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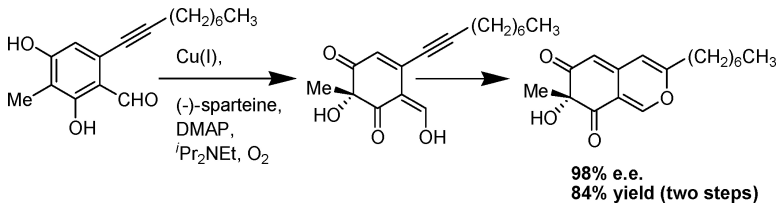
J. Am. Chem. Soc., **2005**, 127 (26), 9342-9343• DOI: 10.1021/ja052049g • Publication Date (Web): 10 June 2005



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Published on Web 06/10/2005

Synthesis of the Azaphilones Using Copper-Mediated Enantioselective Oxidative Dearomatization

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The azaphilones are a structurally diverse family of natural products containing a highly oxygenated bicyclic core and chiral quaternary center (cf. *S*-15183a,[1] **1**, Figure 1). We recently reported the synthesis of (±)-**1** and several unnatural azaphilones employing gold(III)-catalyzed cycloisomerization of *o*-alkynylbenzaldehydes to 2-benzopyrylium salts and subsequent I(V)-mediated oxidation.[2] In addition to our studies, a number of synthetic efforts have been reported toward the racemic synthesis of the azaphilones[3] with only a single report regarding asymmetric control of the quaternary center.[4] Herein, we disclose an enantioselective approach to the azaphilones employing copper-mediated asymmetric oxidation[5] of phenolic substrates.

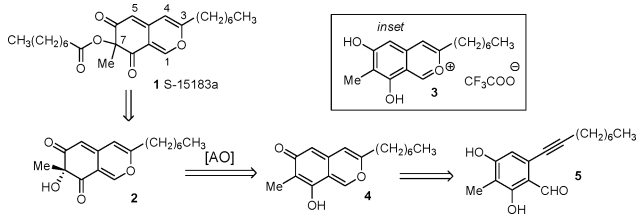
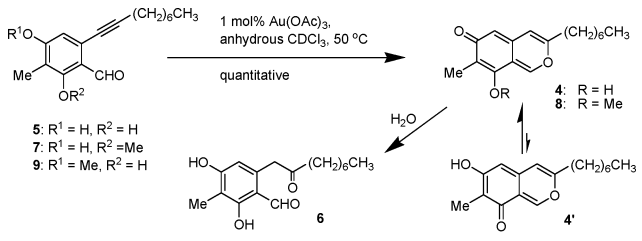


Figure 1. Retrosynthetic Analysis.

Our initial approach is outlined in Figure 1. Our previous studies indicated that (±)-**2** could be obtained by oxidation of 2-benzopyrylium salt **3** (Figure 1, inset) using *o*-iodoxybenzoic acid (IBX) and Bu_4NI as catalyst.[2] However, thus far our efforts to achieve asymmetric oxidation of **3** to **2** have not been successful. Since previous synthetic[3a] and biosynthetic studies[6] have demonstrated that pyronoquinones such as **4** may be viable precursors to the azaphilones, we shifted our focus to biomimetic asymmetric oxidation[7] of the pyronoquinone **4** derived from *o*-alkynylbenzaldehyde **5**.

We first evaluated the feasibility of preparing **4** as a substrate for asymmetric oxidation. After NMR experiments indicating that 2-benzopyrylium salt **3** could be deprotonated to afford pyronoquinone **4** with diisopropylethylamine (DIEA), we recognized that it should be possible to prepare pyronoquinone **4** directly via cycloisomerization of alkynylbenzaldehyde **5** (Scheme 1). Treatment of **5** with 5 mol % $Au(OAc)_3$[2,8] in anhydrous $CDCl_3$ (50 °C) led to formation of pyronoquinone **4** as the major tautomer, which was

