CHEMISTRY LETTERS, pp. 83-86, 1988. © 1988 The Chemical Society of Japan

Enantioselective Synthesis of erythro-β-Hydroxy-L-histidine, the Pivotal Amino Acid of Bleomycin-Fe(II)-O_2 Complex[1a)]

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erythro-β-Hydroxy-L-histidine, a novel amino acid constituent of bleomycin, has been synthesized enantioselectively via the reaction of (N-pyruvylideneglycyl-D-phenylalaninato)copper(II) with imidazole-4-carbaldehyde.

Bleomycins (BLMs) are a group of antitumor antibiotics clinically used for the treatment of Hodgkin's lymphoma, tumors of testis, and carcinomas of skin, head, and neck.[2)] The potent activity of BLM is attributed to the oxygen activation[3)] and the DNA cleavage[4)] by the formation of a unique iron-chelate of the β-aminoalanine-pyrimidine-β-hydroxyhistidine moiety of the unusual glycopeptide (Fig. 1).[5)] Previously we have reported synthetic models of BLM in which erythro-β-hydroxy-L-histidine (**1**) was shown to be a key amino acid as an irreplaceable moiety of the metal binding site.[6)] The L-erythro stereochemistry of **1** appears to be particularly important in defining the spatial relationships between the metal binding site, the DNA binding site, and the disaccharide moiety. For further development of new man-designed BLMs, we required a facile access to **1** which is the subject of the present paper.

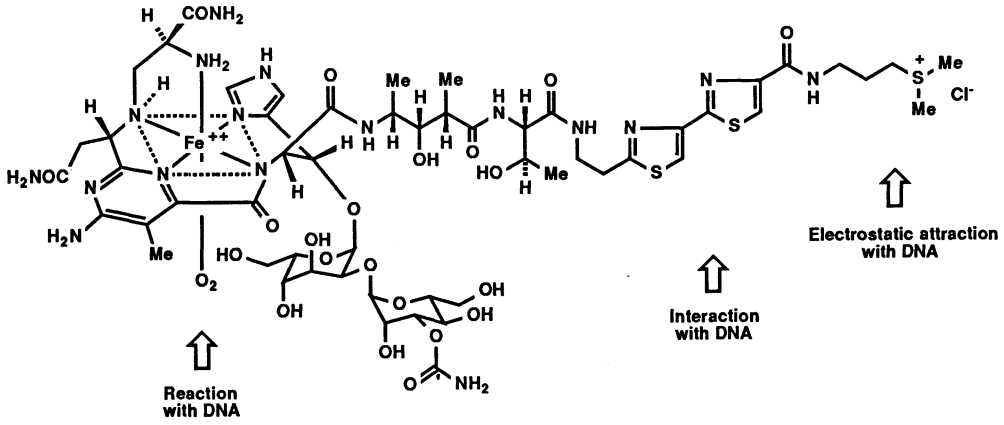
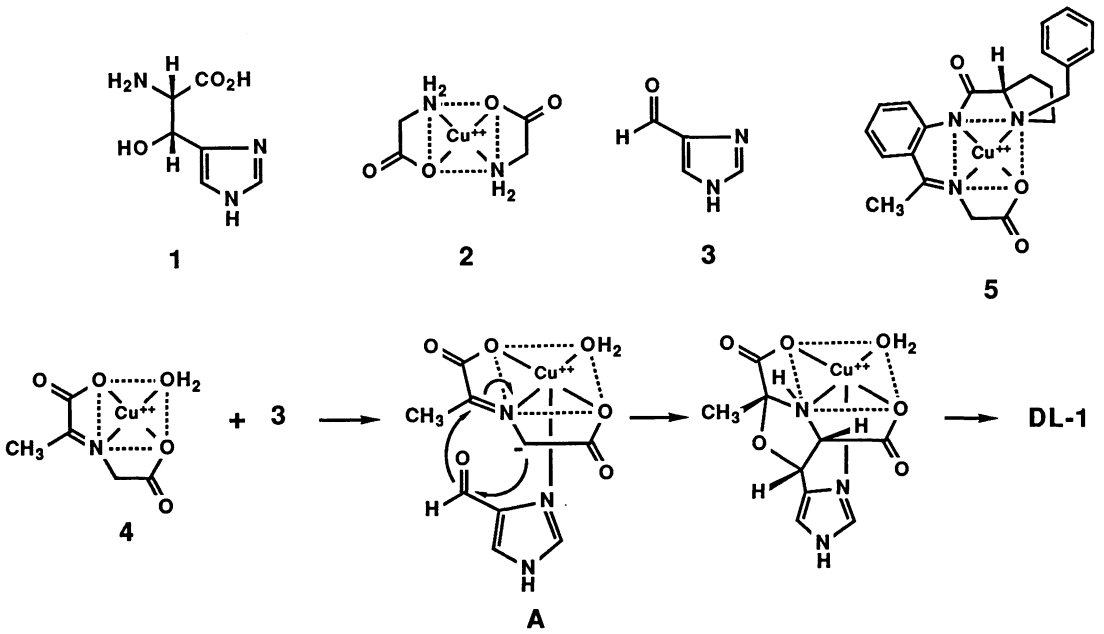


