## Crown Ether-Bearing Dihydroazulenes<sup>[1]</sup>: Synthesis and Photochromism of a Benzo[15]crown-5 Derivative

Christian Fischer and Jörg Daub\*

Institut für Organische Chemie der Universität Regensburg, Universitätsstraße 31, W-8400 Regensburg

Received December 28, 1992

Key Words: Photochromism / Photoresponsive crown ether

Photosensitive crown ether 1 composed of 1,8a-dihydroazulene as a photodynamic unit and a benzo[15]crown-5 ether subgroup has been synthesized from C-7-substituted cycloheptatriene 8, which has been obtained by nucleophilic addition of 4-acetylbenzo[15]crown-5 (6) to tropenylium tetrafluoroborate (7). Dehydrogenation of dicyanovinyl derivative 9 leads to heptafulvene 2 which thermally rearranges to dihydroazulene 1. Attempts to synthesize 1 according to the

Numerous approaches are currently persued to design and synthesize molecular-based materials exhibiting photocontrolled sensor or photoregulation activity<sup>[2]</sup>. In principle, these supramolecular species<sup>[3]</sup> consist of three different subunits: (i) a unit for switching which preferentially is activated photochemically, (ii) a subgroup involved in metalion recognition, and (iii) functional groups to achieve aggregation by intermolecular interaction. Properties (i) and (ii) are found in photoresponsive crown ethers, a class of compounds which has already been studied to some extent<sup>[4]</sup>.

In previous studies we have shown that dihydroazulene (DHA)/vinylheptafulvene (VHF) photochromism can successfully by utilized in photocontrolled switching processes<sup>[5]</sup> which recommends this photodynamic system to be incorporated into photoresponsive materials for ion transport or sensor applications. The following study deals with the photolabile system 1/2 which assembles a photochromic dihy-

Scheme 1



"[8 + 2]-cycloaddition route" have been unsuccessful. Crown ether 1 shows photochromic bistability with a photochemically driven forward and a thermal back reaction. The spectroscopic properties of 1 and the photochemical isomerization  $1 \rightarrow 2$  have been shown to be almost insensitive to sodium iodide addition. The rate of the thermal back reaction  $2 \rightarrow 1$ slightly is affected by sodium iodide addition.

droazulene/vinylheptafulvene subunit and a benzo[15]crown-5 ether component covalently attached. Synthesis and the molecular rearrangement will be described (Scheme 1).

Benzo[15]crown-5 has been selected as ionophoric subunit since it is known that substituents at C-4 influence the binding constants for sodium ion complexation significantly<sup>[6]</sup>. Furthermore, by photochemical rearrangement  $1 \rightarrow 2$  the acceptor strength of the hydrocarbon subunit increases.

## Synthesis

In a first approach the synthesis of dihydroazulene 1 has been attempted according to "[8 + 2]-cycloaddition route" utilizing the [8 + 2]-cycloaddition reaction of methylenepropanedinitrile 3 with 8-methoxyheptafulvene (4, 8-MHF)<sup>[7]</sup> and subsequent elimination of methanol<sup>[8]</sup>. Although successfully applied frequently it has turned out that donorsubstituted aryl groups reduce the rate of cycloaddition significantly and even prevent elimination of methanol by irreversibly binding diphosphorous pentoxide at the electronrich groups<sup>[8]</sup>.

This also applies to the present case as well: [8 + 2] cycloaddition of 3 to 4 with formation of tetrahydroazulene (THA) 5 proceeds rather sluggishly (reaction time 8 days, yield 48%), and subsequent elimination of methanol even fails completely.

With more success the "vinylheptafulvene route" has been adopted<sup>[9]</sup>: The reaction of 4-acetylbenzo[15]crown-5 (6) with tropenylium tetrafluoroborate (7) affords cycloheptatriene 8. The Knoevenagel condensation with malonodinitrile gives the dicyanovinyl derivate 9 which by hydride elimination and deprotonation yields vinylheptafulvene 2 via tropenylium derivative 10. Thermally, 2 rearranges to di-

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Scheme 2





Scheme 3



hydroazulene 1. The structure assignment of 1 is based on spectroscopic data documented by a typical absorption band at 363 nm (lg  $\varepsilon = 4.3$ ).

