

span a phospholipid bilayer and are well suited for transmembrane electron transfer in artificial photosynthetic membranes. In fact, porphyrin-based triads have been found to demonstrate photo-driven transmembrane electron transfer.<sup>6</sup> The chlorophyll-based triads have a much larger effective absorption cross section due to the efficient singlet energy transfer and the greatly increased oscillator strength in the Q-bands and therefore are potentially much more effective in model photosynthetic systems.

**Acknowledgment.** This work was supported by the U.S. Department of Energy and Saudia Arabian National Center for Science and Technology, Grant DE-FG02-84CH10198. We thank the NSF (Grant CHE-8409644) for its contribution to the purchase of a high-field NMR spectrometer.

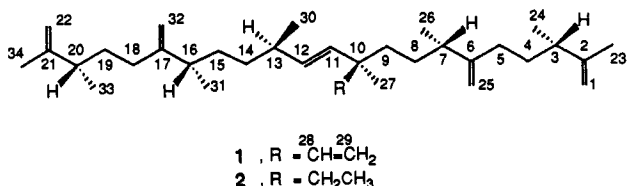
### Absolute Configuration of (-)-Botryococcene

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Received May 19, 1986

The green alga *Botryococcus braunii* (Kützing) is found throughout the world under a wide range of climatic conditions.<sup>1</sup> The unusual morphology and composition of this organism has been investigated and its involvement in the formation of a variety of carboniferous deposits, including petroleum, has been postulated.<sup>2</sup> Of particular chemical interest is the finding that *B. braunii* produces a mixture of C<sub>30</sub>-C<sub>36</sub> hydrocarbons of terpenoid origin that constitutes up to 90% of the dry weight of the alga.<sup>3</sup> The major component of this mixture, botryococcene, was shown by Eglinton et al. through degradation and spectral analysis to possess the gross structure depicted in 1.<sup>4</sup> Our interest in the

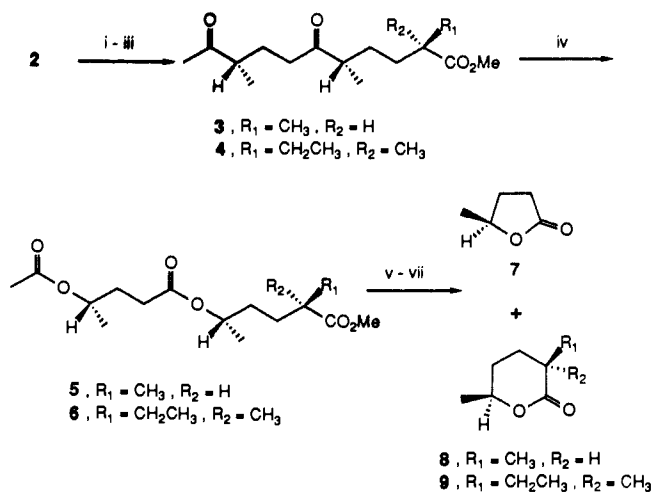


total synthesis of **1**, as well as the biosynthetic events leading to incorporation of the four non-mevalonoid methyl groups and the unusual coupling of the farnesyl moieties, required that we establish the configuration of the six stereogenic centers in the molecule. We now report that the absolute configuration of botryococcene is 3*S*,7*S*,10*S*,13*R*,16*S*,20*S*.

Selective reduction of botryococcene (**1**) with diimide afforded the known dihydro derivative **2**<sup>4</sup> which, upon exhaustive ozonolysis followed by an oxidative workup and treatment with diazomethane, gave **3** and **4**. After chromatographic separation, these diketone esters were each subjected to Baeyer-Villiger oxidation to furnish triesters **5** and **6**, respectively. Saponification of **5**, followed by acidification, afforded a pair of hydroxy acids which were converted to a 1:1 mixture of  $\gamma$ - and  $\delta$ -lactones **7** and **8**. Similar treatment of **6** yielded **7** and the  $\delta$ -lactone **9** (Scheme I).

