

Trans-Disubstituted Tetraarylporphyrin as a Precursor to Larger Molecular Architectures: An Application of MacDonald “2 + 2” Porphyrin Synthesis in Aqueous Anionic Surfactant

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Introduction

Tetraarylporphyrins have been employed as building blocks for making various assemblies that are of interest to materials scientists and bioinorganic chemists. These assemblies include multiporphyrin arrays¹ and porphyrins with appended axial ligands or steric constraints for controlling the axial ligation.² Although most of the *meso*-substituted porphyrins used for these purposes have four identical aryl substituents, less symmetric porphyrins are expected to make more varied structures possible. Specifically, *trans-meso-A₂B₂* porphyrins may be employed to make assemblies that are difficult to make from the conventional *meso-A₄* porphyrins. First, *trans-meso-A₂B₂* porphyrins may be used to make one-dimensional structures and therefore may be employed to make molecular wires,³ transmembrane artificial proton pumps,⁴ and nonbranching squares.⁵ Second, assemblies made from *trans-meso-A₂B₂* porphyrins offer better control of both axial ligation sites.^{6,7}

Unfortunately, the development of such porphyrin assemblies has been hampered by the difficulty of preparing isomerically pure *trans-meso-A₂B₂* porphyrins, by either chromatographic separation or rational synthesis. Traditionally, low-symmetry tetraarylporphyrins have been prepared by reaction of pyrrole with two different arenecarbaldehydes, followed by chromatographic isolation of the desired species. Porphyrins with *meso-AB₃* structure are easy to isolate using this method.^{8,9} However, *meso-A₂B₂* porphyrins are usually found to elute simultaneously as *trans*- and *cis*-isomers, thus precluding the preparation of isomerically pure *meso-A₂B₂* porphyrins. The only exceptions are porphyrins that are substituted by either aminophenyl^{10,11} or pyridyl groups.¹² If one desires a *trans-meso-A₂B₂* porphyrin that is functionalized with hydroxy groups, a rational synthesis

is required. For such a synthesis to be successful, the scrambling must be avoided because chromatographic separation cannot be relied upon to purify an isomerically impure *meso-A₂B₂* porphyrin.

For the rational synthesis of *trans-meso-A₂B₂* tetraarylporphyrins, the most obvious strategy is to react a *meso*-aryldipyrrromethane with a different arenecarbaldehyde. This strategy was first successfully explored by Lee and Lindsey.¹³ The method they developed has been widely used, but it has the disadvantage of causing considerable scrambling if one of the aryls has an electron-donating substituent.^{6,14,15} Although some other synthetic methods have been developed to minimize scrambling,^{6,16} development of other methods is warranted because of the importance of *trans-meso-A₂B₂* tetraarylporphyrins in various potential applications. In this paper we present a novel synthetic method in which the suppression of scrambling is achieved by the use of sodium dodecyl sulfate micelles. This reaction condition was first used by Bonar-Law for synthesis of *meso-A₄* tetraarylporphyrins.¹⁷ The utility of our method as a step for constructing a large porphyrin assembly is demonstrated here by the attachment of bulky hydrotris(3,5-dimethylpyrazolyl)boratoxomolybdenum(V) groups onto the periphery of two phenyls that are mutually *trans*. The porphyrin systems containing only one such bulky groups have been suggested by Enemark and co-workers^{18,19} to be potential spectroscopic mimics of sulfite oxidase. Our aim, however, is larger than just to make a protein mimic. Rather, it is to explore the feasibility of this synthetic method for the construction of larger porphyrin assemblies. We report herein the synthesis and characterization of 5,15-di-*p*-tolyl-10,20-bis[2,3-[(hydrotris(3,5-dimethylpyrazolyl)borato)oxomolybdeno]dioxo]phenylporphyrin²⁰ (**1**), with 5,15-di-*p*-tolyl-10,20-bis(2,3-dimethoxyphenyl)porphyrin (**2**) as the most important precursor.