Scheme 1. Preparation of a Pyronoquinone Substrate



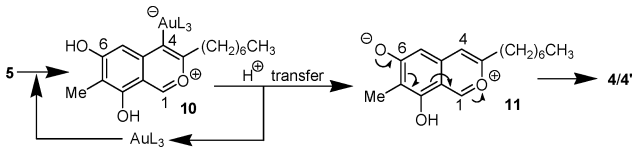
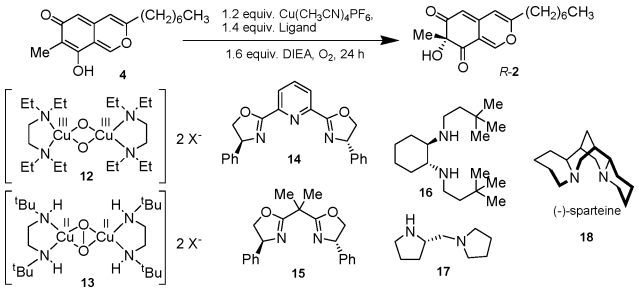


Figure 2. Proposed Mechanism for Formation of **4**/**4′**.

Table 1. Development of Copper-Mediated Asymmetric Oxidation



entry	ligand	solvent	temp (°C)	conv. (%)[a]	ee (%)
1	**14**	CH_2Cl_2	−78	44	11[b]
2	**18**	CH_2Cl_2	−78	50	51
3	**18**	CH_2Cl_2	−40	38	66
4[c]	**18**	CH_2Cl_2	−40	24	20
5	**18**	CH_2Cl_2	−20	27	59
6	**18**	toluene/CH_2Cl_2 (1:1)	−40	35	81

[a] Conversion was determined by ^{1}H NMR analysis of **2** and the keto aldehyde **6** (from hydrolysis of pyronoquinone **4**). [b] Ligand **14** slightly favored the *S*-enantiomer of **2**. [c] No DIEA was added.

confirmed by HMBC analysis.[9] Pyronoquinone **4** was found to be unstable and readily hydrolyzed to keto aldehyde **6**. Methyl ether **7** also smoothly underwent cycloisomerization to produce pyronoquinone **8**, while regioisomer **9** failed to undergo cycloisomerization. A generalized mechanism (Figure 2) involves activation of *o*-alkynylbenzaldehyde **5** by Au(III) to afford metal ate complex **10**,[2] which may be converted to zwitterion **11** after proton transfer from the C6 hydroxyl to C4. Intermediate **11** may afford the pyronoquinone **4**/**4′** after subsequent bond rearrangement.

Regarding biomimetic oxidation, our initial question centered on whether tyrosinase "mimics"[10] based on Cu/O_2 enzymes could mediate oxo transfer to the "tyrosine-like" pyronoquinone **4**. Recently, Stack has employed readily available bidentate, nitrogen ligands to prepare such Cu/O_2 oxidant systems.[10a,b] Two examples shown in Table 1 include binuclear copper-oxo (**O**, bis-μ-oxodicopper(III)) complex **12** and the copper-peroxo (**P**, μ-η^2:η^2-peroxodicopper(II)) complex **13**. In initial experiments, we found that both **12** and **13** (X = PF_6^-) oxidized pyronoquinone **4** to **2** (−78 °C, CH_2Cl_2). We also observed that oxidation reactions were cleaner with added DIEA. This result encouraged us to investigate asymmetric oxidation of pyronoquinone **4** employing chiral, non-

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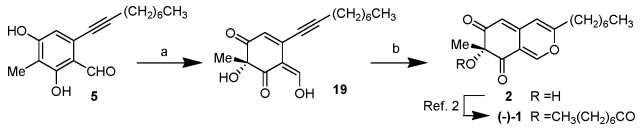
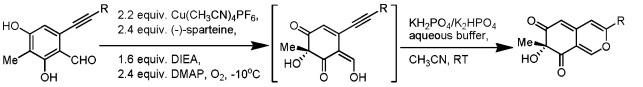
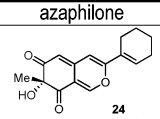
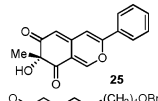
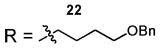
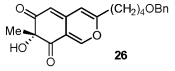
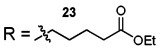
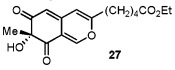
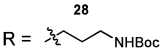
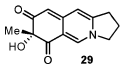
Scheme 2. Copper-Mediated Enantioselective Oxidative Dearomatization[a]



[a] Conditions: (a) 2.2 equiv of $Cu(CH_3CN)_4PF_6$, 2.4 equiv of (−)-sparteine, DIEA, DMAP, O_2, CH_2Cl_2, −78 to −10 °C; (b) aq. KH_2PO_4/K_2HPO_4 buffer (pH 7.2), CH_3CN, room temperature, 98% ee, 84% yield, two steps.