Irradiation of dihydroazulene 1 with monochromatic light  $(\lambda = 366 \text{ nm})$  causes rearrangement to 2. The absorption band at 363 nm decreases and a new absorption at 474 nm appears (Figure 1) with isosbestic points at 398 and 314 nm. The addition of sodium iodide to a solution of 1 has no significant effect on the absorption spectra of 1/2 and does not impair the photochemical transformation [in acetoni-trile,  $c(\text{NaI}) = 1.5 \cdot 10^{-5} \text{ M}$ ,  $c(1) = 2.69 \cdot 10^{-5} \text{ M}$ , at  $25^{\circ}\text{C}$ ]. Long-wavelength bands of DHA 1 and VHF 2 are collected in Table 1 together with those of related compounds  $11-14^{[10]}$ .

Vinylheptafulvene 2 reconverts clearly to dihydroazulene 1 under thermal conditions. Plotting  $\ln c(2)$  versus time at

Table 1. Long-wavelength absorption of 1, 2, 11–14 in acetonitrile  $[\lambda_{max} (\lg \epsilon), \text{ in nm}]$ 

-	$\lambda_{max}$ (lg $\epsilon$ )	$\lambda_{max}$ (lg $\epsilon$ )		
1	363 (4.3)	2	474 (4.3)	
1 + Nal	364 (4.3)	2 + NaI	473 (4.4)	
11	365 (4.4)	12	467 (4.5)	
13	364 (4.3)	14	473 (4.4)	

different temperatures gives straight lines indicating firstorder kinetics. To evaluate the sensitivity of the thermal back reaction to sodium iodide addition the thermal decay rates of the rearrangement  $2 \rightarrow 1$  have been determined at different temperatures (Table 2, Experimental). Half-lives  $(t_{1/2})$  at different temperatures have been found to decrease on sodium iodide addition (Table 2). The Arrhenius parameters also show that the exponential factor ln A and energy of activation ( $E_a$ ) decrease if vinylheptafulvene 2 is thermally rearranged in the absence of sodium iodide  $[2 \rightarrow 1: E_a = 87.4$ kJ/mol; ln A = 25,  $(2 + \text{NaI}) \rightarrow (1 + \text{NaI}): E_a = 103.6$  kJ/ mol; ln A = 32].



Figure 1. UV/Vis spectral changes caused by 366-nm irradiation of 1 in acetonitrile at 25 °C. Time of irradiation: a) 0 s; final spectrum after 110 min

Scheme 4



## Discussion

Studies of Ungaro, El Haj, and Smid<sup>[6]</sup> indicate that the equilibrium constants (K) of Na<sup>+</sup> complexation of benzo[15]crown-5 ether strongly depend on the nature of the 4-substituent at the benzene ring. By conductometry in acetone at 25 °C they have observed an almost 25-fold increase in the complexation constants in going from 4-amino to 4-nitro substitution leading to good Hammett plots. This finding is explained by a decrease in the donor strength of the ether oxygen in the 4-amino as compared to the 4-nitro compound which results in a decreased complexation in the 4-nitro derivative. Since by the  $1 \rightarrow 2$  rearrangement the weaker donor group (dihydroazulene) is shifted to a stronger dicyanovinyl acceptor group we assume that 1 again should allow stronger Na<sup>+</sup> complexation and therefore 1/2 should exhibit properties of a photochemically driven molecular switching system. The finding that thermal and photochemical 1/2 interconversions are not influenced by sodium iodide may be an indication that interconversions in Scheme 1 are mainly due to reactions proceeding via the uncomplexed species (pathways  $1 \rightleftharpoons 2$ ).

We thank Mrs. M. Feuerer and Mr. F. Gaßner for the support of this work. C. F. thanks the Stiftung Stipendien-Fonds des Verbands der Chemischen Industrie, Frankfurt/Main, for a dissertation fellowship.

## Experimental

Melting points: uncorrected. – IR: Beckman Acculab 1. – UV/ Vis: Shimadzu UV-210A. – <sup>1</sup>H NMR: Bruker WM 250, Varian EM 360, Varian T-60; TMS as internal standard. – MS: Varian CH-5 and MAT 311A. – Column chromatography: Silica gel ICN Silitech 63–200. – Thin layer chromatography: Alumina foil Merck 60 F 254 (silica gel), layer thickness 0.2 mm. – [8 + 2]-Cycloaddition reactions were performed under nitrogen. – Elemental analyses: Mikroanalytisches Labor, Universität Regensburg.

