N^1,N^7-Dialkylation of cyclenphosphine oxide hydrate

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According to experimental conditions, either selective mono *N*-alkylation or N^1,N^7-dialkylation of cyclenphosphine oxide is effected.

Over the past two decades numerous works have been devoted to the synthesis of polyazamacrocyclic compounds with pendant arms.[1] Recently we have proposed a stoichiometric easy-to-run triprotection of a series of tetraazamacrocycles involving a phosphoryl group. Cyclen was selectively mono *N*-alkylated *via* the reaction of its phosphine oxide with electrophiles and acidic removal of the phosphoryl protecting group.[2] Cyclenphosphine oxide was previously studied by Richman;[3] structure I_A (Scheme 1) was proposed for this product on the basis of its spectroscopic data: the free N–H stretching band at 3330 cm^{-1} observed in the IR spectrum and the four distinct carbons (^{13}C NMR, $CDCl_3$) variously coupled with the phosphorous atom at low temperature are consistent with this hypothesis. At higher temperatures this pattern changes to a doublet, indicating a rapid exchange of all the carbon sites probably through a pentacoordinated intermediate.

As observed by Richman,[3] cyclenphosphine oxide is a very hygroscopic material. When exposed to atmospheric moisture, fast addition of water occurs leading to a monohydrate as supported by elemental analysis.†

We report here the unexpected properties of cyclen phosphine oxide in the presence of water.

Typically, cyclenphosphine oxide is prepared by transamination of $P(NMe_2)_3$ with cyclen, oxidation of the resulting P^{III} macrocycle with CCl_4 to give the corresponding phosphonium salt which is finally hydrolysed with aqueous NaOH.[2] The crude extract consists of three compounds in various amounts as shown by ^{31}P NMR ($CDCl_3$): I_A: δ −8; I_B: δ −20 and I_C: δ −30. Compound I_C can be readily separated by crystallization in a 1 : 1 Et_2O–CH_2Cl_2 mixture, afterwards, I_A and I_B are easily isolated and characterized.

^{13}C, ^{31}P and ^{1}H NMR data enabled us to identify I_A‡ as the well known cyclenphosphine oxide (Scheme 1). However, we observed that its hydrate, in solid state, was slowly converted into I_B at room temperature.

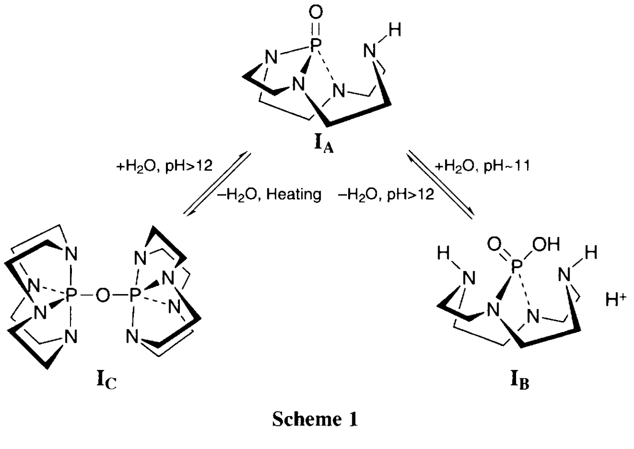
In $CDCl_3$, I_B exhibited two signals in the ^{13}C NMR spectrum: at δ 44.1 (broad) and 43.2 (doublet, *J* 11 Hz); its ^{1}H spectrum shows four poorly resolved multiplets and a broad signal at δ 7 attributed to acidic hydrogens. Futhermore, a mild dehydratation by azeotropic distillation (toluene) regenerates I_A. In addition, reaction of I_B with 2 equiv. of an electrophile in DMF in the presence of sodium carbonate as proton scavenger, leads in high yields, after acidic hydrolysis, to N^1, N^7-dialkylated cyclen. In all cases ^{31}P NMR signals of the intermediates takes place near δ −20 (Table 1).

