

Biotransformation of Jervine by *Cunninghamella echinulata*

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Biotransformation of jervine (**1**) by *Cunninghamella echinulata* (ACCC 30369) was carried out. Four biotransformation products were obtained, and three of them, **3–5**, were identified as new compounds. On the basis of their NMR and mass-spectral data, their structures were characterized as jervinone (**2**), 7 α -hydroxyjervine (**3**), 14 α -hydroxyjervine (**4**), and 1 β ,7 α -dihydroxyjervine (**5**). The X-ray diffraction structure of **1** is also reported for the first time.

Introduction. – Microbial transformation is an effective method for the structural modification of bioactive natural compounds. Its application in asymmetric synthesis is increasing due to its versatility and ease [1]. A variety of transformations on natural products such as oxidation, reduction, hydrolysis, isomerization, epimerization, rearrangement, *D*-homoannulation, *Michael* addition, and reverse aldol reaction have been already performed [2]. *Cunninghamella echinulata*, a filamentous fungus, is recognized for its potential for steroid hydroxylation and has been noted for its ability to mimic mammalian hepatic metabolism with other substrates [3][4].

Veratrum alkaloids are a group of potent hypotensive agents that act by reflex suppression of the cardiovascular system [5][6]. Jervine (**1**) is one of the most important steroidal alkaloid derived from the *Veratrum* genus. Similar to cyclopamine, which also occurs in the *Veratrum* genus, it is a teratogen implicated in birth defects when consumed by animals during a certain period of their gestation [7–10]. Biotransformations of *Veratrum* alkaloids, such as rubijervine, jervine, and veratramine with various microorganisms have been reported previously [11–13].

In continuation of our studies on the phytochemistry of *Veratrum* alkaloids [14][15] and biotransformation studies on the *Veratrum* alkaloids [16], we now report the characterization of four metabolites of jervine (**1**) in cell suspension of *C. echinulata* (ACCC 30369). These metabolites were identified as jervinone (**2**), 7 α -hydroxyjervine (**3**), 14 α -hydroxyjervine (**4**) and 1 β ,7 α -dihydroxyjervine (**5**) by spectroscopic methods (Fig. 1). We also report here the X-ray diffraction structure of jervine (**1**) for the first time.

Results and Discussion. – Compound **3** was obtained as a white amorphous powder, showing a positive reaction with *Dragendorff's* reagent. The HR-ESI-MS (positive-ion

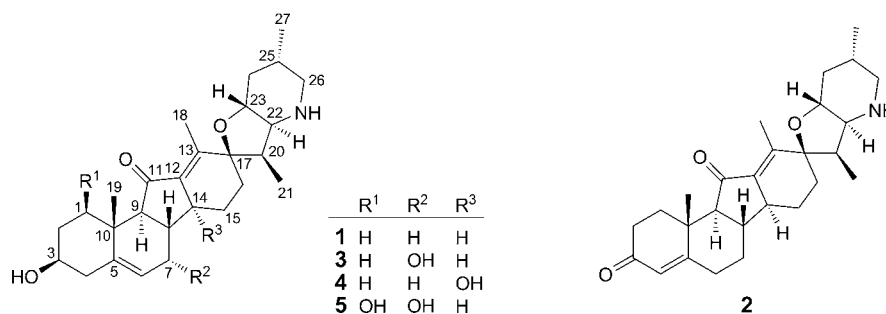


Fig. 1. Structures of compounds 1–5

mode) provided the molecular formula $C_{27}H_{39}NO_4$ m/z 442.2952 ($[M+H]^+$). The IR spectrum exhibited absorptions for an OH group (3370 and 1070 cm^{-1}). The ^{13}C -NMR spectrum (Table 1) of **3** showed signals due to four Me, seven CH_2 , ten CH groups, and six quaternary C-atoms, including one C=C bond ($\delta(\text{C})$ 142.3 (C(5)), 123.4 (C(6))), and three O-bearing sp^3 -C-atoms. The ^1H -NMR spectrum (Table 2) displayed resonances for four Me groups ($\delta(\text{H})$ 0.85 (*d*, $J = 6.6$, Me(27)), 0.89 (*s*, Me(19)), 0.90 (*d*, $J = 7.1$, Me(21)), 2.01 (*s*, Me(18)), and the ^{13}C -NMR exhibited the signals of two C-atoms attached to an N-atom at $\delta(\text{C})$ 65.4 (C(22)) and 56.7 (C(26)), which are characteristic for a jervine-type steroid alkaloid. The OH is located at C(7) due to the HMBCs between the H-atom resonating at $\delta(\text{H})$ 4.61–4.67 (*m*, H–C(7)) and C(8) ($\delta(\text{C})$ 37.0). Furthermore, the relative configuration of 7-OH was deduced as α by NOESY correlation between H–C(7) and the H-atom resonating at $\delta(\text{H})$ 2.30–2.36 (*m*, H_β –C(8)). Therefore, the structure of **3** was elucidated as 7 α -hydroxyjervine.

