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**Chiral basket-shaped host compounds derived from diphenylglycoluril**


* Nijmegen SON Research Center, Department of Organic Chemistry, University of Nijmegen, Toernooiveld, 6525 ED Nijmegen, The Netherlands
§ J.H. van 't Hoff Institut, Department of Inorganic Chemistry, University of Amsterdam, Nieuwe Achtergracht 166, 1018 WV Amsterdam, The Netherlands
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**Abstract.** The design and synthesis of two novel chiral receptors derived from diphenylglycoluril are described. The chirality in these molecules is due to the unsymmetrical positioning of amino functions in the crown ether rings with respect to the diphenylglycoluril subunit.

**Introduction**

The ability of enzymes to catalyze reactions in a stereoselective way depends to a large extent on a process of molecular recognition. The binding pocket of an enzyme has a chiral shape and, as a result of this, one particular substrate is bound and converted enantioselectively into the specified product. Recently, we have described a synthetic supramolecular catalyst consisting of a basket-shaped receptor molecule provided with a catalytically active Rh(I) complex. This system was found to mimic the catalytic activity of enzymes in the conversion of several substrates into the specified product.

Our supramolecular catalyst, it was felt necessary to modify the binding moiety of the receptor part in such a way that a chiral environment is obtained. Chiral recognition requires a minimum of three simultaneous interactions between the binding site and the substrate. Hydrogen bonding and electrostatic attractions are regarded to be single-point interactions, whereas e.g. dipole stacking and \( \pi-\pi \) interactions are multi-point interactions.

The chiral receptors described in this paper are constructed from this molecule. Our ultimate objective is to use this receptor as a model of a chiral environment.

**Results and discussion**

**Strategy**

As shown in Figure 1, compound 1 can be regarded as being composed of four subunits. To illustrate this, the molecule has been divided into four quadrants. Chirality can be easily built in by modifying one or two of these quadrants. As a result two chiral centers appear on the quaternary carbon atoms of the glycoluril unit, as indicated by asterisks in Figure 1. An obvious way to do this is by introducing dissymmetry in the handles of the basket compounds which can be synthesized from 1. In compound 2, only one of the handles is altered, leading to a completely asymmetric compound (C\(_1\) symmetry). In 3, two handles are modified which results in a chiral molecule with C\(_2\) symmetry.

First, the synthesis of basket 2 is described and an attempt made to resolve this compound into enantiomers. After that the preparation of basket 3 is presented. This compound could be successfully resolved at the stage of a precursor molecule. This paper is concluded with some preliminary binding studies on 3.

**Basket with C\(_1\) symmetry**

The synthesis of compound 2 is summarized in Scheme 1. Benzene-1,4-diol was alkylated with 1-bromo-2-chloroethane in acetonitrile using K\(_2\)CO\(_3\) as a base to yield 4-(2-chloroethoxy)phenol (4a) (30%). Subsequently, 4a was treated with 2-(2-chloroethoxy)ethyl p-toluenesulfonate and sodium hydride in DMF, resulting in 1-(2-chloroethoxy)-4-(2-(2-chloroethoxy)ethoxy)benzene (4b) (55%). Reaction of a 1:1 mixture of 4b and 1,4-bis[2-(2-chloroethoxy)ethoxy]benzene (4c) with the cyclic ether 5\(_7\) in acetic anhydride and trifluoroacetic acid gave a number of products, viz. the symmetric tetrachloride 6, the meso compound 7, a racemic mixture of the target molecule 8 and the racemate 9. The molar ratio of these compounds amounted to approximately 2:1:4:1, which is close to the theoretically expected values. The compounds could be resolved.
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Figure 1. Division of compound 1 into four quadrants (left) and the X-ray structure of this compound (right).

separated by column chromatography and the racemate of 8 was obtained in 39% yield. The dissymmetry in the molecule is clearly visible in its $^1$H-NMR spectrum. The aromatic xylylene protons on the symmetric side of the molecule are displayed as a singlet and those on the asymmetric side as an AB pattern. The methylene bridges, which link the xylylene walls to the glycoluril unit, give rise to three AX patterns, probably because two of them coincide.