Kinetic measurements were undertaken with a Shimadzu UV-210 spectrometer and low-temperature equipment. The rates were obtained by determining the decrease in the long-wavelength absorption of heptafulvene 2 (475 nm) (Table 2, Figure 2).

Table 2. Rates (k in s) of the thermal back reaction  $2 \rightarrow 1$  with  $[c(NaI) = 1.5 \cdot 10^{-4} \text{ M}]$  and without sodium iodide at different temperatures

<i>T</i> /[C]	Without sodium iodide		In the presence of sodium iodide	
	τ <sub>1/2</sub> [min]	ln <i>k</i>	$\tau_{1/2}$ [min]	ln k
25	353	-10.3	219	-9.9
30	169	-9.6	113	-9.2
35	99	-9.1	53	8.4
40	57	-8.5	29	- 7.8
45	38	-8.1	16	-7.2

Precursor compounds: Benzo[15]crown-5<sup>[11]</sup>, 4-Formylbenzo-[15]crown-5<sup>[12]</sup>,  $4^{[13]}$ ,  $6^{[14]}$ , and  $7^{[15]}$ ) were prepared as described.

2-(2,4,6-Cycloheptatrien-1-yl)-1-(2,3,5,6,8,9,11,12-octahydro-1,4,7,10,13-benzopentaoxacylopentadecin-15-yl)ethanone (8): A solution of 4.10 g (23.0 mmol) of tropenylium tetrafluoroborate (7) and 7.00 g (22.6 mmol) of 6 in 140 ml of methanol containing 1 ml of acetic acid is stirred at room temp. The color of the solution changes from white to red. After 4 h 80 ml of water is added, and the mixture is extracted with four portions of 100 ml of chloroform. The combined organic layers are washed with 100 ml of water and dried with MgSO<sub>4</sub>. The solvent is removed and the resulting brown oil passed through a short silica gel column using dichloromethane as eluent. Evaporation of the solvent gave 4.00 g (89%) of 8 as a brownish oil. – IR (KBr):  $\tilde{v} = 3020 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ , 2930, 2870, 1705, 1670, 1590, 1510, 1425, 1355, 1270, 1140, 1050, 935, 705. - <sup>1</sup>H NMR (60 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 2.50$  (m<sub>c</sub>; 1 H, methine H), 3.25 (d, J = 7 Hz; 2 H, methylene H), 3.75 (s; 8 H, methylene H at C-5, -6, -8, -9), 3.87 (m<sub>c</sub>, 4H, methylene H at C-3, -11), 4.13 (m<sub>c</sub>, 4H, methylene-H at C-2,

-12), 5.24 (m<sub>c</sub>; 2H, 2'-, 7'-H), 6.00-6.35 (m; 2H, 3'-, 6'-H), 6.60 (m<sub>c</sub>; 2H, 4'-, 5'-H), 6.81 (d, J = 9 Hz; 1H, 17-H), 7.47 (s, 1H, 14-H), 7.55 (d, J = 9 Hz, 1H, 16-H).



Figure 2. Arrhenius plot  $\ln k = f(1/T) (k \text{ in s}, T \text{ in } K)$  for the thermal back reaction  $2 \rightarrow 1$ : (0) without sodium iodide and ( $\blacktriangle$ ) in the presence of sodium iodide  $[c(\text{NaI}) = 1.5 \cdot 10^{-4} \text{ M in acetonitrile}]$ 