Table 2. Enantioselective Synthesis of Diverse Azaphilones[a]



entry	substrate	azaphilone	yield[b] (ee)
1	**20** R = 	 **24**	71% (96%)
2	**21** R = 	 **25**	64% (95%)
3	**22** R = 	 **26**	68% (97%)
4	**23** R = 	 **27**	72% (97%)
5	**28** R = 	 **29**	44%[c] (97%)

[a] See Supporting Information for further details. [b] Isolated yield for two steps. [c] Isolated yield for three steps.

racemic diamine ligands (Table 1). Use of pybox **14** resulted in 11% ee at −78 °C (entry 1). Ligands **15**, **16**,[11] and **17** did not afford any conversion. We were pleased to discover that the $Cu_2L_2O_2$ complex generated from $Cu(CH_3CN)_4PF_6$ and (−)-sparteine (**18**)[9,12] reacted cleanly with pyronoquinone **4** and produced azaphilone **2** in 51% ee (entry 2). Further optimization afforded **2** with 81% ee employing toluene/CH_2Cl_2 (1:1) as solvent (entry 6).

Due to the instability of pyronoquinone **4**, we investigated *o*-alkynylbenzaldehyde **5** as an oxidation substrate. To our delight, $Cu_2[(-)\text{-sparteine}]_2O_2$-mediated enantioselective oxidative dearomatization[13] of **5** afforded the corresponding vinylogous acid **19** (Scheme 2).[14] However, only up to 60% conversion was obtained when 1.6 equiv of $Cu_2[(-)\text{-sparteine}]_2O_2$ was employed. Further optimization studies identified 4-(dimethylamino)pyridine (DMAP) as an effective additive[15] to promote full conversion to vinylogous acid **19** with 1.1 equiv of $Cu_2[(-)\text{-sparteine}]_2O_2$. After aqueous KH_2PO_4/K_2HPO_4 buffer-mediated cycloisomerization,[16] **2** was produced in 98% ee (84% yield, two steps). Use of $Cu(CH_3CN)_4OTf$ as a Cu(I) source reduced the ee only slightly (92%). Following our previously reported procedure,[2] we prepared (−)-**1**,[9] which was confirmed to be *R* by CD spectroscopy,[17] thereby assigning the absolute configuration of (−)-*S*-15183a.

The copper-mediated asymmetric oxidation-cycloisomerization sequence was found to be compatible with *o*-alkynylbenzaldehydes **20** and **21** containing an enyne and an aromatic functionality, as well as **22** and **23** bearing a benzyl ether and an ester substituent to afford the corresponding azaphilones **24**−**27**, respectively (entries 1−4, Table 2). In addition, *o*-alkynylbenzaldehyde **28** featuring a terminal NH−Boc substituent was also well-tolerated in this methodology to produce the desired azaphilone, which was further converted to tricyclic amino-azaphilone **29** after Boc deprotection and intramolecular amine addition (entry 5).[9] When *o*-alkynylbenzaldehydes derived from propargylic ethers were subjected to copper-mediated oxidation, severe side reactions were detected, likely due to the active propargylic functionality. An alkynyl-imine from condensation of **5** and butylamine was also investigated in the copper-mediated oxidation and in initial studies showed low enantioselectivity.

In conclusion, we have developed a highly enantioselective approach for the biomimetic synthesis of the azaphilones involving copper-mediated enantioselective oxidative dearomatization of *o*-alkynylbenzaldehydes. Further studies, including asymmetric oxidative dearomatization of other substrates, are currently in progress and will be reported in due course.

Acknowledgment. We thank Prof. Olga Gursky (Boston University School of Medicine) for assistance with CD spectra, Mr. Gerard Rowe for help with the low temperature UV/vis, and Profs. Sean J. Elliott and John P. Caradonna (Boston University) for helpful discussions. We thank Bristol-Myers Squibb for research support (Unrestricted Grant in Synthetic Organic Chemistry to J.A.P, Jr.).

Supporting Information Available: Experimental procedures and characterization data for all new compounds. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

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JA052049G