Double ring closure of 8 with two equivalents of 4-(methoxymethoxy)benzylamine under dilute conditions in acetonitrile with Na$_2$CO$_3$ as the base gave the racemate of 2a (76%). The protected phenolic hydroxyl groups in the latter compound provide functionalities for the coupling of a chiral auxiliary group or a catalytic center. In the $^1$H-NMR spectrum of 2a the bridging methylene groups were visible as four AX patterns. The aromatic protons of the substituted benzyl groups gave rise to two different AB patterns and the xylylene wall protons displayed the same pattern as those in 8. For the NCH$_2$ methylene protons in the ring, complicated signals were observed.

The methoxymethyl protecting groups were quantitatively removed by stirring a solution of 2a in tetrahydrofuran/propan-2-ol with concentrated hydrochloric acid, resulting in 2b·2HCl.

We tried to separate the enantiomers of 2a, 2b, and also those of 8 on a chiral HPLC column. Unfortunately, we were not able to find a suitable stationary phase. Subsequently, we reacted 2b with chiral reagents in order to obtain diastereomers, which can be separated chromatographically. However, the coupling of 2b to (+)-10-camphorsulfonyl chloride, (R)-(+)α-methoxy-α-(trifluoromethyl)benzeneacetyl chloride (Mosher's reagent), or (-)-menthyl chloroformate did not give separable diastereomers, as could be concluded from TLC and HPLC. Finally, we tried to achieve resolution by crystallization of the dibenzoyltartaric acid salt of compound 2a. These attempts were also unsuccessful.

Basket with C$_2$ symmetry

The synthetic route to compound 3 is depicted in Scheme 2. The mono-alkylated benzene-1,4-diol derivative 4-[2-(2-chloroethoxy)ethoxy]phenol (4d) was coupled to the cyclic ether 5 in 1,2-dichloroethane with p-toluenesulfonic acid and molecular sieves. The racemate 10 and the meso compound 11 could be separated chromatographically. Their structures were assigned on the basis of the $^{13}$C-NMR spectra (Figure 3): the meso

Figure 2. Schematic representation of the binding of benzene-1,3-diol in the basket-shaped receptor molecule based on 1.
compound 11 displays two resonances for the carbonyl functionalities of the glycoluril unit, whereas the racemate gives only one signal due to the $C_2$ symmetry in the molecule. The bridging methylene groups in 10 form two sets which are non-equivalent and therefore give rise to two AX patterns in the $^1$H-NMR spectrum. The signals of the xylene wall protons appeared as an AB pattern and were shifted ca. 1 ppm to a higher field compared to the reference compounds 6−9. This feature may be explained by assuming that the phenolic hydroxyl groups are hydrogen-bonded to the carbonyl groups of the glycoluril unit. The hydrogen bond will be optimized if the xylene walls are moved towards the carbonyl groups, causing a twist in the molecule, as is shown in Figure 4. Such a twist is not unlikely and has been observed before in glycoluril derivatives. An indication for such a twist is found in the $^{13}$C-NMR spectrum of 10. For the carbon atoms of the phenyl groups on the convex side of the glycoluril unit several well-separated signals are observed. Normally, these carbon atoms give rise to a narrow cluster of overlapping signals (e.g. see compound 11, Figure 3). In 10, the carbon atoms will be all magnetically different as a result of the ring current shifts, caused by the twisted benzene rings. The hydrogen bonds are broken by coordinating solvent molecules, as can be concluded from the fact that the $^1$H-NMR signals of the xylene walls of 10 are not shifted in DMSO-$d_6$. In the meso compound 11, hydrogen bonds between the carbonyl groups of the glycoluril unit and the phenolic hydroxyl groups are possible but these hydrogen bonds cannot be stabilized by a twist in this molecule. In line with this, only small shifts of the xylene wall protons were observed.