[2-(2,4,6-Cycloheptatrien-1-yl)-1-(2,3,5,6,8,9,11,12-octahydro-1,4,7,10,13-benzopentaoxacylopentadecin-15-yl)ethylideneJpropanedinitrile (9): To 2.00 g (5.0 mmol) of 8 and 0.40 g (6.0 mmol) of malononitrile in 30 ml of dry benzene is added 6.7 g of ammonium acetate in 20 ml of acetic acid. Water is removed by azeotropic distillation. After refluxing for 16 h the solution is diluted with 15 ml of benzene, extracted 5 times with small portions of water, and the organic phase is dried with MgSO<sub>4</sub>. After removal of the solvent by evaporation 1.99 g (89%) of a pale yellow powder is obtained. The solid is further purified by column chromatography on silica gel (dichloromethane/acetonitrile, 7:3). Recrystallization from petroleum ether (80-110°C) yields 9 as a yellow powder, m.p.  $114 - 115 \,^{\circ}\text{C.} - \text{IR}$  (KBr):  $\tilde{v} = 3010 \,\text{cm}^{-1}$ , 2920, 2860, 2210, 1585, 1545, 1510, 1445, 1420, 1335, 1300, 1270, 1140, 1040, 930, 840, 740, 695. – <sup>1</sup>H NMR (250 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 1.97$  (m<sub>c</sub>; 1 H, methine H), 3.18 (d, J = 7.9 Hz; 2 H, methylene H), 3.76 (br s; 8 H, methylene H at C-5, -6, -8, -9), 3.89-3.94 (m, 4H, methylene H at C-3, -11), 4.14 - 4.18 (m, 4H, methylene H at C-2, -12), 5.14 (dd, J = 9.0/6.3Hz; 2H, 2'-, 7'-H), 6.14-6.21 (m; 2H, 3'-, 6'-H), 6.60 (m; 2H, 4'-, 5'-H), 6.88 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H, 17-H), 6.99 (d, J = 2.2 Hz, 1H, 141634

H), 7.07 (dd, J = 8.4/2.2 Hz, 1H, 16-H).  $- C_{26}H_{28}N_2O_5$  (448.5): calcd. C 69.63, H 6.29, N 6.24; found C 69.83, H 6.23, N 6.23.

Tropenylium Salt 10: Under nitrogen a solution of 0.83 g (2.82 mmol) of trityl tetrafluoroborate in 17 ml of dry 1,2-dichloroethane is added dropwise to a solution of 1.25 g (2.79 mmol) of 9 in 5 ml of dry 1,2-dichlorethane within 30 min. The solution is stirred at 70°C for 1 h. After cooling to room temp. 200 ml of dry diethyl ether is added, and the mixture is stirred for another 0.5 h. Tropenylium salt 10 precipitates and is removed by filtration. Yield 0.36 g (24%) of 10 as dark red solid. - IR (KBr):  $\tilde{v} = 2940 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ , 2880, 2210, 1595, 1510, 1340, 1250, 1125, 1050, 940, 820, 695.

1,8a-Dihydro-2-(2,3,5,6,8,9,11,12-octahydro-1,4,7,10,13-benzopentaoxacylopentadecin-15-yl)-1,1-azulenedicarbonitrile (1): To a solution of 0.36 g (0.67 mmol) of 10 in 20 ml of dry CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> 0.23 g (2.34 mmol) of triethylamine is added at 0°C. The rection mixture is diluted with 100 ml of CCl<sub>4</sub> and filtered. After removal of the solvent from the filtrate 0.36 g of 2 is obtained as a red oil, which is taken up in 100 ml of benzene and the solution refluxed for 2 h. After removal of the solvent a brown solid results which is purified by column chromatography on silica gel (dichloromethane/acetonitrile, 7:3). Total yield of 1: 0.245 g (82%) as an orange solid. Recrystallization from diethyl ether gives 1 as a yellow solid, m.p.  $107 - 109 \,^{\circ}\text{C}$ . - IR (KBr):  $\tilde{v} = 2930 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ , 2870, 1590, 1510, 1445, 1380, 1260, 1125, 1050, 930, 695. - <sup>1</sup>H NMR (250 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 3.62 - 3.68$  (m, 8H, methylene H at C-5, -6, -8, -9), 3.80 - 3.86(m, 5 H, methylene H at C-3, -11, 8a-H), 4.13-4.17 (m, 4 H, methylene-H at C-2, -12), 5.78 (dd, J = 10.0/6.4 Hz, 1 H, 8-H), 6.29-6.34 (m, 1 H, 7-H), 6.37 (br d,  $J \approx 6$  Hz, 1 H, 4-H), 6.50 (dd, J = 11.2/5.9Hz, 1 H, 6-H), 6.59 (dd, J = 11.2/6.3 Hz, 1 H, 5-H), 7.03 (d, J = 8.4Hz, 1 H, 17-H), 7.04 (s, 1 H, 3-H), 7.27 (d, J = 2.2 Hz, 1 H, 14-H), 7.40 (dd, J = 8.5/2.3 Hz, 1H, 16-H). – MS (70 eV), m/z (%): 446  $(15) [M^+], 432 (5) [M - CH_2], 358 (10) [M - 2 C_2H_4O], 314 (43)$  $[M - 3 C_2 H_4 O]$ , 300 (21)  $[M - 3 C_2 H_4 OC H_2]$ , 287 (26) [M - 3 $C_2H_4OC_2H_5$ ], 258 (17) [M - 4  $C_2H_4OCH_2$ ]. - UV/Vis (acetonitrile):  $\lambda_{max}$  (lg  $\varepsilon$ ) = 216 nm (4.2), 363 (4.3).