Fig. 1.

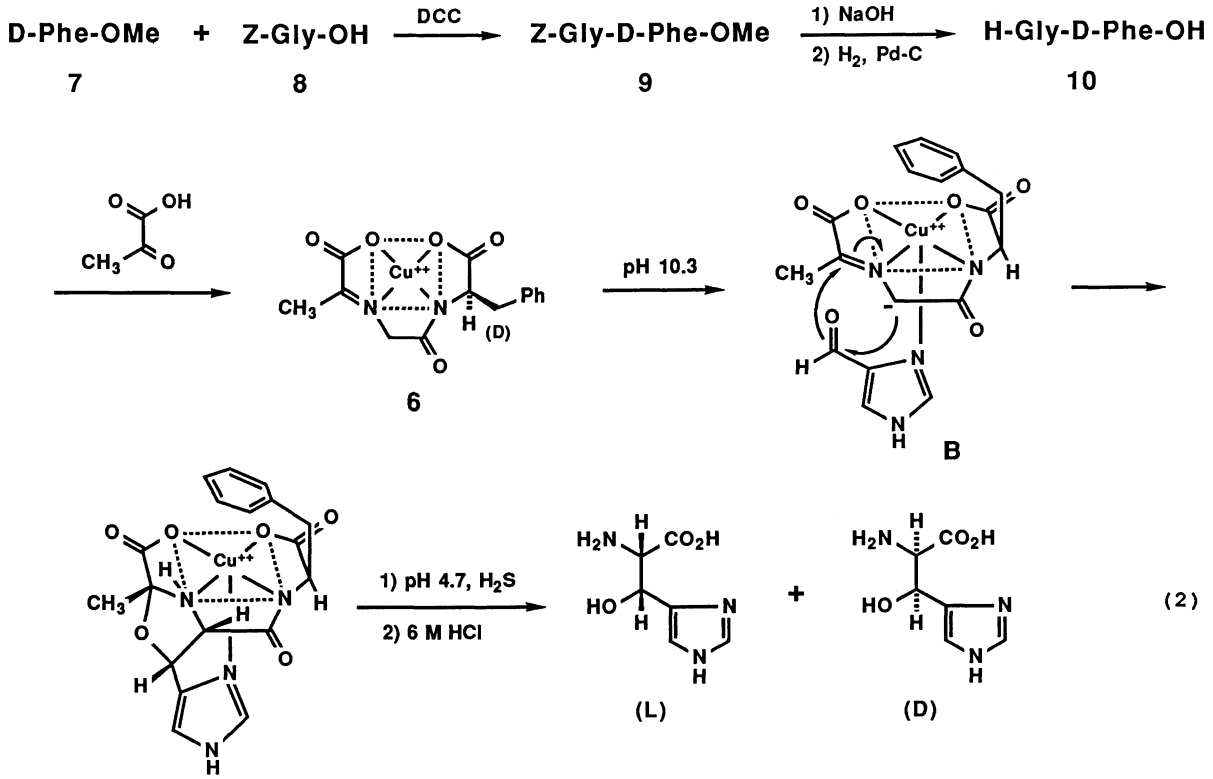
The first synthesis of erythro-β-hydroxy-L-histidine was reported by Takita et al. based on the Akabori reaction of bis(glycinato)copper(II) (**2**) and imidazole-4-carbaldehyde (**3**) to afford a mixture of four racemic threo and erythro isomers which had to be separated from each other.[7)] Yoshioka et al. improved this process by employing the Ishido's method[8)] using N-pyruvylidene-