Table 1. ^{13}C -NMR Data of **3**–**5**. At 125 MHz in CD_3OD ; δ in ppm. Atom numbering as indicated in Fig. 1.

| C-Atom | 3 | 4 | 5 | C-Atom | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------|----------|----------|----------|--------|----------|----------|----------|
| C(1) | 38.2 | 38.1 | 74.3 | C(15) | 24.3 | 24.1 | 24.0 |
| C(2) | 29.6 | 29.5 | 29.5 | C(16) | 28.4 | 28.7 | 28.8 |
| C(3) | 67.9 | 68.1 | 67.2 | C(17) | 84.3 | 84.3 | 84.7 |
| C(4) | 31.1 | 30.8 | 31.3 | C(18) | 11.6 | 11.6 | 11.7 |
| C(5) | 142.3 | 141.9 | 143.2 | C(19) | 18.1 | 18.5 | 18.0 |
| C(6) | 123.4 | 122.3 | 124.5 | C(20) | 39.8 | 39.8 | 39.6 |
| C(7) | 68.8 | 32.6 | 69.5 | C(21) | 10.6 | 10.7 | 10.7 |
| C(8) | 37.0 | 36.8 | 38.2 | C(22) | 65.4 | 65.8 | 65.9 |
| C(9) | 61.6 | 61.9 | 61.7 | C(23) | 76.0 | 75.2 | 75.4 |
| C(10) | 34.8 | 34.9 | 34.8 | C(24) | 38.2 | 38.5 | 38.5 |
| C(11) | 206.3 | 206.9 | 206.6 | C(25) | 31.3 | 31.3 | 31.5 |
| C(12) | 138.5 | 138.4 | 138.4 | C(26) | 56.7 | 56.6 | 56.8 |
| C(13) | 147.1 | 146.5 | 146.7 | C(27) | 18.7 | 18.9 | 19.1 |
| C(14) | 46.3 | 77.8 | 45.5 | | | | |

Compound **4** was obtained as a white amorphous powder, showing a positive reaction with *Dragendorff's* reagent. The HR-ESI-MS (positive-ion mode) gave the

molecular formula $C_{27}H_{39}NO_4$ m/z 442.2956 ($[M + H]^+$). The IR spectrum exhibited absorptions for OH groups (3361 and 1073 cm^{-1}). The ^{13}C -NMR data of **4** were similar to those of jervine (**1**) except for the presence of a OH group. Therefore, **4** was determined as an oxidized analog of **1**. The OH was localized at C(14) due to the HMBCs between H-atom resonating at $\delta(H)$ 1.72–1.77 (m , 1 H, $CH_2(15)$) and C(14) ($\delta(C)$ 77.8). Comparing the spectra of **4** with those of compound **1**, the chemical shifts of C(8), C(12), C(13), and C(15) were similar to those found in compounds **1**, **3**, and **5**, indicating the relative α -configuration for 14-OH. Thus, the structure of **4** was identified as 14 α -hydroxyjervine.