(2,3,5,6,8,9,11,12-Octahydro-1,4,7,10,13-benzopentaoxacylopentadecin-15-ylmethylene) propanedinitrile (3): To 1.47 g (4.96 mmol) of 4'-formylbenzo[15]crown-5 and 0.36 g (5.45 mmol) of malononitrile in 19 ml of ethanol 3 drops of piperidine are added. The reaction mixture is stirred at room temp. The color of the solution changes immediately from white to yellow, and after 15 min a yellow solid precipitates. The solid is removed by filtration, washed with small portions of ethanol and hexane, and dried with CaCl<sub>2</sub>. Yield 1.07 g (69%) of 3 as yellow crystals, m.p. 136-138 °C. - IR (KBr):  $\tilde{v} = 3020 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ , 2990, 2880, 2235, 1585, 1570, 1555, 1515, 1285. -<sup>1</sup>H NMR (250 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 3.76$  (br s, 8H, methylene H at C-5, -6, -8, -9), 3.89-3.95 (m, 4H, methylene H at C-3, -11), 4.16-4.23 (m, 4H, methylene H at C-2, -12), 6.81 (d, J = 8.4 Hz; 1H, 17-H), 7.35 (dd, J = 8.7/2.2 Hz; 1H, 16-H), 7.61 (s; 1H, vinyl H), 7.65 (d, J = 2.2 Hz, 1 H, 14-H). – MS (70 eV), m/z (%): 344 (15)  $[M^+]$ , 212 (100)  $[M - 3 C_2H_4O]$ , 197 (36)  $[M - 3 C_2H_4O -$ CH<sub>3</sub>], 156 (21), 136 (52).  $- C_{18}H_{20}N_2O_5$  (344.4): calcd. C 62.78, H 5.85, N 8.13; found C 62.46, H 5.77, N 8.12.

1,2,3,8a-Tetrahydro-3-methoxy-2-(2,3,5,6,8,9,11,12-octahydro-1,4,7,10,13-benzopentaoxacylopentadecin-15-yl)-1,1-azulenedicarbonitrile (Stereoisomeric Mixture) (5): Under nitrogen 0.35 g (1.02 mmol) of 3 is added with stirring to a solution of 0.16 g (1.16 mmol) of 8-methoxyheptafulvene (4, 8-MHF)<sup>[16]</sup> in 25 ml of dry dichloromethane. Stirring is continued at room temp. for 8 d. Thereafter, the solution is passed through a short silica gel column using ethanol as the eluent. Evaporation of the solvent from the eluate yields 0.47 g of a yellow solid, which contains equal amounts of 3 and 5 as determined by NMR analysis. - <sup>1</sup>H NMR (250 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): 5 (main stereoisomer), 70%):  $\delta = 3.14$  (m<sub>c</sub>, 1 H, 8a-H), 3.18 (s, 3 H,  $OCH_3$ ), 3.62 (d, J = 3.8 Hz, 1 H, 2-H), 3.77 (br s, 8 H, methylene H at C-5, -6, -8, -9), 3.91-3.95 (m, 4H, methylene H at C-3, -11), 4.17 - 4.23 (m, 4H, methylene H at C-2, -12), 4.32 (d, J = 3.6 Hz, 1 H, 3-H), 5.66 (dd, J = 9.8/4.1 Hz, 1 H, 8-H), 6.26-6.42 (m, 2 H, 4-, 7-H), 6.52-6.79 (m, 2H, 5-, 6-H), 6.88 (d, J = 8.3 Hz, 1H, 17-H), 7.21 (d, J = 1.9 Hz, 1H, 14-H), 7.07 (m, 1H, 16-H). 5 (second stereoisomer, 30%), some characteristic signals:  $\delta = 3.20$  (s, 3H, OCH<sub>3</sub>), 5.50 (m, 1 H, 8-H). 5 (third stereoisomer, trace), typical signal:  $\delta = 2.69$  (m<sub>c</sub>, 1 H, 8a-H).

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