHCl₃ were evaporated and CHCl₃ (10 mL) was added. The resulting solution was cooled to -10 °C and then a solution of NEt₃ (6 mL) in CHCl₃ (15 mL) was added dropwise over 15 min. After stirring for 30 min, the cold bath was removed, with further stirring at room temperature for 2 days. The reaction mixture was poured into dilute HCl solution (200 g) to remove the excess NEt₃. It was extracted with CHCl₃ (2 x 75 mL). The combined organic layer was washed with NaHCO₃ (5% , 100 mL) and water (100 mL) and dried (CaCl₂) After evaporation of the solvent the residue was crystallised from ethanol/CHCl₃ to give **19** as white crystals (1.93 g, 9.6 mmol, 66%). M.p. 104-106 °C. ¹H-NMR (200 MHz, CHCl₃) δ 6.86 (d, *J* = 10.1 Hz, A part of AB system, olefinic, 2H), 6.74 (s, aromatic, 2H), 5.94 (dt, *J* = 10.1 and 6.8 Hz, B part of AB system, olefinic, 2H), 3.87 (s, OCH₃, 6H), 2.37 (t, *J* = 6.8 Hz, methylenic, 2H); ¹³C-NMR (50 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 153.3 (C-OMe), 130.0 (C), 129.8 (CH), 126.1 (CH), 109.7 (CH), 58.0 (OMe), 28.5 (CH₂); *v*_{max} (KBr) 3016, 2939, 2838, 1596, 1450, 1326, 1257, 1072, 941, 786, 694 cm⁻¹.

1,4-Dimethoxy-5*H*-benzo[*a*]cycloheptene (20): To a stirred solution of **19** (640 mg, 3.17 mmol) in dry THF (30 mL) was added potassium *t*-butoxide (2.0 g, 13.4 mmol) at room temperature, and then the mixture was refluxed for 3 days. It was cooled to room temperature and the solvent was evaporated. After the adding of water (100 mL), the mixture was neutralised with solid NH₄Cl. The mixture was extracted with CHCl₃ (3 x 60 mL). The combined organic layer was dried over CaCl₂ and the solvent was evaporated. The isomerised cycloheptatriene **20** was obtained (195 mg, 0.97 mmol) in 31% yield. Pale yellow liquid; ¹H-NMR (200 MHz, CHCl₃) δ 7.46 (d, *J* = 11.7 Hz, A part of AB system, H₉, 1H), 6.90 (d, *J* = 8.7 Hz, A part of AB system, aromatic, 1H) 6.69 (d, *J* = 8.7 Hz, B part of AB system, aromatic, 1H), 6.63 (dd, *J* = 11.7, 5.1 Hz, B part of AB system, H₈, 1H), 6.17 (dd, *J* = 9.5, 5.1 Hz, A part of AB system, H₇, 1H), 5.84 (dt, *J* = 9.5, 6.9 Hz, B part of AB system, H₆, 2H), 3.84 (s, OCH₃, 3H), 3.83 (s, OCH₃, 3H), 3.09 (d, *J* = 6.9 Hz, methylenic, 1H); ¹³C-NMR (50 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 152.8 (C-OMe), 151.4 (C-OMe), 131.0 (CH), 130.0 (CH), 129.6 (C), 129.3 (CH), 128.7 (CH), 128.6 (C), 113.4 (CH), 108.9 (CH), 58.5 (OMe), 57.9 (OMe), 27.5 (CH₂); *v*_{max} (CHCl₃) 2998, 2941, 2837, 1601, 1470, 1324, 1258, 1093, 965, 797 cm⁻¹.

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