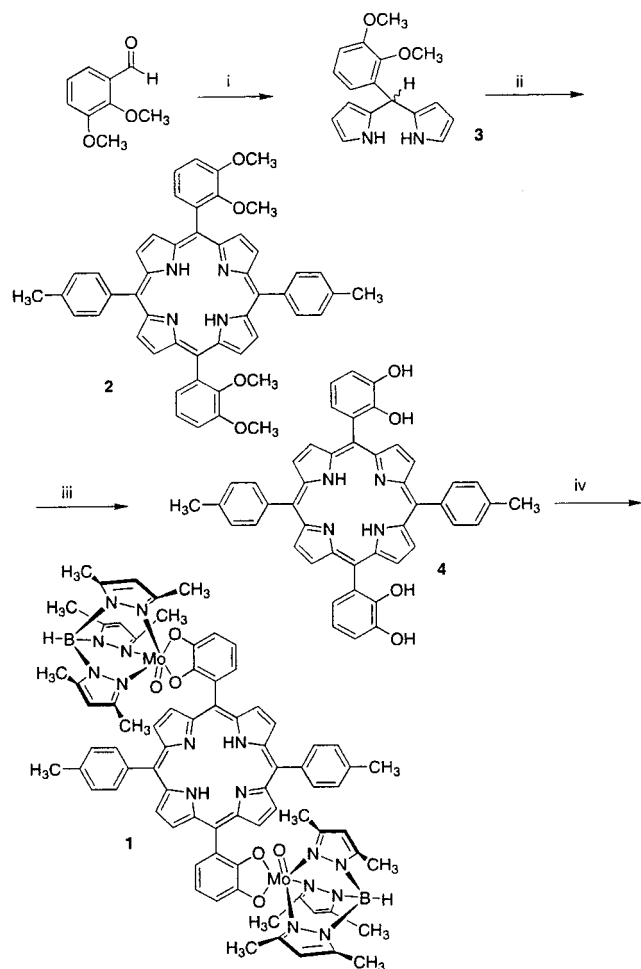
Results and Discussion

2,3-Dimethoxyphenyldipyrrromethane (**3**) was synthesized in 57% yield by following the procedure of Lee and Lindsey.¹³ Attempts to react this dipyrromethane with *p*-tolualdehyde using the condition of Lee and Lindsey¹³ resulted in extensive scrambling.¹⁴ The “2 + 2” reaction was later carried out in acidified aqueous sodium dodecyl sulfate using 1000 mg of **3**. The subsequent oxidation by tetrachloroquinone (TCQ) produced **2** in 16% yield (230 mg) with no observable scrambling. (When the reaction was scaled down to one-tenth, 25% yield was obtained. Since the quantity of surfactant was much smaller, the extraction of the product from the precipitated surfactant

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Scheme 1. Reagents, Conditions, and Percent Yields^a

^a (i) Pyrrole/CF₃COOH, room temperature, 2 h; 57%. (ii) Sodium dodecyl sulfate (0.5 M)/H₂O/HCl, room temperature, 4 h; then TCQ/THF, 12 h; 16–25%. (iii) BBr₃/CH₂Cl₂, –78 °C → room temperature, 12 h; 75%. (iv) HB(3,5-Me₂Pyz)₃OMo(OCH₂CH₂O) (5)/toluene, 60 °C, 3 days; 12%.

was easier, and this resulted in the higher yield.) The proof that the product consisted only of the *trans*-isomer instead of the *cis* or a *trans*–*cis* mixture was provided by the ¹H NMR spectrum, in which the signal from the β-pyrrole protons appeared as two clean peaks at 8.92 and 8.99 ppm that were mutually spin-coupled (*J* = 5 Hz) (Figure 1). (The *cis*-isomer would have given rise to four β-pyrrole peaks, two singlets and two mutually coupled doublets.) During the reaction, the acidity was kept relatively low (30 mM HCl was added, about one-fourth of the concentration used by Bonar-Law¹⁷) in order to minimize the scrambling.^{6,14} It is also likely that the micelles play a role in suppressing the scrambling by acting as thermodynamic traps for the porphyrinogen¹⁷ and/or separators between the acid catalyst and the lipophilic product.^{17,21,22}