Compound **5** was obtained as a white amorphous powder, showing a positive reaction with *Dragendorff's* reagent. The HR-ESI-MS (positive-ion mode) led to the molecular formula $C_{27}H_{39}NO_5$ (m/z 458.2906, $[M + H]^+$). The IR spectrum exhibited absorptions for OH groups (3361 and 1068 cm^{-1}) and C=C bonds (1624 cm^{-1}). The ^{13}C - (Table 1) and 1H -NMR (Table 2), and ESI mass spectra suggested it to be a dihydroxylated jervine derivative. Three OH groups are localized at C(1) ($\delta(C)$ 74.3), C(3) (67.2), and C(7) (69.5), respectively, due to the HMBC correlations between the H-atom resonating at $\delta(H)$ 3.85–3.89 (m , H–C(1)) and C(2) ($\delta(C)$ 29.5), the H-atom resonating at $\delta(H)$ 3.86–3.92 (m , H–C(3)) and C(2) ($\delta(C)$ 29.5), C(4) (31.3), and the H-atom resonating at $\delta(H)$ 4.59–4.66 (m , H–C(7)) and C(6) ($\delta(C)$ 124.5), C(8) (38.2). The stereochemical relationship among the functional groups, *i.e.*, 3-OH, Me(19), Me(21), and Me(27), was established to be identical to that of the

Table 2. 1H -NMR Data of **3**–**5**. At 500 MHz in CD_3OD ; δ in ppm, J in Hz. Atom numbering as indicated in Fig. 1.

| H-Atom | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|------------|--|--|--|
| $CH_2(1)$ | 2.51–2.53 (m), 2.12–2.17 (m) | 2.47–2.52 (m), 2.10–2.13 (m) | 3.85–3.89 (m) |
| $CH_2(2)$ | 1.80–1.85 (m), 1.70–1.74 (m) | 1.80–1.84 (m), 1.70–1.75 (m) | 2.29–2.34 (m), 1.92–1.96 (m) |
| H–C(3) | 4.12–4.21 (<i>br. s</i>) | 4.11–4.26 (m) | 3.86–3.92 (m) |
| $CH_2(4)$ | 2.41–2.47 (m), 1.52–1.61 (m) | 2.38–2.45 (m), 1.51–1.55 (m) | 2.57–2.63 (m), 2.39–2.44 (m) |
| H–C(6) | 5.35 (d , $J = 5.1$) | 5.35 (d , $J = 5.1$) | 5.62 (d , $J = 5.1$) |
| H–C(7) | 4.61–4.67 (m) | 2.21–2.27 (m), 2.05–2.09 (m) | 4.59–4.66 (m) |
| H–C(8) | 2.30–2.36 (m) | 1.63–1.67 (m) | 2.35–2.39 (m) |
| H–C(9) | 1.90–1.97 (m) | 1.81–1.85 (m) | 2.04–2.07 (m) |
| H–C(14) | 1.96–2.01 (m) | – | 2.09–2.13 (m) |
| $CH_2(15)$ | 1.92–1.97 (m), 1.31–1.33 (m) | 2.21–2.24 (m), 1.72–1.77 (m) | 1.99–2.04 (m), 1.39–1.42 (m) |
| $CH_2(16)$ | 2.33–2.36 (m), 1.38–1.41 (m) | 2.07–2.11 (m), 1.68–1.71 (m) | 2.33–2.36 (m), 1.32–1.36 (m) |
| Me(18) | 2.01 (s) | 2.04 (s) | 2.01 (s) |
| Me(19) | 0.89 (s) | 0.85 (s) | 0.91 (s) |
| H–C(20) | 2.53–2.57 (m) | 2.57–2.62 (m) | 2.55–2.61 (m) |
| Me(21) | 0.90 (d , $J = 7.1$) | 0.91 (d , $J = 7.0$) | 0.91 (d , $J = 7.0$) |
| H–C(22) | 2.68–2.71 (m) | 2.64–2.69 (m) | 2.67–2.70 (m) |
| $CH_2(23)$ | 3.43–3.50 (m) | 3.66–3.69 (m) | 3.62–3.66 (m) |
| $CH_2(24)$ | 2.26–2.30 (m), 1.17–1.22 (m) | 2.23–2.26 (m), 1.13–1.16 (m) | 2.24–2.27 (m), 1.09–1.13 (m) |
| H–C(25) | 1.48–1.53 (m) | 1.49–1.52 (m) | 1.47–1.52 (m) |
| $CH_2(26)$ | 3.14–3.18 (dd , $J = 12.0, 3.5$), 2.34–2.38 (m) | 3.07–3.11 (dd , $J = 11.0, 3.5$), 2.28–2.31 (m) | 3.19–3.25 (dd , $J = 12.0, 6.0$), 2.29–2.34 (m) |
| Me(27) | 0.85 (d , $J = 6.6$) | 0.87 (d , $J = 6.6$) | 0.86 (d , $J = 6.0$) |

starting material **1** by NOESY analysis, and also by comparison of chemical shifts and coupling constants of **5** with those of **1**. The relative configuration of 1-OH and 7-OH was deduced as β/α , respectively, by the NOESY correlations between H–C(1) resonating at $\delta(\text{H})$ 2.04–2.07 (*m*, H $_{\alpha}$ –C(9)) and H–C(7) resonating at 2.35–2.39 (*m*, H $_{\beta}$ –C(8)) (Fig. 2). Therefore, the structure of **5** was identified as 1 β ,7 α -dihydroxyjervine.

