Total Synthesis of Gambierol

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In recent years, there has been an explosion of interest in biologically active natural products of marine origin.1 Because of their structural novelty and toxicity, polyetheralcohols are particularly attractive targets for synthetic chemists.2 Gambierol (1), a potent neurotoxin isolated from the cultured cells of Gambierdiscus toxicus, has 8 ether rings and 18 stereogenic centers.3 The compound shows toxicity against mice (LD50 50 μg/kg), and the symptoms resemble those caused by ciguatoxins, inferring the possibility that it is also implicated in ciguatera poisoning.1 The unique structural features have attracted the attention of synthetic chemists, and a number of strategies have been investigated.4,5 In this paper, we describe a new approach to the total synthesis of gambierol (1).

Figure 1 illustrates our retrosynthetic analysis of 1. Recently, we developed a convergent method for the synthesis of polycyclic ether frameworks via the intramolecular allylation of α-acetoxy ethers and subsequent ring-closing metathesis.6 On the basis of this methodology, the octacyclic ether framework of 1 was retrosynthetically broken down into the ABC ring segment 3 and the FGH fragment 4 via the diene 2.

The initial task of the total synthesis was the construction of the octacyclic framework. The carboxylic acid 3 and the alcohol 4,6 were connected by Yamaguchi conditions7 to give the ester 5 in 94% yield (Scheme 1). A series of reactions including desilylation with TBAF, acid-catalyzed acetal formation with 6, and acetal cleavage with TMSI/HMDS furnished the aliphatic stannane 7 in 77% overall yield.8 The ester 7 was then subjected to the modified Rychnovsky acetylation. Thus, partial reduction of 7 with Dibalh, followed by treatment of the resulting aluminum hemiacetal with (CH2Cl)2O/pyridine/DMAP,9 gave the α-chloroacetoxy ether 8 as a 3:2 inseparable mixture of diastereomers in 88% yield. Treatment of 8 with BF3·OEt2 gave a 2:1 mixture of the desired product 2 and its epimer 9 in 87% yield.10,11 The diene 2 obtained was subjected to ring-closing metathesis using the second generation Grubbs catalyst 10 to give the octacyclic ether 11 in 88% yield.

We then focused on the modification of the H ring moiety. Hydrolysis of the benzylidene acetal of 11 led to the corresponding diol. Selective protection of the primary alcohol followed by TPAP oxidation of the secondary alcohol gave the ketone 12 in 77% overall yield. Hydrogenation of 12 followed by debenzylation gave the saturated diol. The primary and secondary alcohols were protected by Pb and TIPS groups, respectively, to afford 13 in 80% overall yield. Treatment of 13 with LiHMDS/TMSCl/Et3N12 gave the corresponding enol silyl ether, which was subjected to dehydroxylation with Pd(OAc)213 to afford the enone 14 in 92% overall yield. Stereoselective introduction of the methyl group was carried out using MeMgI in toluene14 to give the tertiary alcohol as a single stereoisomer. TBS protection and subsequent selective deprotection of the primary silyloxy group afforded 15 in 82% overall yield.

We have already succeeded in the stereoselective synthesis of the triene moiety via the Uenishi hydrosilylation of dibromoalkene followed by a modified Stille coupling in a model study.6 However, the coupling reaction of Z-bromoalkenes was very slow. This problem prompted us to develop an efficient method for the construction of the triene side chain. After several unfruitful attempts, we found that the reduction of dibromoalkenes with a Zn-Cu couple gave reactive Z-iodoalkanes in a highly stereoselective manner.15 Thus, PCC oxidation of 15 followed by treatment of the resulting aldehyde with Cl2 and PPh316 gave the dideoalkene 16 in 92% overall yield. Stereoselective hydroiodination of 16 was carried out by using a Zn-Cu couple and AcOH in THF-MeOH to give the Z-iodoalkene 17 as a single stereoisomer, which was then treated with Dibalh, furnishing 18 in quantitative yield. Deprotection of the bis-silyl ether 18 with SiF4 proceeds smoothly to afford the corresponding triol.12 Finally, the iodoalkene obtained was subjected to the modified Stille coupling with 19 to give gambierol (I) in 72% yield.18 The synthetic gambierol exhibited physical and spectroscopic data identical to those reported previously.3,5

In conclusion, the convergent total synthesis of gambierol has been achieved using the intramolecular allylation of α-chloroacetoxy ether and subsequent ring-closing metathesis. The longest linear sequence leading to 1 was 66 steps with 1.2% overall yield, and the total number of steps was 102, while the synthesis by Sasaki and Tachibana gave an overall yield of 0.57% by 71 steps, with a total of 107 steps.5 The present synthesis demonstrated that this methodology is efficient and practical for constructing polycyclic ether frameworks. Application of the present strategy to the synthesis of other marine natural products is in progress.
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Supporting Information Available: Schemes for the preparation of compounds 3 and 4. Experimental procedures and characterization data for all new compounds reported in Scheme 1. Copies of ¹H NMR spectra for selected compounds (PDF). This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

References


(6) For the preparation of 3 and 4, see Supporting Information.


(10) The reaction of the corresponding α-acetoxy ether gave the undesired isomer 9 predominantly. Perhaps, the poor leaving ability of acetyl group, in comparison with chloroacetoxy group, would force the reaction course to proceed through the S2 pathway. The D ring of the desired isomer 2, in which all of the substituents take an equatorial position, is more thermally stable than that of 9. The details of the mechanism are under investigation. We appreciate a referee who pointed out the above problems, and we also thank Professor T. Osumi (Otsuka University) and Professor M. Inoue (Tohoku University) for suggesting the use of the chloroacetyl group.

(11) For the determination of the stereochemistries of 2 and 9, see Supporting Information.


(17) Corey, E. J.; Yi, K. Y. Tetrahedron Lett. 1992, 33, 2289–2290. The other attempts for desilylation of the protected gambierol having the triene side chain, for example, the use of TBAF, TASF, and SiF₄, resulted in failure as reported by Sasaki, see ref 5.

(18) Fuji Silysia silica gel was used for the purification of I. Although the detail is not clear, the use of Kanto Chemical silica gel (neutral) caused partial isomerization of I. See Supporting Information.