The demethylation of 2 by BBr₃ produced the corresponding bis(dihydroxyphenyl)porphyrin 4 in 75% yield. Although porphyrin catechols are susceptible to oxidative degradation,²³ this problem was minimized by performing all the purification steps under strongly acidic conditions, thereby keeping the catechol

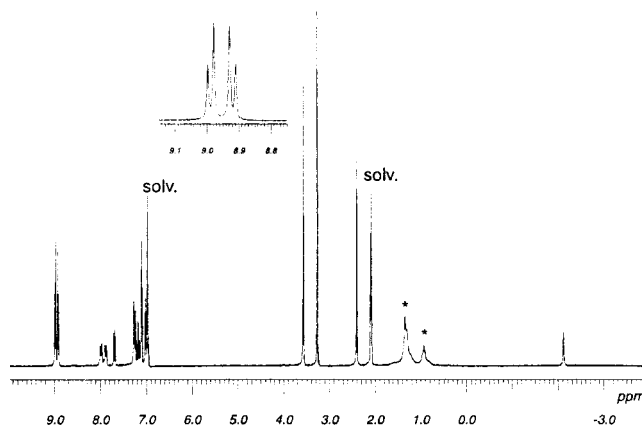


Figure 1. ¹H NMR spectra of 2 (αα atropisomer) in toluene-*d*₈. (Impurities denoted by *.) See the Experimental Section for the peak assignment. Inset: expanded plot of the β-pyrrole region. The presence of two peaks that are coupled to each other is consistent with *trans*-substitution.

side group less susceptible to oxidation to the corresponding *o*-quinone,²⁴ and also diminishing the photosensitization of oxygen by the porphyrin.²⁵ The acidic condition also kept the porphyrin catechol 4 from binding too tightly to the silica gel chromatographic matrix. Complex 1 was synthesized from the porphyrin 4 and HB(3,5-Me₂Pyz)₃OMo^V(OCH₂CH₂O)²⁶ (5) in 12% yield. Only one band was found during silica gel column chromatography. The identity of the product was confirmed by FAB-MS (positive ion detection) (Figure 2). The lack of *m/z* peaks between the matrix and the parent peak regions indicates the robustness of 1. Although the mass spectrum does not give any information on the atropisomers present, the product is expected to consist almost completely of the αβ atropisomer because of the steric interaction between the two tris(dimethylpyrazolyl)borate groups during the formation. The EPR spectrum (X-band) of 1 was taken on a glassy, frozen 1 mM solution of 1 in 1:1 DMF/CH₂Cl₂. The spectrum (*g* = 1.973, 1.968, 1.923) is similar to that of HB(Me₂Pyz)₃OMo^V(*o*-O₂C₆H₄).²⁶ It is very close to axial, because of the *fac*-arrangement of the three N and three O atoms.¹⁸

In summary, we have demonstrated the following. (1) Applying Bonar-Law's method to the "2 + 2" procedure results in an efficient and regiospecific synthesis of the *trans*-disubstituted tetraarylporphyrin 2. (2) A large porphyrin-based structure such as the bis(oxomolybdenum(V)) complex 1 may be synthesized from a *trans*-*meso*-A₂B₂ tetraarylporphyrin synthesized by our method. Future directions could include application of the present method to the synthesis of the *cis*-substituted isomer^{27–30} and usage of *trans*-bis(hydroxyphenyl)-diarylporphyrins in making other large structures of interest to bio-inspired chemistry and materials science.^{1–5}