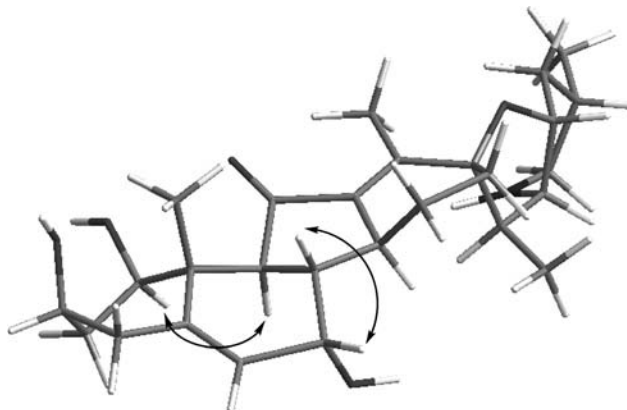


Fig. 2. Key NOESY correlations of **5**

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Experimental Part

General. Column chromatography (CC): *MCI* gel *CHP20P* (high-porous polymer 75–150 μm ; *Mitsubishi Chemicals*, Japan), reversed-phase (RP) silica gel *RP-18* (40–63 μm ; *Merck*, Germany), silica gel (SiO_2 ; 200–300 mesh; *Yantai*, P. R. China), and *Sephadex LH-20* (*Pharmacia Co., Ltd.*). TLC: SiO_2 plates; visualization by spraying with 10% H_2SO_4 in EtOH, followed by heating. Optical rotation: *Perkin-Elmer 341* polarimeter. IR Spectra: *Nicolet-Compact-40-Bruker-Vector-22* spectrophotometer; $\tilde{\nu}$ in cm^{-1} . NMR Spectra: *Bruker AVANCE^{II}-500* NMR, for ^1H at 500 and ^{13}C at 125 MHz; δ in ppm rel. to Me_4Si as internal standard, *J* in Hz. MS: *Varian MAT-212* mass spectrometer (for ESI) and *Q-Tof* micro mass spectrometer (for HR-ESI); in *m/z*.

Plant Material. The plants were collected in Yanbian, Jilin Province, P. R. China, in September 2005, and authenticated as *V. dahuricum* by Prof. Yong-Zhen Liu, School of Pharmacy, Yanbian University, China. A voucher specimen (No. 211) was deposited with the Herbarium of the School of Pharmacy, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai, China.

Organisms. The stock culture of *C. echinulata* (ATCC 30369) was maintained on a potato dextrose agar slant. Four 1000-ml *Erlenmeyer* flasks, each containing 300 ml of liquid medium consisting of 0.1% peptone, 0.1% yeast extract, 0.1% beef extract, and 0.5% glucose were inoculated with freshly obtained *C. echinulata* cultured from the agar slant on a rotary shaker at 180 rpm. After cultivation at 28° for 72 h,

the *jervine* (**1**) soln. (50 mg of **1** dissolved in 250 μ l of EtOH) was added to each flask, and the incubation was continued for 12 d.

Microbial Metabolism of Jervine (1). After 12 d of incubation, the incubation mixtures were pooled and filtered. The filtrate was passed through a *MCI-gel CHP20P* column, and washed with H₂O to remove sugars; then, successive extraction with 20% aq. MeOH, 60% aq. MeOH, and MeOH gave the *Fractions A, B, and C*, resp. Each fraction was evaporated to dryness *in vacuo* and analyzed by TLC (CHCl₃/MeOH/H₂O 65:35:10; visualization by spraying with 10% H₂SO₄ soln.). *Fr. C* was chromatographed repeatedly through a column on SiO₂ (CHCl₃/MeOH 10:1) to afford **2** (8.8 mg). *Fr. B* was subjected repeatedly to CC (SiO₂; CHCl₃/MeOH 5:1; *Sephadex LH-20*; 70% MeOH) to furnish **3** (4.6 mg) and **4** (6.1 mg). *Fr. A* was dissolved in 10% aq. MeOH and subjected to CC (RP SiO₂ (*ODS*); H₂O/MeOH 100:10 \rightarrow 0:100) to give **5** (3.6 mg).