Rac-10 was treated with two equivalents of (−)-menthyl chloroformate to give a mixture of diastereomers (12a and 12b). The $^1$H-NMR spectrum of this mixture displayed several distinct sets of resonances for each of the diastereomers. After chromatographical resolution (13% yield of each diastereomer), these sets were separately visible in the $^1$H-NMR spectra of each of the diastereomers (see experimental section). The removal of the menthyl groups with sodium methoxide in methanol yielded each of the enantiomers of 10 in an optically pure form (74%). Reacting these enantiomers with a large excess of 1-bromo-2-chloroethane in DMSO with base, resulted in the quantitative formation of the enantiomers of 9 ([α]$_D^25 + -13.4^\circ$). These compounds were also obtained as an inseparable racemate in the synthesis of 8 (see previous section). Double ring closure of 9 with two equivalents of benzylamine under dilute conditions in acetonitrile with Na$_2$CO$_3$ as a base yielded both enantiomers of the chiral basket compound 3 ([α]$_D^20 + -16.4^\circ$, yields 77% and 90%, respectively).

**Binding experiments**

$^1$H-NMR spectroscopy was used to evaluate the binding properties of the two enantiomers of 35,10. First, the binding constant of benzene-1,3-diol was determined and found to be $K_B = 200 \pm 25 \text{ M}^{-1}$. This value is much lower than the values normally observed for this type of base.
ket-shaped compounds, viz. $K_a = 3000 \text{ M}^{-1}$. The lower binding affinity may be caused by the benzyl groups which probably partially cover the cavity of 3 as a result of the restricted flexibility of the handles. A similar situation is present in a related basket compound with small handles, of which we recently reported an X-ray structure. We carried out a titration with the guest compound 13 to investigate whether receptor 3 displays any enantioselectivity in the binding of a chiral substrate. Compound 13 was prepared by the condensation of 2,4-dihydroxybenzaldehyde and (-)-a-methylbenzylamine. Unfortunately, the affinity of 13 for both (+)-3 and (-)-3 was very low; the binding constants amounted to approximately $K_a = 60 \text{ M}^{-1}$. Probably, the cavity of the host is too shielded by the benzyl groups to accommodate a bulky substrate like 13. Another complication is the fact that in 13 an intramolecular hydrogen bond can be formed between one of the phenolic hydroxyl groups and the N atom of the imine function. This feature is also unfavourable for binding. Work is now in progress to connect ligands to the para positions of the benzyl groups in 3. On complexation to a metal center, the benzyl groups will be lifted to a more upward position which opens the cavity of 3 and makes it more accessible for substrate molecules.

**Experimental section**

**General**

Unless otherwise indicated, commercial materials were used as received. Hexane, THF, diethyl ether, and toluene were distilled under nitrogen atmosphere from sodium ketyl. Dichloromethane was distilled from CaCl$_2$. All solvents were stored on molecular sieves under an inert atmosphere.

$^1$H-NMR spectra were recorded on Bruker WH-90, Bruker AC-100, and Bruker AM-400 instruments. Chemical shifts ($\delta$) are reported in ppm downfield from internal Me$_4$Si. Abbreviations used are s = singlet, d = doublet, tr = triplet, q = quartet, m = multiplet, and br = broad. FAB mass spectra were recorded on a VG 7070E instrument, the matrix used was 3-nitrobenzyl alcohol. IR spectra were recorded on a Perkin-Elmer IRFT spectrometer 1720-X. The optical rotations were determined on a Perkin-Elmer 241 polarimeter. The HPLC columns used were a Machary Nagel Nucleosil Chiral-2, a LiChrosorb Si-100-10, and a LiChrosorb RP-18. For column chromatography Merck Silica Gel (60H) was used and for thin-layer chromatography Merck Silica Gel 60 F$_{254}$ plates. Elemental analyses were determined with a Carlo Erba Ea 1108 instrument.