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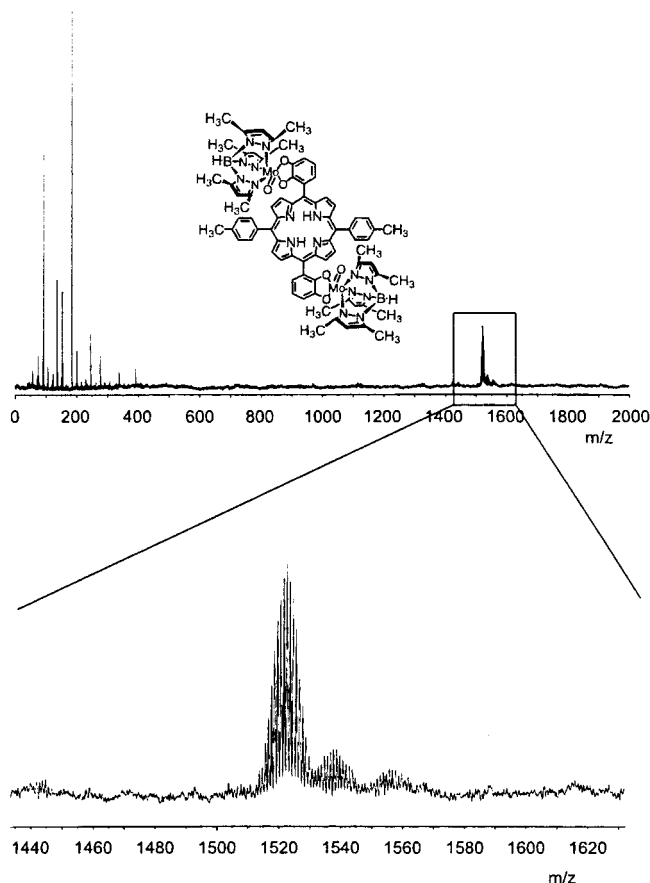


Figure 2. FAB(+)-MS of **1** (top, $m/z = 0-2000$; bottom, enlarged region of the signal from **1**, centered around $m/z = 1522$.) The peak pattern reflects the isotopic distribution of two molybdenums. The signals centered at $m/z = 1538$ and 1554 are caused by the addition of one and two oxygen atoms, respectively, to **1**. A similar peak pattern for oxygenated species ($M + 16$ and $M + 32$) is observed in the FAB(+)-MS of the Mo(V) complex **5**.

Experimental Section

Reagents, Materials, and Physical Measurements. Methylene chloride, toluene, pyrrole, and *p*-tolualdehyde were purified using standard methods.³¹ Triethylamine was passed through a silica gel column before use. HB(3,5-Me₂PyZ)₃OMo^V(OCH₂CH₂O) (**5**) was synthesized using the procedure of Cleland et al.²⁶ The other reagents were used as received. All reactions were done under a nitrogen or argon atmosphere and with magnetic stirring. Silica gel used in the preparations was J.T. Baker 60–200 mesh. TLC plates were J.T. Baker Silica Gel IB2. 1-D NMR spectra were recorded with a Bruker AM 250 MHz spectrometer. 2-D NMR spectra were recorded with a Varian Unity 300 MHz spectrometer. EPR spectra were recorded with a Bruker ESP-300E spectrometer equipped with an Oxford CF935 cryostat. Fast-atom bombardment mass spectra (FAB-MS) were recorded by the Mass Spectrometer Facility (Department of Chemistry, University of Arizona) with a JEOL HX-110A spectrometer; for the matrix, glycerol/*m*-nitrobenzyl alcohol was used.

2,3-Dimethoxyphenyldipyromethane (3). Pyrrole (50 mL, 48 g, 0.72 mol) and 2,3-dimethoxybenzaldehyde (1.706 g, 10.27 mmol) were reacted, and the product was isolated using the procedure of Lee and Lindsey.¹³ The resulting solid was recrystallized from MeOH/H₂O. Yield: 1.555 g (54%). ¹H NMR (CDCl₃): δ 8.33 (s, 2H, pyrrole NH), 6.98 (t, $J = 8$ Hz, 1H, phenyl 5-H), 6.83 (d, $J = 8$ Hz, 1H, phenyl 4-H), 6.78 (d, $J = 8$ Hz, 1H, phenyl 6-H), 6.65 (m, 2H, pyrrole(1,9)-H), 6.13 (m, 2H, pyrrole(2,8)-H), 5.92 (m, 2H, pyrrole(3,7)-H), 5.69 (s, 1H, *meso*-H), 3.86 (s, 3H, 3-OCH₃), 3.49 (s, 3H, 2-OCH₃). ¹³C NMR