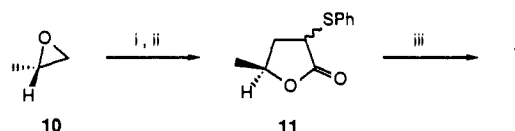
The absolute configurations of **7-9** were determined by correlation with the optically pure substances synthesized from (*S*)-(-)-propylene oxide (**10**).<sup>5</sup> Thus, opening of **10** with the dilithio dianion of 2-thiophenoxyacetic acid,<sup>6</sup> followed by lac-

### Scheme I<sup>a</sup>



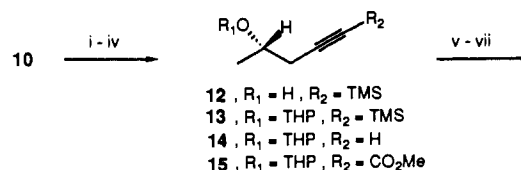
<sup>a</sup> (i) O<sub>3</sub>, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>/MeOH/EtOAc (10:5:1), -78 °C; (ii) CrO<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>S-O<sub>4</sub>, Me<sub>2</sub>CO, 0 °C, 2 h; (iii) CH<sub>2</sub>N<sub>2</sub>, Et<sub>2</sub>O, 25 °C (**3**, 38%; **4**, 40% from **2**); (iv) mCPBA, NaHCO<sub>3</sub>, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, 25 °C, 5 days then  $\Delta$ , 24 h (**5**, 64%; **6**, 83%); (v) KOH, aqueous THF, 25 °C, 24 h; (vi) aqueous HCl; (vii) C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub>, 4- $\text{Å}$  sieves,  $\Delta$ , 3 h, (**7,8** 1:1), 80%; **7,9** (1:1), 86% from **5** and **6**, respectively).

### Scheme II<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> (i) PhSCH<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>2</sub>H, 2 equiv of LDA, THF, -78 °C; (ii) C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub>, *p*-TsOH,  $\Delta$  (80% from **10**); (iii) Raney nickel (W6), MeOH,  $\Delta$ , 6 h (78%).

### Scheme III<sup>a</sup>



tonization, gave **11** which was desulfurized with Raney nickel to yield (4*S*)-**7** (Scheme II).<sup>7</sup> For synthesis of the  $\delta$ -lactones **8** and **9**, (*S*)-propylene oxide was reacted with lithium trimethylsilylacetylide to afford **12** which was converted to its tetrahydropyranyl

<sup>a</sup> (i) Me<sub>3</sub>SiC $\equiv$ CH, *n*-BuLi, THF, -78 °C, 6 h (97%); (ii) DHP, *p*-TsOH, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, 25 °C, 3 h (90%); (iii) *n*-Bu<sub>4</sub>NF, THF, 25 °C, 1 h (78%); (iv) *n*-BuLi, ClCO<sub>2</sub>Me, THF, -78  $\rightarrow$  25 °C, 2 h (92%); (v) H<sub>2</sub>, 10% Pd/C, EtOAc, 25 °C (97%); (vi) *p*-TsOH, MeOH, 40 °C, 1.5 h; (vii) K<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub>, azeotropic removal of MeOH with C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub>, 25 °C; (viii) *P*-TsOH, C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub>, 4- $\text{Å}$  sieves,  $\Delta$ , 2 h (78% from **16**); (ix) LDA, MeI, THF, HMPA, -78  $\rightarrow$  -40 °C, 4 h (92%); (x) LDA, EtI, THF, HMPA, -78  $\rightarrow$  -40 °C, 4 h (87%).

