PDF hosted at the Radboud Repository of the Radboud University Nijmegen

The following full text is a publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.
http://hdl.handle.net/2066/16426

Please be advised that this information was generated on 2020-03-06 and may be subject to change.
A cage compound derived from cyclotriveratrylene and diphenylglycoluril sub-units

J. W. H. Smeets, H. K. A. C. Coolen†, J. W. Zwikker and R. J. M. Nolte† *

Department of Organic Chemistry, University of Utrecht, 3584 CH Utrecht, The Netherlands
† Present address: Department of Organic Chemistry, University of Nijmegen, 6525 ED Nijmegen, The Netherlands
(Received January 8th, 1989)

Abstract. To diphenylglycoluril (2), four aliphatic chains were attached, each with a vanillyl alcohol group at the end. In an acid-catalyzed reaction, three of the vanillyl alcohol groups cyclize to form a cyclotriveratrylene unit. The resulting compound (3) has a well-defined cavity and a free, functionalized arm. Cyclization of four vanillyl alcohol groups (5) does not occur, probably for steric reasons.

Introduction

Organic molecules containing an intramolecular cavity, as well as a nearby catalytic centre, are currently receiving a great deal of attention as synthetic equivalents of enzymes (so called synzymes) 1. Recently, we showed that such synthetic systems can be constructed from concave building blocks containing ligating arms 2. Coordination of the arms to a metal centre results in the formation of a metallocage (Fig. 1). In this approach, the metal has a dual function: (i) it holds the framework of the cage and (ii) it is a potentially reactive site.

In this paper we describe a different approach to the synthesis of molecules containing a cavity as well as a catalytic centre. The approach is outlined in Fig. 2. If one starts from two concave sub-units with different numbers of reactive groups or functionalities (X and Y in Fig. 2,A), a cage molecule can be assembled in which one or more of these groups are unused. In a later stage, these groups can be converted into catalytic functions (Fig. 2,A). Alternatively, one can use a concave building block with reactive groups (P) and perform a cyclocondensation or cyclopolymerisation reaction. If this reaction is a controlled process, reactive groups will remain which can there be transformed into catalytic functions (Fig. 2,B). We have used procedure B to synthesize a cage compound which involves the concave building blocks cyclotriveratrylene (1) and diphenylglycoluril (2) 3,4. This molecule has one functional group that can be transformed into a catalytic function.

Results and discussion*

To diphenylglycoluril (2), four -(CH₂)₆- arms, terminated with vanillyl groups, were attached as shown in Scheme 1. Vanillin (6) was heated in aqueous base with 1,6-dibromohexane under phase-transfer conditions using methyltrioctylammonium chloride (Aliquat 336) as the phase-transfer catalyst to give compound 7 (81%). The latter compound was coupled (~ 50%) to 2 in N,N-dimethylformamide using sodium hydride as base. The resulting product was quantitatively reduced to the corresponding benzylic alcohol 9 with NaBH₄ in dioxane. An alternative route, in which 1,6-dibromohexane is first attached to 2 and subsequently coupled to vanilin, was unsuccessful.

Intramolecular condensation of the vanillyl alcohol sub-units in 9 was achieved by heating in formic acid under high-dilution conditions. Chromatographic work-up afford-
ed two solids, compounds 3 and 4, in approximately 30% and 10% yield, respectively. Compound 3 contains a cyclotrimeratylene sub-unit and one free arm. It was fully characterized by elemental analysis and spectroscopic techniques (see Experimental). The cyclotrimerization reaction, by which 3 is formed, can proceed in two ways with respect to the diphenylglycoluril unit, leading to four stereoisomers (Fig. 3). The presence of these isomers can be seen in the $^1$C NMR spectrum which shows more than one signal for each carbon atom of 3. The benzylic carbon of the free arm gives only one signal in the $^1$C NMR spectrum, indicating that the free arm is not influenced by the stereoisomers. So far, we have not been able to separate these isomers. Based on the FAB MS and $^1$H NMR spectra, we ascribe a non-cyclic, tetrameric structure to compound 4. We found that the ratio $3/4$ depends on the reaction conditions used. For instance, when a mixture of acetic acid and sulfuric acid (100:1, v/v) is substituted for formic acid, only compound 3 is formed. We ascribe this to the fact that the condensation of the vanillyl alcohol groups is a reversible process. In the presence of strong acid, 4 is converted into the thermodynamically more stable 3. The cyclic tetramer 5 could not be detected in our reaction mixtures. The FAB mass spectrum of 3 showed a signal at $m/z$ 1167 which could correspond with (M + H)$^+$ of 5. However, with the aid of MAIKE spectroscopy (Mass Analyzed Ion Kinetic Energy) in combination with $^1$H NMR, we were able to show that this signal is due to a rearrangement of the protonated side-arm of 3 (Scheme 2). Our result

![Scheme 2](image)

**Fig. 3.** Four stereoisomers of compound 3.

![Fig. 3](image)

**Fig. 4.** Conformations of cyclotrimeratylene: the "crown" form (a) and the "sofa" form (b).
suggests that ring closure of 4 to 5 is an unfavourable process. It is known from the literature that cyclotetraetraylenene can have three conformations: two related “crown” forms (C₁₀ and C₂₀, Fig. 4a) and a “sofa” form (C₂₀, Fig. 4b). The latter is the most stable, since it has one of its valent units in a less strained upward position. CPK models suggest that a “sofa” form of the cyclotetraetraylenene sub-unit in 5 is not possible for steric reasons. Preliminary experiments show that the CH₂OH function of the free arm in 3 can be easily modified. Our efforts are being directed towards the derivatization of 3 with imidazoyl functions. These functions can act as a nucleophilic catalyst on a substrate bound in the cavity of 3 or they can be used to coordinate a transition metal centre.