All these data suggest the structure for I_B as depicted in Scheme 1 in non-aqueous medium, probably in a zwitterionic form. This product corresponds to the selective opening of the P–N bond opposite to the free secondary amine in I_A. The high selectivity of this process can find its explanation in the weakening of the bond due to the strong transannular P ← N interaction[3] also observed for the thiophosphoryl analogue of cyclenphosphine oxide.[4]

In D_2O, ^{31}P NMR spectroscopy indicated a rapid and strongly pH dependent equilibrium between I_A and I_B: I_A was predominant above pH = 12. On decreasing the pH, the ^{31}P NMR signal shifts are consistent with a titration curve corresponding to a rapid conversion of I_A into I_B associated to a proton exchange, and below pH = 11 I_B dominates. This pH dependence suggests a protonated form of I_B in water, stabilized by intramolecular hydrogen bonding.

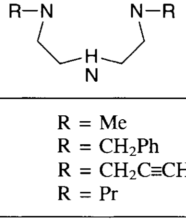
Compound I_C‡ was obtained pure when I_A (or I_B) was extensively dehydrated by heating at 150 °C. Two doublets at δ 43.1 (J_{PC} 5 Hz) and 42.1 J_{PC} 11 Hz) were observed in ^{13}C NMR ($CDCl_3$) and its ^{1}H NMR spectrum ($CDCl_3$) showed four well resolved multiplets at δ 2.85, 3.05, 3.35 and 3.65 for four anisochronous hydrogen localized on two different carbons of the macrocycle. The ^{31}P NMR signal at δ −30 was in agreement with a pentacoordinated phosphorus,[5,6] as expected for I_C (Scheme 1).

Treatment with aqueous sodium carbonate at room temperature slowly converted I_C into I_B probably *via* I_A, since in more basic medium (sodium hydroxide, pH > 12) I_A is regenerated. The dimeric form I_C is also a side product from the hydrolysis of the phosphonium salt and for this reason it can be found in various amounts in the crude reaction mixture.



Scheme 1

Table 1 N^1,N^7-Disubstitution of 1,4,7,10-tetraazacyclododecane

Alkylating agent	Stoichiometry	End product	Yield (%)	δ_P (intermediate)
				
MeI	2	R = Me	80	−21
$PhCH_2Br$	2	R = CH_2Ph	95	−16
$HC{\equiv}CCH_2Cl$	2	R = $CH_2C{\equiv}CH$	95	−19
PrBr	2	R = Pr	80	−17

To sum up, cyclenphosphine oxide can be reversively hydrated or dehydrated, according to experimental conditions (Scheme 1). Therefore, $\mathbf{I_A}$ is the only form observed when hydrolysis of the phosphonium salt is performed at pH > 12.

Moreover, semi-empirical calculations (AM1 formalism), in the gas phase, are in agreement with the spontaneous conversion of cyclenphosphine oxide hydrate into $\mathbf{I_B}$, since $\mathbf{I_B}$ is more stable than $\mathbf{I_A}H_2O$(ΔE = 12 kcal mol^{-1}, 1 cal = 4.184 J).

This behaviour is not observed for higher homologues of $\mathbf{I_A}$, like cyclamphosphine oxide, with larger fused rings for which no transannular P ← N interaction is observed.[7]

This study shows that cyclenphosphine oxide behaves differently according to the experimental conditions: its mono *N*-alkylation requires strictly anhydrous reagents and medium,[2] but its hydrate, in presence of 2 equiv. of an electrophile, is easily N^1, N^7-dialkylated. This method constitutes a new route to this class of compounds.[8–10]

We thank the SIMAFEX for generous gifts of cyclen trisulfate and R. Pichon and N. Kervarec for the NMR measurements.

Footnotes

† Elemental analysis: Anal. calc. for $C_8H_{17}N_4PO$, H_2O: C, 41.02; H, 8.11; N, 23.93; P, 13.25; O, 13.67. Found: C, 41.56; H, 8.71; N, 23.99; P, 12.18; O, 13.56%. MS *m/z* (%): 234 (M^+, 2.5), 216 (68) and 199 (100).

‡ Compounds $\mathbf{I_A}$, $\mathbf{I_B}$, $\mathbf{I_C}$ were characterized by ^1H NMR (300 MHz, $CDCl_3$), ^{13}C NMR (75.45 MHz, $CDCl_3$) and ^{31}P NMR (40.26 MHz, $CDCl_3$).

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Received, 15th May 1996; Com. 6/03715A