(CDCl₃): δ 152.9 (phenyl 2-C), 146.1 (phenyl 3-C), 136.6 (phenyl 1-C), 132.5 (pyrrole(4,6)-C), 124.2 (phenyl 5-C), 121.5 (phenyl 6-C), 116.7 (pyrrole (1,9)-C), 111.1 (phenyl 4-C), 108.1 (pyrrole (2,8)-C), 106.7 (pyrrole (3,7)-C), 60.3 (3-OCH₃), 55.6 (2-OCH₃), 39.3 (*meso*-C). FAB(+)-MS: calcd ($M + 1$), 283.14; found, 283.14.

5,15-Di-*p*-tolyl-10,20-bis(2,3-dimethoxyphenyl)porphyrin (2). In a 200 mL Schlenk flask containing 18 g of sodium dodecyl sulfate and 100 mL of H₂O, *p*-tolualdehyde (47 μL, 0.399 mmol) was first added, and then **3** (100 mg, 0.354 mmol). After 1 h, 250 μL of 12 M HCl was added, producing a concentration of HCl of 30 mM. The reaction was monitored using two methods: UV/visible spectroscopy for monitoring the yield of the porphyrin¹⁷ and TLC for monitoring the possible rearrangement products.³² After the reaction was complete (4 h), 220 mg (0.895 mmol) of tetrachloroquinone (TCQ) was added. After the oxidation was complete (overnight), the surfactant and the porphyrin were precipitated using a mixture of 0.5 g of KOH, 1 g of pH 7 phosphate buffer powder (Na₂HPO₄ + KH₂PO₄), and 1 g of KCl in 20 mL of H₂O and 50 mL of toluene. The precipitate was extracted with toluene. The organic layer was washed with H₂O and then dried. The resulting solid was chromatographed on a silica gel column (4 × 20 cm). The αβ (CH₂Cl₂) and αα (100:1 CH₂Cl₂/EtOAc) atropisomers were recovered. The total yield of the *trans*-disubstituted porphyrins was 34 mg (25%). In another preparation, the entire reaction was scaled up so that 1002 mg (3.55 mmol) of **3** was used. The yield of the porphyrin in this preparation was 230 mg (16%). The αα atropisomer is readily soluble in CH₂Cl₂, CHCl₃, DMF, and toluene. The solubility of the αβ atropisomer is considerably lower than that of the αα atropisomer. ¹H NMR (αα in toluene-*d*₈): δ 8.99 (d, $J = 5$ Hz, 4H, β-pyrrole H), 8.92 (d, $J = 5$ Hz, 4H, β-pyrrole H), 7.98 (d, $J = 8$ Hz, 2H, MePh *o*-H), 7.88 (d, $J = 8$ Hz, 2H, MePh *o*-H), 7.69 (d, $J = 7$ Hz, 2H, (MeO)₂Ph *o*-H), 7.26 (d, $J = 8$ Hz, 4H, MePh *m*-H), 7.19 (t, $J = 8$ Hz, 2H, (MeO)₂Ph *m*-H), 3.58 (s, 6H, (MeO)₂Ph *m*-OMe), 3.27 (s, 6H, (MeO)₂Ph *o*-OMe), 2.41 (s, 6H, *p*-Me), -2.13 (s, 2H, pyrrole NH). (In the spectrum of the αβ atropisomer, only one signal from MePh *o*-H is observed at δ 7.94 (d, $J = 8$ Hz, 4H). Also, the signal from (MeO)₂Ph *o*-OMe shifts to δ 3.25.) FAB(+)-MS: calcd ($M + 1$), 763.32; found, 763.33.