glycinatocopper(II) (**4**), furnishing a racemic mixture of erythro-β-hydroxyhistidine, from which the desired L-erythro isomer was separated by a co-crystallization with D-tartaric acid.[9] The erythro selectivity of this process was accounted for by co-ordination of the imidazole to the metal (**A**, Eq. 1). It was considered that the L-erythro isomer **1** could be selectively available by shielding the front side of the co-ordination plane of **A** to avoid the undesired co-ordination of the imidazole. Although a complex containing N-benzylproline as a chiral auxiliary **5** has been reported for the enantioselective synthesis of threonine,[10] β-hydroxyhistidine could not be obtained by the reaction of **5** with aldehyde **3**. After extensive experimentations, we found that base-catalyzed reaction of (N-pyruvylideneglycyl-D-phenylalaninato)copper(II) **6** with aldehyde **3** afforded **1** stereoselectively.

Thus, D-phenylalanine methyl ester **7**[11] was coupled with N-benzyloxycarbonylglycine **8**[12] (DCC, THF-$CHCl_3$, -10 °C, overnight) to give the protected dipeptide **9** in 89% yield.[13] The protective groups in **9** were removed by ester hydrolysis (1 M NaOH, MeOH) followed by the hydrogenation (H_2, Pd-C, MeOH-AcOH-H_2O) to give glycyl-D-phenylalanine **10** in 89% yield; mp 262-265 °C (lit. 263-265 °C)[14a]; $[\alpha]_D^{23}$ -40.4° (c 2.5, water) (lit. $[\alpha]_D$ -41.0° (c 2.5, water)).[14a, 14b]

The copper complex **6** was prepared as follows. Pyruvic acid (1.15 ml, 16.0 mmol) was added to a suspension of the dipeptide **10** (3.55 g, 16.0 mmol) in water-EtOH (5-8 ml). The mixture was stirred at 40 °C for 30 min to give a yellow homogeneous solution of Schiff base, then $Cu(OAc)_2 \cdot H_2O$ (3.19 g, 16.0 mmol) was added. The resulting dark blue solution was stirred at 40 °C for 2 h and then at room temperature overnight. The precipitate of copper complex **6** was collected, washed successively with water, EtOH, and Et_2O, and then dried in vacuo. To a suspension of the copper complex **6** in water (16 ml) was added aldehyde **3**[15] (1.54 g, 16.0 mmol). After being stirred at room temperature for 2 h the pH of the solution was adjusted to 10.3-10.7 by adding anhydrous Na_2CO_3 and



the solution was stirred for further 5-7 h. Then, the solution was acidified to pH 4.3 with 1 M HCl and treated with H_2S gas. The precipitate of CuS formed was removed by filtration and the filtrate was concentrated in vacuo. The residue was dissolved in 6 M HCl (40 ml). The resulting solution was heated at 100-110 °C for 12-18 h to facilitate hydrolysis of the peptide bond, and was concentrated to dryness in vacuo. The residue containing glycine, D-phenylalanine, erythro-β-hydroxyhistidine, and unreacted **3** was separated by microcrystalline cellulose column chromatograohy (eluted with MeOH : H_2O : Pyridine = 8 : 2 : 0.4). Pauly- and ninhydrin-positive fractions were collected, treated with activated charcoal, and crystallized from EtOH to give erythro-β-hydroxyhistidine (1.35 g, 49.2%). The erythro-β-hydroxyhistidine was proved to be a mixture of L-form and D-form in a ratio of 3 : 1 by HPLC (DAICEL, CHIRALPAK WH; column 4.6 mm x 250 mm; solvent 0.5 mM $CuSO_4$; flow rate 1.0 ml / minute; temperature 25 °C), showing two peaks for L-erythro isomer **1** (retention time, 46 minutes) and D-erythro isomer **11** (retention time, 17 min). Although the enantioselectivity is not enough (50% ee), co-crystallization of this material with D-tartaric acid was carried out much smoothly to afford optically pure erythro-β-hydroxy-L-histidine; dp 203-204 °C (lit. 205 °C);[7] $[\alpha]_D^{25}$ +39.5° (c 1.0, water))(lit. $[\alpha]_D^{25}$ +40.0° (c 1.0, water))[7] The enantioselectivity of the reaction can be explained by considering that the desired conformationally restricted form **B** seems indeed preferred, but not exclusive. However, the present approach allowed us to synthesize 1-10 g of **1** enantioselectively for the first time and further study is now under progress to improve the enantioselectivity.

This study was finantially supported in part by Grants-in-Aid (No. 62114006)

for Special Project Research from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture, Japan, and Uehara Memorial Foundation.

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(Received October 22, 1987)