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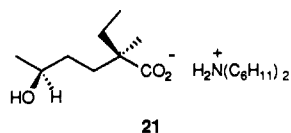
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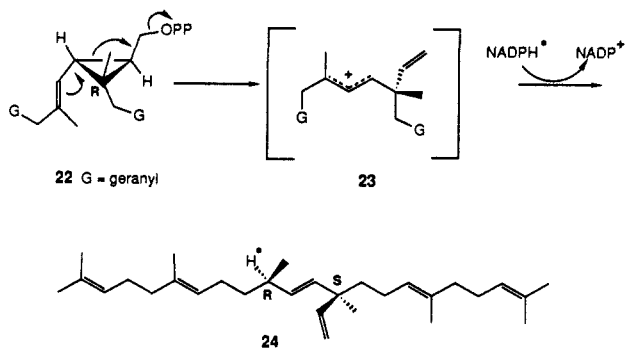
ether **13**. Removal of the silyl group and carbomethoxylation of the resulting pentyne **14** gave **15**. This ester was hydrogenated to the saturated derivative **16**, from which the tetrahydropyranyl ether was removed by methanolysis and the crude hydroxy ester **17** lactonized to (5*S*)-**18**.<sup>8</sup> Methylation<sup>9</sup> of **18** gave **8** and **19** (3:2, respectively), which were separated by gas-liquid chromatography and identified by comparison of their <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectra with published data.<sup>10</sup> Alkylation of the mixture of **8** and **19** with ethyl iodide gave the 2*R*,5*S* and 2*S*,5*S* lactones **9** and **20** (3:1) which were separated by HPLC ( $\mu$ -Porasil) (Scheme III). The major diastereomer **9** was found to correspond with the lactone obtained from botryococcene and was shown to be *trans* by an X-ray crystal structure of the dicyclohexylamine salt, **21**, of the derived hydroxy acid.<sup>11</sup>



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A parallel series of transformations from (*R*)-(+)-propylene oxide<sup>12</sup> provided the enantiomers of **7-9**. The absolute configurations of the lactones obtained from botryococcene were then determined from the <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectra (400 MHz) of 1:1 mixtures of natural and synthetic lactones in the presence of tris[3-[(heptafluoropropyl)hydroxymethylene]-(+)-camphorato]europium(III) [Eu(hfc)<sub>3</sub>].<sup>13</sup> Progressive induced shifts of the methyl signals were observed with increasing Eu(hfc)<sub>3</sub> concentration for unmatched lactones.

The absolute configuration of botryococcene has important biogenetic implications. Taken with the incorporation studies of Casadevall<sup>14</sup> and Wolf,<sup>15</sup> our results show that the four non-mevalonoid methyl substituents are installed sequentially at the *si* face of the trisubstituted double bonds of the intact triterpenoid precursor. Further, the 10*S*,13*R* configuration of **1** is consistent with a biosynthesis via (*R,R,R*)-presqualene pyrophosphate (**22**) but deviates from the pathway to squalene in the subsequent collapse of **22** to **23**. This variant, which has precedent in the chemistry of monoterpenes containing an "irregular" linkage of isoprene units,<sup>16</sup> would be terminated by delivery of a hydrogen atom (presumably from NADPH) to C-13 from the *si* face of the allylic system.



22 G = geranyl

23

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**Acknowledgment.** We are indebted to Dr. J. R. Maxwell, University of Bristol, for a sample of botryococcene and to Dr. D. A. Keszler and Scott Hein for the structure determination of

**21**. Acknowledgement is made to the donors of the Petroleum Research Fund, administered by the American Chemical Society, for the support of this research. Funds for the purchase of a Bruker AM 400 NMR spectrometer were provided by the National Science Foundation (CHE-8216190) and the M. J. Murdock Charitable Trust.

**Supplementary Material Available:** Spectral data for compounds **1-21** (7 pages). Ordering information is given on any current masthead page.

## Facile Cyclization of the Valeronitrile Group Bound to a Nickel Macrocycle

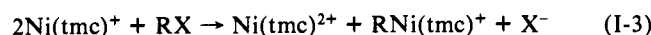
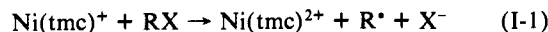
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The formation of cyclic alkyl products in reactions of transition-metal complexes with linear cyclizable alkyl halides has been considered reliable evidence for the involvement of free radicals in these reactions.<sup>1-9</sup> The underlying assumption that the products were determined exclusively by the competition between radical cyclization and capture by the metal seems to have been correct in the work reported. On the other hand, several literature reports provide undeniable evidence of cyclizations/rearrangements of carbanions<sup>10,11</sup> and organometallic complexes in aprotic solvents.<sup>12-19</sup> Thus the formation of cyclic products from linear cyclizable precursors does not constitute sufficient evidence for the involvement of free radicals in a reaction.<sup>20</sup>

### Scheme I



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