5,15-Di-*p*-tolyl-10,20-bis(2,3-dihydroxyphenyl)porphyrin (4). A 100 mL Schlenk flask containing 1 mL (3 g, 10 mmol) of BBr₃ and 3 mL of CH₂Cl₂ was placed in a dry ice bath. In a 100 mL Schlenk flask, **2** (52 mg, 0.068 mmol, mixture of the two atropisomers) and freshly distilled CH₂Cl₂ (3 mL) were stirred and transferred into the BBr₃/CH₂Cl₂ mixture. The resulting solution was stirred in the dry ice bath for 2 h and then at room temperature overnight. The flask was then placed in an ice–water bath, and 20 mL of H₂O was added slowly. The mixture was washed three times with 50 mL of 0.1 M HCl. The solvent was then removed from the organic layer. The remaining green solid was chromatographed through a 4 × 30 cm column of silica gel that had been acidified with 1% v/w trifluoroacetic acid. (If the matrix is not acidified, the porphyrin adsorbs tightly and becomes difficult to elute.) The desired product was eluted with 1:1 CH₂Cl₂/EtOAc. The solvent was then removed. The protonated porphyrin was redissolved in 50 mL of CH₂Cl₂, neutralized three times with 40 mL of pH 7 buffer (0.1 M Na₂HPO₄/KH₂PO₄), and washed three times with 40 mL of H₂O. The solvent was removed, and the resulting purple amorphous solid was washed with pentane and then dried (36 mg, 75%). The product was highly soluble in acetone, soluble in MeOH, EtOAc, and DMF, and moderately soluble in CH₂Cl₂. ¹H NMR (αα–αβ mixture in acetone-*d*₆): δ 8.92 (d, $J = 5$ Hz, 4H, pyrrole β-H), 8.85 (d, $J = 5$ Hz, 4H, pyrrole β-H), 8.49 (s, 1H, (HO)₂Ph *o*-OH), 8.39 (s, 1H, (HO)₂Ph *o*-OH), 8.11 (d, $J = 8$ Hz, 4H, MePh *o*-H), 7.64 (s, 2H, (HO)₂Ph *m*-OH), 7.63 (d, $J = 8$ Hz, 4H, MePh *m*-H), 7.48 (m, 2H, (HO)₂Ph *o*-H), 7.34 (m, 2H, (HO)₂Ph *p*-H), 7.12 (m, 2H, (HO)₂Ph *m*-H), 2.69 (s, 6H, MePh *p*-CH₃), -2.75 (s, 2H, pyrrole NH). (The peaks from the hydroxide and amine protons disappear upon addition of CD₃OD.) FAB(+)-MS: calcd ($M + 1$), 707.27; found, 707.26.

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(32) When the mixture is spotted on a J.T. Baker Silica Gel IB2 plate and eluted with Et₂O, the disubstituted porphyrin appears at $R_f = 0.6$; the mono- and trisubstituted porphyrins appear close to the disubstituted porphyrin, but they do separate clearly ($\Delta R_f \approx 0.03$).

5,15-Di-*p*-tolyl-10,20-bis[2,3-[(hydrotris(3,5-dimethylpyrazolyl)-borato)oxomolybdenio]dioxy]phenylporphyrin (1). A 100 mL Schlenk flask containing 173 mg (0.245 mmol) of **4**, 493 mg (1.053 mmol) of **5**, and 50 mL of toluene was placed in an oil bath at room temperature, and the bath was slowly warmed to 63 °C. The reaction was monitored by TLC. After the reaction was complete (3 days), the reaction mixture was cooled to room temperature and dried. The resulting solid was chromatographed first on a short column (4 × 2 cm) and then a long column (4 × 20 cm) of silica gel. The impurities were eluted with toluene, and then the desired product was eluted with CH₂Cl₂. The product was recrystallized from CH₂Cl₂/MeOH. Yield: 45 mg (12%). FAB(+)-MS: calcd (M + 1, tallest peak of the isotopic mixture),

1522.44; found, 1522.44. EPR (X-band, 1:1 CH₂Cl₂/DMF, 77 K): *g* = 1.973, 1.968, 1.923.

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Supporting Information Available: Spectral data from 1- and 2-D NMR and EPR spectroscopies. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

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