**4-(2-Chloroethoxy)phenol (4a)**

A mixture of 3 g (27 mmol) of benzene-1,4-diol, 10 g (70 mmol) of 1-bromo-2-chloroethane, and 10 g (72 mmol) of K$_2$CO$_3$, in 50 ml of acetone was refluxed for 18 h. The mixture was filtered and the
solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The residue was taken up in 50 ml of CH₂Cl₂ and the solution was subsequently washed with 1 N aqueous HCl, a saturated aqueous solution of NaHCO₃, and brine. The organic layer was dried (MgSO₄) and evaporated to dryness. The product was purified by column chromatography (silica, eluent: 0.5% MeOH in CHCl₃) to give 1.41 g (30%) of 4a as a white crystalline solid. ¹H-NMR (100 MHz, CDC1₃) δ 6.79 (br s, 4H, ArH), 4.80 (s, 1H, OH), 4.17 (tr, 2H, CH₂O, J = 6 Hz), 3.78 (tr, 2H, CH₂X, J = 6 Hz).

I-(2-Chloroethoxy)-4-[2-(2-chloroethoxy)ethoxy]benzene (4b)
To a suspension of 0.4 g (10 mmol) of NaH (60% dispersion in oil) in 25 ml of DMF was added 1.73 g (10 mmol) of 4a. After the evolution of gas had stopped, 2.79 g (10 mmol) of 2-(2-chloroethoxy)ethyl p-toluenesulfonate was added and the mixture was stirred for 18 h under argon. The mixture was neutralized with aqueous HCl and the solvent was removed under vacuum. The residue was taken up in 50 ml of 1 N aqueous HCl and the resulting emulsion was extracted three times with CH₂Cl₂. The combined organic layers were washed with saturated aqueous solution of NaHCO₃ and brine, dried (MgSO₄), and evaporated to dryness. After column chromatography (silica, eluent: 0.5% MeOH in CHCl₃) 1.53 g (55%) of 4b was obtained as a yellowish oil. ¹H-NMR (100 MHz, CDC1₃) δ 6.84 (br s, 4H, ArH), 4.22-4.03 (m, 4H, CH₂Cl), 3.88-3.57 (m, 8H, CH₂O).

1,4-Bis[2-(2-chloroethoxy)ethoxy]benzene (4c)
This compound was synthesized according to a literature procedure. 4-[2-(2-Chloroethoxy)ethoxy]phenol (4d)
This compound was synthesized from 0.44 g (4 mmol) of benzene-1,4-diol, 1.19 g (4.3 mmol) of 2-(2-chloroethoxy)ethyl p-toluenesulfonate and 0.18 g (4.5 mmol) of NaH (60% dispersion in oil) in 10 ml of DMF as described for 4b. After column chromatography (silica, eluent: EtOAc:Hex, 1:2 v/v) 0.15 g (17%) of 4d was obtained as a yellowish oil. ¹H-NMR (100 MHz, CDC1₃) δ 6.78 (s, 4H, ArH), 4.92 (s, 1H, OH), 4.18-3.98 (m, 2H, CH₂X), 3.95-3.53 (m, 6H, CH₂O).

