

RAUCUBAINE, A NEW TYPE OF INDOLE ALKALOID FROM RAUWOLFIA SALICIFOLIA GRISEB.

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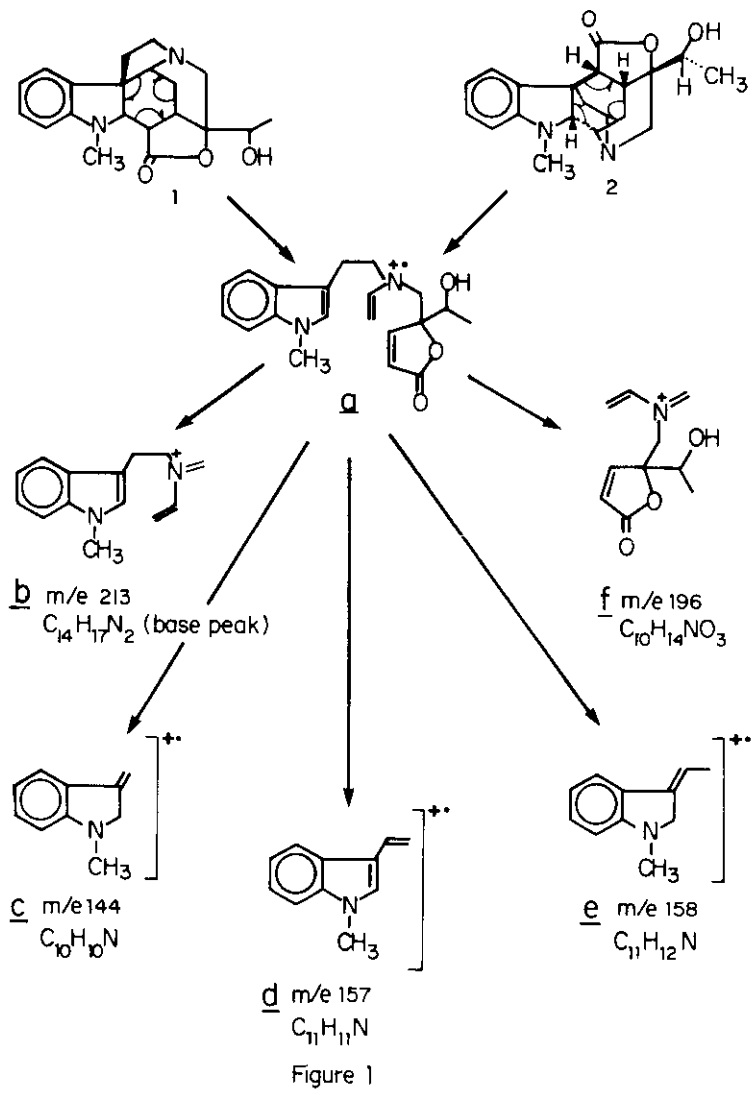
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Abstract - Raucubaine ($C_{20}H_{24}N_2O_3$), a new indole alkaloid with a novel carbon skeleton was isolated from the leaves of Rauwolfia salicifolia griseb.

The structure was determined by X-ray diffraction analysis.

Rauwolfia salicifolia griseb., a species endemic to Cuba, was collected in Baracoa, a zone in Guantánamo province. The leaves of the plant yielded a new alkaloid raucubaine, $C_{20}H_{24}N_2O_3$. Raucubaine, crystallised from methanol, had mp. $224^\circ C$, $[\alpha]_D^{20} - 18^\circ$ ($CHCl_3$), and gave a UV spectrum characteristic of the dihydroindole chromophore with maxima at 209, 249 and 290 nm. $\Delta\epsilon$ values measured from the CD spectrum were -10.12 (204 nm), $+15.83$ (246) and -1.45 (295). The IR spectrum showed absorbances at 3450 (OH), 2975 (NCH_3) and 1768 (γ -lactone) cm^{-1} . The 1H -nmr spectrum showed prominent absorbances for: four aromatic protons (δ 6.4 - 7.4), an N-methyl group (δ 2.72), a methyl group (δ 1.29, d, $J = 7$ Hz) and a methine signal at δ 3.65 (q, $J = 7$ Hz). The alkaloid was further characterised by its mass spectrum with significant ions at m/e 340 (M^+), 213, 196, 158, 157 and 144. These fragments, viz. a - f (Figure 1) are characteristic of the pattern derived from members of the Strychnos family¹ (eg. akuammicine) and on this basis raucubaine was originally assigned the structure 1, consistent with the above-mentioned spectral data. Meanwhile the compound was subjected to X-ray diffraction analysis. The crystals of the alkaloid were monoclinic, $P2_1$, $a = 7.2179$ (3), $b = 12.8169$ (7), $c = 9.1996$ (2) \AA , $\beta = 93.040$ (3), $Z = 2$. X-ray intensity data was collected on an automatic Enraf-Nonius CAD-4 diffractometer with an $\omega - 2\theta$ scan. 1700 of the 1822 reflections (93.3%) measured in the range $2^\circ < \theta < 75^\circ$ had $I / \sigma(I) > 3$ and were considered observed and included in the refinement. The structure was solved by direct methods²; the E-map revealed the position of all non-hydrogen atoms. After four full-matrix least squares refinement cycles all hydrogen atoms were located on a difference map.



An isotropic extinction correction was applied and the structure refined with a polynomial weighting scheme to a final R of 0.046. Figure 2 shows a view of the molecule. The molecules were connected by O-H ... N hydrogen bonds.

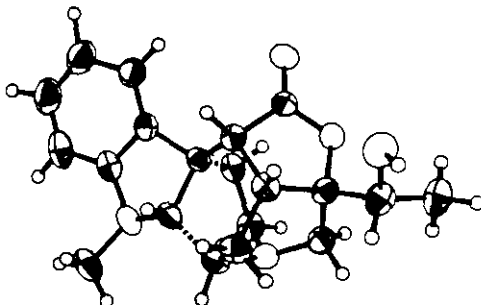


Figure 2

The structure λ , determined for raucubaine by X-ray analysis, can be seen consistent with the mass spectral data when ring C is cleaved, as shown, to give the primary fragment a (Figure 1). The interesting biosynthetic aspects of a structure such as λ will be discussed at a later date, together with the structures of several other compounds closely related to raucubaine.

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