Jervine (1). Colorless prisms. C₂₇H₃₉NO₃. ESI-MS: 426 ([*M* + H]⁺). [α]_D²³ = –58.2 (*c* = 3.08, MeOH). *Jervine (1)* was isolated from the roots of *Veratrum dahuricum* with purity of 99.0% by HPLC analysis in our laboratory. The chemical structure was identified by detailed NMR analysis and comparing its data with those in the literature [17]. An X-ray diffraction analysis of (–)-varatrobazine (= *jervine-11 β -ol*) has been reported previously [18]. We performed the X-ray-analysis of **1** (*Fig. 3*) to establish the absolute configuration of (–)-*jervine*.

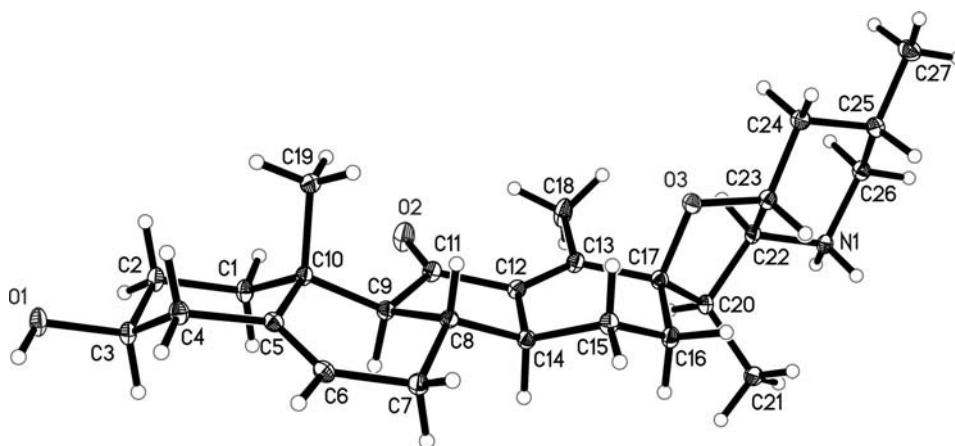


Fig. 3. X-Ray crystal structure of **1**

7 α -Hydroxyjervine (= (3 β ,7 α ,22S,23R)-3,7-Dihydroxy-17,23-epoxyveratraman-11-one = (3S,3'R,3a'S,6S,6'S,6aS,6bS,7a'R,9R,11aS,11bR)-2,3,3'a,4,4',5',6,6',6a,6b,7,7',7'a,8,11a,11b-Hexadecahydro-3,6-dihydroxy-3',6',10,11b-tetramethylspiro[9H-benzofluorene-9,2'(3'H)-furo[3,2-b]pyridin]-11(1H)-one; **3**). White amorphous powder. [α]_D²³ = –113.4 (*c* = 0.81, MeOH). IR (KBr): 3370, 2951, 2177, 1623, 1070. ¹H- and ¹³C-NMR: *Tables 2 and 1*, resp. 2D-NMR (HMBC; 500 MHz, CD₃OD): H–C(3)/C(4), H–C(7)/C(5), H–C(7)/C(8), H–C(15)/C(14). ESI-MS: 442 ([*M* + H]⁺). HR-ESI-MS: 442.2952 ([*M* + H]⁺, C₂₇H₄₀NO₄⁺; calc. 442.2957).