5,7,12,13b,13c,14-Hexahydro-1-(and 1 l)-(2-chloroethoxy)-4,8,11-(and 1 l)-tris[2-(2-chloroethoxy)]-13b,13c-diphenyl-6H,75 H-5a,6a,12a,13a-tetraazabenz[5,6]azuleno-[2,1,8-ija]benz[ i]azulene-6,13-dione (rac-8)
A solution of 2.34 g (6.2 mmol) of compound 5 in a mixture of 6 ml of Ac₂O and 6 ml of trifluoroacetic acid was stirred at 95°C for 30 min. Subsequently, 1.73 g (6.2 mmol) of 4b and 2.0 g (6.2 mmol) of 4c were added and the solution was stirred for another 30 min at 95°C. After cooling to room temperature 25 ml of methanol was carefully and slowly added. The resulting precipitate was filtered off and washed three times with ice cold diethyl ether. The products were separated by column chromatography (silica, eluent: EtOAc:Hex, 1:3 v/v), giving 2.25 g (59%) of rac-8 as a white solid. ¹H-NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.14-7.05 (m, 10H, Ar); 6.74 and 6.71 (2d, 2H, ArH, J = 9 Hz), 6.73 (s, 2H, ArH); 5.57, 5.544 and 5.541 (3d, 4H, NC/7 HAr, J = 16 Hz), 4.32-3.61 (m, 32H, NCH/Ar, CH₂CH₂); FAB MS m/z 944 ([M + H]⁺); Anal. calcd. for C₄₆H₅₀N₄O₉Cl₄: C 58.48, H 5.33, N 5.93; found: C 58.52, H 5.35, N 5.87%.

Racemate of compound 2a
Compound 2a was prepared according to a previously published procedure from 0.82 g (0.9 mmol) of 8, 0.44 g (2.6 mmol) of...
To a solution of 0.5 g (0.45 mmol) of compound 2b in a mixture of 50 ml of MeOH and 10 ml of CHCl₃, MeOH was added in a flask with a stirrer. The solution was stirred for 3 days in the same flask with a stirrer (HCl) and evaporated to dryness. After column chromatography (silica, eluent: 4% MeOH in CHCl₃), 0.5 g (13%) of rac-10 and 0.5 g (13%) of rac-10 were identical to those of rac-10. The spectral data of (+)-10 and (-)-10 were identical to those of rac-10.

5.7,12,13b,13c,14-Hexahydro-1,8- (or 4,11)-bis-[2-(chloro­ethoxy)-ethoxy]-4,11- (or 1,8)-dihydroxy-13b,13c-diphenyl-6H,13H-5a,6a,12a,13a-tetraazabenz[5,6]azulene-6,13-dione (meso-11)

This compound was synthesized as described previously⁸ from 0.24 g (0.27 mmol) of rac-10 and 0.9 mg (0.83 mmol) of freshly distilled benzylamine, 1 g of Na₂CO₃ and 2 g of NaI in 110 ml of acetonitrile. The compound was purified by column chromatography (silica, eluent: CHCl₃ with 1% MeOH) and then by slow evaporation of MeOH to dryness. The resulting oil was then recrystallized from CHCl₃ and MeOH. The compound was identified by its spectral data: M/z 775 (M+H)⁺.

As an asterisk indicates that the absolute configuration of the compound is unknown.

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[^9]: This work was supported by the National Natural Science Foundation of China (No. 21202105) and the Natural Science Foundation of Jiangxi Province of China (No. 20122BAB203003).
A solution of 1 g (7.2 mmol) of 2,4-dihydroxybenzaldehyde and 1.4 g (11.6 mmol) of (S)-(-)-α-methylbenzylamine in 50 ml of 1,2-dichloroethane was refluxed for 1.5 h. The reaction volume was reduced to approx. 2 ml and added dropwise to 50 ml of hexane. The resulting yellow precipitate was filtered off. The precipitation procedure was repeated four times until the excess of amine had been removed. Yield 1.3 g (73%) of a yellow powder: [α]D 320°. 1H-NMR (100 MHz, CDCl3) δ 8.00 (s, 1H, CH = N), 7.34 (m, 5 H, ArH), 7.00 (d, 1H, ArH, J 8.9 Hz), 6.28-6.21 (m, 2H, ArH), 4.62 (q, 1H, CH, J 6.8 Hz), 1.65 (d, 3H, CH3), J 6.8 Hz).

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