

BIOMIMETIC SHORT-STEP SYNTHESIS OF (\pm)-CASBENE FROM GERANYLGERANIOL

Kazunori TOMA, Eiji MIYAZAKI, Tatsushi MURAE, and Takeyoshi TAKAHASHI*
Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science, The University of Tokyo,
Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113

(\pm)-Casbene was synthesized from all-*trans* geranylgeraniol by a route involving intramolecular carbene-olefin cyclization.

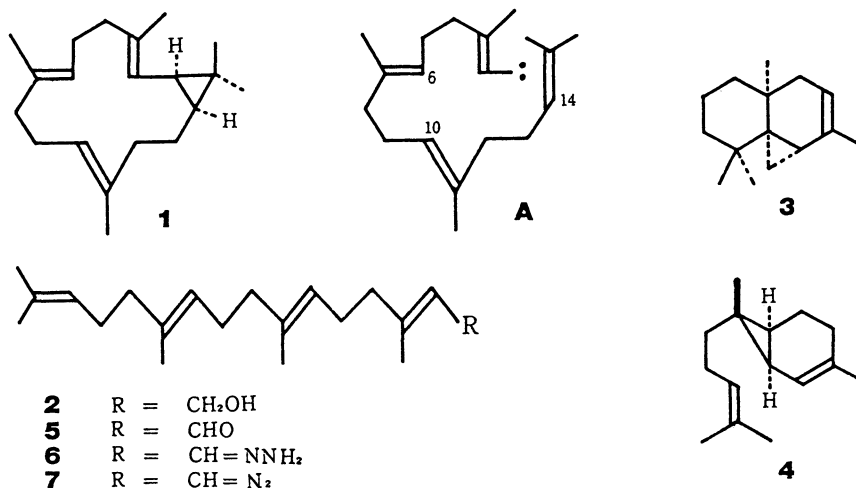
Casbene (**1**), an anti-fungal diterpene produced in cell-free extracts of castor bean,¹⁾ has been suggested to be a key intermediate in the biosynthesis of lathyrane, tiglane, ligenane, and related diterpenes from geranylgeraniol.²⁾ A total synthesis of (-)-casbene (**1**) from (+)-*cis*-chrysanthemic acid has been achieved in connection with the structure determination of **1**.²⁾ However, no efficient synthesis of casbene (**1**) has yet been described. We wish to report a biomimetic short-step synthesis of (\pm)-casbene (**1**) from all-*trans* geranylgeraniol (**2**).

Successful intramolecular cyclization by diazo decomposition has been reported for the synthesis of (\pm)-thujopsene (**3**),³⁾ (\pm)-sesquicarene (**4**),⁴⁾ and (\pm)-sirenin.⁵⁾ Similar reaction has now been applied to the synthesis of macrocyclic compound containing a cyclopropane ring; an intramolecular carbene-olefin cyclization of a C₂₀-carbene (**A**) derived from all-*trans* geranylgeraniol (**2**) resulted in a formation of both fourteen-membered and three-membered rings at a time to afford (\pm)-casbene (**1**). A preferential attack of the carbene center of **A** must have occurred to the C-14(15) double bond rather than those at C-6(7) and C-10(11); this can be well interpreted by a folded conformation of **A**.

Transformation of geranylgeraniol (**2**) into the carbene (**A**) was carried out according to the procedures described in the literature.^{4b)} All-*trans* geranylgeraniol (**2**)⁶⁾ was oxidized with excess activated manganese dioxide in hexane at 0 °C for 2 h to give geranylgeranial (**5**) in *ca.* 80% yield. The aldehyde (**5**) was converted into a hydrazone (**6**) on treatment with anhydrous hydrazine and triethylamine (each 6 equivalent moles) in absolute ethanol at room temperature for 1 h. When **6** was oxidized with activated manganese dioxide in dichloromethane at 0 °C for 2 h, an orange diazo compound (**7**)⁷⁾ was formed. An intramolecular cyclization of **7** *via* **A** proceeded by slow addition of **7** in tetrahydrofuran (THF) to a suspension of copper(I) iodide (2 equivalent moles) in THF at 0 °C followed by stirring at 0 °C for 30 min and then at room temperature for 30 min to give a mixture of products.⁸⁾ From this mixture pure (\pm)-casbene (**1**) was isolated as a main product by column chromatography using silica gel impregnated with silver nitrate. Without purification in each step (\pm)-casbene (**1**) was obtained in *ca.* 14% yield based on geranylgeraniol (**2**). The mass, ¹H-NMR, and

^{13}C -NMR spectral data⁹⁾ were identical with those reported for (-)-casbene by Crombie *et al.*^{2b)}

Further studies including cyclization of casbene (1) so obtained and its derivatives are under way.



References

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- 6) The starting material contained α . 95-98% of all-*trans* geranylgeraniol. The authors thank Dr. Masao Nagahama and Dr. Masahisa Tanomura, Kuraray Co. Ltd., for a generous gift of geranylgeraniol.
- 7) IR (neat) 2050, 1675, and 1638 cm^{-1} .
- 8) The hydrocarbon fraction obtained from this product mixture contained two minor products besides main one (1). The structures of the minor products are under investigation.
- 9) MS; m/e 272.2480 (M^+ , $\text{C}_{20}\text{H}_{32}$), 272 (52%), 136 (75%), 121 (100%), 107 (76%), 93 (87%). $^1\text{H-NMR}$; δ (CDCl_3) 0.58 (1H, t, $J=8.4$ Hz), 0.93 (3H, s), 1.05 (3H, s), 1.22 (1H, t, $J=8.4$ Hz), 1.55 (3H, s), 1.58 (3H, s), 1.65 (3H, s), 4.88 (1H, d, $J=8.4$ Hz), 4.89 (1H, m), 4.97 (1H, m). $^{13}\text{C-NMR}$; δ (CDCl_3) 135.96 (s), 135.26 (s), 133.18 (s), 125.59 (d), 123.53 (d), 121.23 (d), 40.39 (t), 39.52 (t), 39.34 (t), 30.72 (t), 28.91 (d), 25.84 (d), 25.06 (t), 24.08 (t), 24.08 (q), 19.75 (s), 16.47 (q), 16.31 (q), 15.74 (q) $\times 2$.

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