14 α -Hydroxyjervine (= (3 β ,22S,23R)-3,14-Dihydroxy-17,23-epoxyveratraman-11-one = (3S,3'R,3a'S,6'S,6aR,6bR,7a'R,9R,11aS,11bR)-2,3,3'a,4,4',5',6,6',6a,6b,7,7',7'a,8,11a,11b-Hexadecahydro-3,6b-dihydroxy-3',6',10,11b-tetramethylspiro[9H-benzofluorene-9,2'(3'H)-furo[3,2-b]pyridin]-11(1H)-one; **4**). White amorphous powder. [α]_D²³ = –54.6 (*c* = 0.76, MeOH). IR (KBr): 3361, 2947, 2170, 1617, 1073. ¹H- and ¹³C-NMR: *Tables 2 and 1*, resp. 2D-NMR (HMBC; 500 MHz, CD₃OD): H–C(3)/C(4), H–C(7)/C(8), H–C(15)/C(14). ESI-MS: 442 ([*M* + H]⁺). HR-ESI-MS: 442.2956 ([*M* + H]⁺, C₂₇H₄₀NO₄⁺; calc. 442.2957).

1 β ,7 α -Dihydroxyjervine (= (1 β ,3 β ,7 α ,22S,23R)-1,3,7-Trihydroxy-17,23-epoxyveratraman-11-one = (1R,3R,3'R,3a'S,6S,6'S,6aS,6bS,7a'R,9R,11aS,11bR)-2,3,3'a,4,4',5',6,6',6a,6b,7,7',7'a,8,11a,11b-Hexadeca-

hydro-1,3,6-trihydroxy-3',6',10,11b-tetramethylspiro[9H-benzofa]fluorene-9,2'(3'H)-furo[3,2-b]pyridin]-11(IH)-one; 5. White amorphous powder. $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{23} = -8.9$ ($c = 0.60$, MeOH). IR (KBr): 3361, 2937, 2155, 1624, 1068. ^1H - and ^{13}C -NMR: Tables 2 and 1, resp. 2D-NMR (HMBC; 500 MHz, CD_3OD): H–C(1)/C(2), H–C(3)/C(4), H–C(7)/C(5), H–C(7)/C(8). ESI-MS: 458 ($[M + \text{H}]^+$). HR-ESI-TOF-MS: 458.3304 ($[M + \text{H}]^+$, $\text{C}_{27}\text{H}_{40}\text{NO}_5$; calc. 458.2906).

*X-Ray Diffraction Structure Analysis of Jervine*¹⁾. Single crystal for analysis was obtained from $\text{CHCl}_3/\text{MeOH}/\text{H}_2\text{O}$. Data collection was performed with a *Bruker APEX2 CCD* and graphite monochromated CuK_α radiation ($\lambda = 1.54178 \text{ \AA}$) at 133(2) K. Crystallographic data: $\text{C}_{27}\text{H}_{39}\text{NO}_3 \cdot \text{CH}_3\text{Cl} \cdot 2 \text{ H}_2\text{O}$; M_r 512.11; crystal size $0.25 \times 0.20 \times 0.18 \text{ mm}$, orthorhombic, space group $P2_12_12_1$; $a = 7.4412(10) \text{ \AA}$, $b = 9.9446(10) \text{ \AA}$, $c = 36.9172(3) \text{ \AA}$, $\alpha = \beta = \gamma = 90^\circ$; $V = 2731.86(5) \text{ \AA}^3$; $Z = 4$; $D_x = 1.245 \text{ g cm}^{-3}$; $F_{000} = 1112$; $\mu(\text{CuK}_\alpha) 1.535 \text{ mm}^{-1}$. Cell refinement and data reduction: *Bruker SAINT*. Program used to solve and refine structure: *SHELXS-97* and *SHELXL-97*, resp.; refinement on F^2 with full-matrix least-squares calculations. All non-H-atoms were filtered with anisotropic parameters, and all H-atoms were positioned by geometrical calculation and refined by ride-on method with relative isotropic parameters. Absorption correction was applied with semi-empirical from equivalents (maxmin transmission, 0.7679/0.7003). 12357 Reflections (4615 unique, $R_{\text{int}} = 0.0218$) were measured in the θ range of $2.39 - 66.56^\circ$; limiting indices, $8 \geq h \geq -8$, $11 \geq k \geq -11$, $41 \geq l \geq -43$. The final phase converged to $R_1 = 0.0289$ ($wR_2 = 0.0787$) for 4615 observed reflections ($I > 2\sigma(I)$) and 331 refined parameters, $R_1 = 0.0294$ ($wR_2 = 0.0790$) for all unique reflections; goodness-of-fit on F^2 , 1.046.

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¹⁾ CCDC-889549 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for this article. These data can be obtained free of charge via http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif.