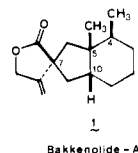
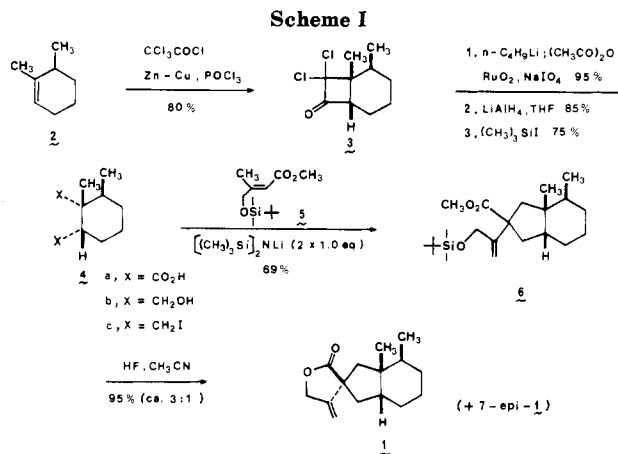


Sir: Although the bakkanolide class of sesquiterpenes dates only from the isolation and structure elucidation of bakkenolide A (fukinanolide), reported in 1968 by two different groups,³ it has grown rapidly so as now to include a number of more highly oxygenated members.⁴ These novel spiro β -methylene- γ -butyrolactones, isolated primarily from several genera of Compositae,³⁻⁵ are thought to be biogenetically related to the eremophilanes on the basis of their frequent cooccurrence in nature and the successful "biomimetic" conversion of fukinone to bakkenolide A (1).⁶

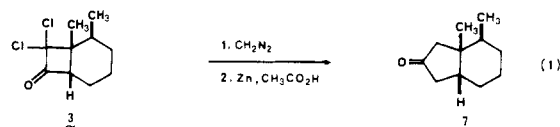


The unusual structural features of these compounds together with the confirmed level of selective cytotoxic activity of bakkenolide A (on cell lines derived from human carcinomas H.Ep.2 and HeLa vs. HeLu)⁷ have served to engender remarkably little synthetic effort to date. The first and only success at total synthesis in this class belongs to Evans, Andrews, and Sims, who accomplished in 1973 a novel 13-step synthesis of racemic 1 in ca. 1.5% yield.⁸ In this communication, we illustrate a potentially general approach to many of the bakkans and their derivatives through a very brief total synthesis of (\pm)-bakkenolide A (1). The approach features a new procedure for stereospecific olefin dicarboxylation and a novel method for β -methylene- γ -butyrolactone construction.

The starting material for the synthesis, commercially available 1,6-dimethylcyclohexene (2, Scheme I), underwent smooth cycloaddition with dichloroketene⁹ to afford



regio- and stereoselectively ($\geq 90\%$) the desired α,α -dichlorocyclobutanone 3¹⁰ in 80% yield. That the requisite relative stereochemistry had been produced could be readily established through conversion¹¹ of 3 to the previously described hydrindanone 7 (eq 1, 72%), a degra-



degradation product from both bakkenolide A and fukinone.^{3a,12} The high degree of selectivity in this cycloaddition reaction reflects the known⁹ preference for axial ketene carbonyl bond formation at the less substituted olefin carbon through a transition state involving a chair-like conformation; transition states leading to isomers of 3 are electronically, stereoelectronically, and/or sterically much less favorable than that which produces 3.

A one-pot conversion of dichlorocyclobutanone 3 to the succinic acid derivative 4a¹⁰ was accomplished in 95% yield through sequential treatment of 3 with *n*-butyllithium (\rightarrow α -chloro enolate), acetic anhydride (\rightarrow enol acetate), and ruthenium(IV) oxide-sodium periodate.¹³ Diol 4b,¹⁰ obtained from diacid 4a in 85% yield by reduction with lithium aluminum hydride, was smoothly transformed to the corresponding diiodide 4c¹⁰ through prolonged exposure to trimethylsilyl iodide in chloroform at ambient temperature (75%).¹⁴

(10) Cyclobutanone 3: bp $\sim 55^\circ\text{C}$ (0.05 torr, evaporative distillation); IR (film) 1800, 1460, 1380, 1020, 855 cm^{-1} ; $^1\text{H NMR}$ (CDCl_3) δ 1.06 (d, $J = 6.5$ Hz, 3 H), 1.40 (s, 3 H), 3.5 (m, 1 H); mass spectrum, m/e 221 (M^+). Diacid 4a: IR (film) 3200, 2650, 1705, 1290, 1250 cm^{-1} ; $^1\text{H NMR}$ (CDCl_3) δ 1.01 (d, $J = 6.8$ Hz, 3 H), 1.26 (s, 3 H), 2.85 (t, $J = 4.5$ Hz, 1 H), 10.63 (br s, 2 H). Dimethyl ester of 4a: IR (film) 1735, 1190 cm^{-1} ; $^1\text{H NMR}$ (CDCl_3) δ 0.96 (d, $J = 7$ Hz, 3 H), 1.21 (s, 3 H), 2.73 (t, $J = 5$ Hz, 1 H), 3.63 (s, 3 H), 3.64 (s, 3 H); mass spectrum, m/e 228 (M^+). Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_{20}\text{O}_4$: C, 63.13; H, 8.83. Found: C, 62.93; H, 8.68. Diol 4b: IR (film) 3280, 1460, 1040 cm^{-1} ; $^1\text{H NMR}$ (CDCl_3) δ 0.83 (d, $J = 6.3$ Hz, 3 H), 0.94 (s, 3 H), 3.20-4.15 (m, 4 H), 4.30 (br s, 2 H); $^{13}\text{C NMR}$ (CDCl_3) δ 15.78, 18.37, 21.86, 26.61, 30.30, 32.99, 39.73, 43.67, 64.13, 68.96. Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_{10}\text{H}_{20}\text{O}_2$: C, 69.72; H, 11.70. Found: C, 69.47; H, 11.89. Diiodide 4c: IR 1450, 1380, 1310, 1230, 1180, 1140, 1110, 990 cm^{-1} ; $^1\text{H NMR}$ (CDCl_3) δ 0.86 (d, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 3 H), 1.01 (s, 3 H), 2.9-3.7 (m, 4 H); $^{13}\text{C NMR}$ (CDCl_3) δ 8.60, 15.49, 19.91, 21.96, 22.76, 25.89, 30.62, 34.69, 39.69, 44.71; mass spectrum, m/e 392 (M^+). (\pm)-Bakkenolide A (1): mp 47-48 $^\circ\text{C}$; IR (Nujol) 1765, 1665, 900 cm^{-1} ; $^1\text{H NMR}$ (C_6D_6)^{3a,b} mass spectrum, m/e 234 (M^+). Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_{15}\text{H}_{22}\text{O}_2$: C, 76.88; H, 9.46. Found: C, 76.73; H, 9.46.

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A new lactone synthesis¹⁵ proved effective for the conversion of diiodide **4c** to bakkenolide A—viz., the methyl acrylate derivative **5** in DME at $-58\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ on successive treatment with 1.0 equiv of lithium bis(trimethylsilyl)amide in DME, 0.9 equiv of the diiodide in HMPA, and then once again with 1.0 equiv of the amide base furnished directly in 69% yield hydrindane **6** as a ca. 3:1 mixture (NMR) of C-7 epimers.¹⁶ Deprotection-lactonization of **6** occurred on brief contact with aqueous hydrofluoric acid in acetonitrile¹⁷ to produce in essentially quantitative yield the corresponding spiro β -methylene- γ -butyrolactones, from which pure racemic bakkenolide A (**1**),¹⁰ mp 47–48 $^{\circ}\text{C}$, was readily obtained by crystallization from cold pentane. This material was indistinguishable spectroscopically (IR, NMR, MS) and chromatographically (TLC, VPC) from an authentic sample of the natural product.

Work directed at extending this efficient approach to the synthesis of other bakkanes is planned.

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Andrew E. Greene,*^{2a} Jean-Pierre Deprés^{2a}
Fernando Coelho,^{2a} Timothy J. Brocksom^{2b}

Departments of Chemistry
Université de Grenoble (LEDSS)
38402 St. Martin d'Hères Cedex, France, and
Universidade Federal de São Carlos
13.560-São Carlos, S.P., Brazil

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Alkylation of Aromatic Compounds with Optically Active Lactic Acid Derivatives: Synthesis of Optically Pure 2-Arylpropionic Acid and Esters

Summary: The alkylation of benzene with (*S*)-methyl 2-[(chlorosulfonyl)oxy]- or 2-(mesyloxy)propionate, in the presence of aluminum chloride, affords (*S*)-methyl 2-phenylpropionate in good chemical (50–80%) and excellent optical yield ($\geq 97\%$ as determined by rotation), with inversion of configuration at the attacking carbon atom.

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Sir: Generally Friedel–Crafts alkylation proceeds with a high degree of racemization (40–100%) when an optically active alkylating reagent is used.¹ When an optically active product is recovered, a partial inversion of configuration, as a normal result, is observed. Some examples of highly stereospecific reactions have, however, been reported such as the alkylation of benzene with (*R*)-1,2-epoxypropane and (*R*)-1,2-epoxybutane (optical yield $\sim 100\%$ with inversion of configuration)^{2a,b} and with (*R*)-2-chloro-1-phenylpropane (o.y. $\sim 96\%$ with retention of configuration).^{2c} These results have been explained on the basis of the cyclic nature of the alkylating reagents or as the result of the formation of cyclic intermediates. When a low stereospecificity in this type of reaction is found, it may be due either to the formation of a free carbonium ion intermediate or to the racemization of the starting material^{1h} and/or of the final product.^{3,4}

Here we report the first example of a Friedel–Crafts alkylation reaction, using acyclic alkylating reagents, that proceeds with high stereospecificity ($\geq 97\%$, Table I) and inversion of configuration. The reaction conditions are similar to procedures reported in patents^{5a,b} where racemic reagents have been used.

It is of note that the alkylation reaction also works in the presence of basic inorganic and organic compounds such as calcium carbonate, pyridine, poly(vinylpyridine), or imidazole, giving the same optical yields but lower chemical yields. Exploratory experiments with different Lewis acids gave no improvement or low yields.

When we tried to extend this reaction to other aromatic substrates such as toluene, isobutylbenzene, tetralin, anisole, naphthalene, 2-methoxynaphthalene, we obtained mixtures of isomeric alkylation products and/or byproducts. At the present, we are unable to improve the reaction as reported in some patterns.^{5c–h} However, after careful purification, by flash chromatography (eluent 7/3 hexane/ethyl acetate), of the mixture obtained in the reaction of isobutylbenzene and optically pure (*S*)-2-(mesyloxy)propionic acid, a sample of (*S*)-2-(4-isobutylphenyl)propionic acid (Ibuprofen) having $[\alpha]_D^{25} +58.5^{\circ}$ (ethanol 95%, c 2) [maximum specific rotation reported $[\alpha]_D^{25} +60^{\circ}$ (ethanol 95%, c 2)]⁷ was recovered.

Concerning the mechanism, it is reasonable to think that cyclic intermediates are involved in which the COOR and OX groups strongly coordinate with aluminum, though it cannot, at present, be established which atoms are actually bonded. Benzene is expected to attack the chiral carbon atom from the backside of the leaving group, analogously to what has been previously reported.^{1d–1,2a,b} No free Lewis acid should be present to racemize the starting material, even if a molar ratio of Lewis acid to ester of 2 is used (compare ref 1h) and/or the rate of the alkylation should be appreciably faster than the scrambling of the OX group. The latter hypothesis is, in our opinion, less probable since

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