**Experimental**

**General**

Unless otherwise indicated, commercial materials were used as received. DMSO, dioxane and DMF were dried over 4 Å sieves and methanol over 3 Å sieves prior to use. Diethyl ether, toluene and hexane were distilled from sodium ketyl, while CHCl₃ was distilled from CaCl₂. FAB mass spectra were recorded on a VG ZAB 2F spectrometer (matrix: 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol). IR spectra were measured on a Perkin-Elmer Model 283 spectrometer.

**Compounds**

**Tetrahydro-3a,6a-diphenylimidazo[4,5-d]imidazole-2,5(1H,3H)-dione (diphenylglycoluril)**

This compound was synthesized according to a literature procedure. 4-(6-Bromohexyloxy)-3-methoxybenzaldehyde (7)

A solution of 6.08 g (40 mmol) of 6 and 1.6 g (40 mmol) of sodium hydroxide in 40 ml of water was vigorously stirred with 97.6 g (400 mmol, 61 ml) of 1,6-dibromohexane and 1.5 g of Aliquat 336 at 70°C for ca. 5 h. The progress of the reaction was followed with TLC (silica, eluent CHCl₃/CH₂OH, 10:1 v/v). To this end, a sample of the water layer was acidified to pH 6 and extracted with CHCl₃. After TLC had indicated the disappearance of 6, the organic layer was evaporated to dryness under reduced pressure.

The remaining oil was dissolved in chloroform, washed three times with a saturated aqueous sodium chloride solution, dried (MgSO₄), filtered over insufflural earth and evaporated under reduced pressure.

**IR**

The resulting oil was stirred for 1 h. The solution became colourless again and the solvent was evaporated under reduced pressure. The resulting oil was dissolved in CHCl₃, washed three times with a saturated aqueous sodium chloride solution, dried (MgSO₄), filtered over insufflural earth and concentrated in vacuo.

The remaining oil was placed in ether in ether. The solvent was evaporated under reduced pressure to yield 0.88 g (≈ 100%) of the compound quantitatively as a white foam. IR (KBr): 3640–3120 (OH), 2920 (CH₂), 2850 (OCH₃), 1600 (C = O), 1500 (Ar, COOH), 1450 (C–C), 1255 (CH.OAr), 1040–980 (COH) cm⁻¹. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, δ): 6 7.25–6.30 (m, 19H, ArH), 4.75 (s, 2H, ArC/OH), 3.90 (t, 2H, CH₂Ar), 3.89 (s, 12H, OCH₃), 3.5–2.8 (br m, 6H, 2CH₂) ppm.

**FAB MS**

m/z 1167 (M + H)⁺, 1185 (M + H – CH₂OH)⁺, 1231 (M + H²)⁺.

**CPK models**

CPK models suggest that a “sofa” form of the cyclotetraetraylenene sub-unit in 5 is not possible for steric reasons. Preliminary experiments show that the CH₂OH function of the free arm in 3 can be easily modified. Our efforts are being directed towards the derivatization of 3 with imidazoyl functions. These functions can act as a nucleophilic catalyst on a substrate bound in the cavity of 3 or they can be used to coordinate a transition metal centre.
Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Prof. W. Drenth and Dr. F. G. M. Niele for helpful discussions. This work was supported by the Netherlands Foundation for Chemical Research (SON) with financial aid from the Netherlands Foundation for Scientific Research (NWO).

References and notes

1a Th. J. Meade and D. H. Busch, Prog. Inorg. Chem. 33, 59 (1985);
c M. W. Hosseini and J.-M. Lehn, J. Am. Chem. Soc. 109, 7047 (1987);
d J. Tabushi, Tetrahedron 40, 269 (1984);
2a F. G. M. Niele and R. J. M. Nolte, J. Am. Chem. Soc. 110, 172 (1988);
3a Collet et al., have synthesized cage molecules incorporating one or two cyclotrimeratrylene building blocks, e.g. speleands3b combining a cyclotrimeratrylene sub-unit with an azo crown ether and cryptophanes3c, in which two cyclotrimeratrylene sub-units are connected to each other. The former type of cage molecule was constructed by following procedure A, while for the latter type procedure B was used;
c J. Canceill, L. Lacombe and A. Collet, J. Am. Chem. Soc. 107, 6993 (1985);
4 Mock and associates have constructed a cage compound built from 6 molecules of glycoluril which are linked by 12 methylene bridges, see: W. A. Freeman, W. L. Mock and N.-Y. Shih, J. Am. Chem. Soc. 103, 7367 (1981).
6a A. Arcoleo, G. Giammona and G. Fontano, Chem. & Ind. 853 (1976);
b A. Goldup, A. Morrison and G. Smith, J. Chem. Soc. 3864 (1965);
c G. M. Robinson, J. Chem. Soc. 267 (1915);
7a J. D. White and B. D. Gesner, Tetrahedron 30, 2273 (1974);