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COMMUNICATIONS

Published on Web 08/08/2006

Synthesis of Taiwaniaquinoids via Nazarov Triflation

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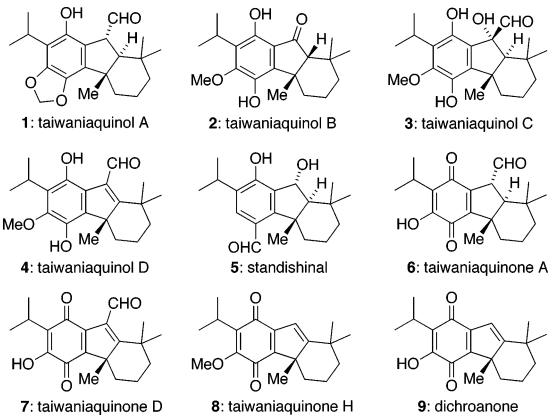
The taiwaniaquinoids are a family of unusual tricyclic diterpenoids isolated from East Asian conifers with interesting biological activities (Chart 1).[1] Structurally, their members are marked by a rare tricyclic [6-5-6] ring system, which is presumably formed by an oxidative ring contraction of a more regular hydrophenanthrene precursor.[1a] In some cases, one carbon has been lost in the course of the biosynthesis to afford norditerpenoids such as taiwaniaquinol B (**2**), taiwaniaquinone H (**8**) and dichroanone (**9**).

Several members of the taiwaniaquinoids have shown activity as aromatase inhibitors and are currently under evaluation for their potential as drug leads.[1e−h] Thus, it comes as no surprise that the taiwaniaquinoids have attracted the interest of several synthetic groups.[2] Fillion reported a total synthesis of (±)-taiwaniaquinol B featuring an interesting domino acylation/alkylation step.[2a] Very recently, Stoltz published a synthesis of (+)-dichroanone based on a novel asymmetric palladium-catalyzed alkylation.[2b] Approaches toward other members of the family based on intramolecular Heck reactions have also been reported.[2c−e]

Chart 1. The Taiwaniaquinoids

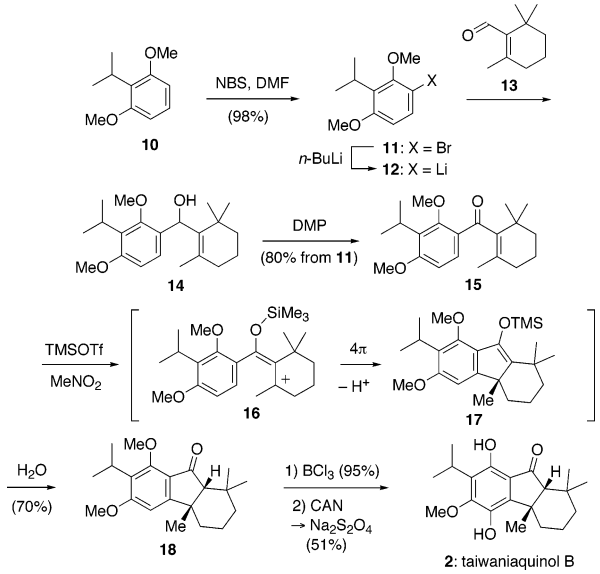


We now report a concise and convergent synthetic approach toward the taiwaniaquinoid family that hinges on Nazarov chemistry.[3] Indeed, aromatic Nazarov reactions are well suited for the construction of the central indanone or indene moieties of these natural products. In the course of our studies we have developed a new aromatic Nazarov cyclization that directly produces indenyl triflates and could be of general use for the synthesis of substituted indenes.

Our total synthesis of taiwaniaquinol B is outlined in Scheme 1. Bromination of the known resorcinol derivative **10** gave aryl bromide **11**. Lithiation of this material (**11** → **12**), followed by addition of the commercially available β-cyclocitral **13** afforded aryl vinyl carbinol **14**. This sensitive alcohol was oxidized immediately to yield aryl vinyl ketone **15**. Attempts to produce **15** more directly via Friedel−Crafts acylation, possibly with concomitant Nazarov cyclization, failed.

After an extensive survey of conditions, we found that **15** could be cyclized in the presence of trimethylsilyl triflate in nitromethane

Scheme 1. Total Synthesis of Taiwaniaquinol B



to afford the highly unstable silyl enol ether **17**, presumably through the intermediacy of cation **16**. Upon aqueous workup, this procedure afforded the thermodynamically more favorable *cis*-indane product **18** as the only stereoisomer observed. It is important to note that the use of solvents less polar than nitromethane gave little or no cyclization.

Since **18** was featured as an intermediate in Fillion's first total synthesis of (±)-taiwaniaquinol B,[2a] the overall sequence constitutes a short formal total synthesis of the natural product. In a slightly modified endgame, we found that selective deprotection, followed by CAN-oxidation and sodium dithionite reduction upon workup[4] afforded (±)-taiwaniaquinol B (**2**) in comparable overall yield from **18**.

Contemplating the mechanism of the key aromatic Nazarov cyclization, we came to the conclusion that treatment of **15** with triflic anhydride (instead of TMS triflate) should afford the corresponding enol triflate.[5] Indeed, heating of aryl vinyl ketone **15** with triflic anhydride in the presence of a hindered base (2,6-di-*tert*-butylpyridine; 2,6-DTBP) cleanly gave trifloxy indene **20** (Scheme 2). This reaction is proposed to proceed through trifloxy cation **19**, which undergoes 4π electrocyclization followed by deprotonation to yield **20**. A systematic survey of substrates showed that the reaction works reasonably well with electron-rich aryl vinyl ketones but fails with most substrates bearing electron-withdrawing substituents on the aryl ring (see Supporting Information). This reflects general reactivity trends among aromatic Nazarov reactions.

Enol triflate **20** can serve as a key intermediate to access several taiwaniaquinoids. Its use in a total synthesis of taiwaniaquinone H (**8**) and dichroanone (**9**) is shown in Scheme 3. Palladium-catalyzed reduction gave indene **21** in excellent yield. Because of steric hindrance, the comparatively small ligand trimethyl phosphite was

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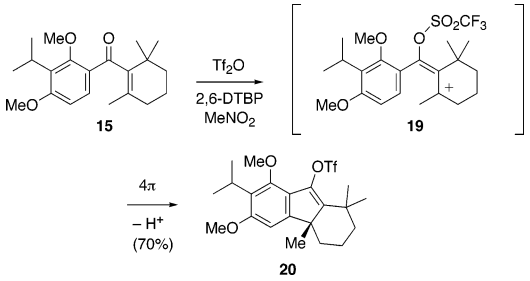
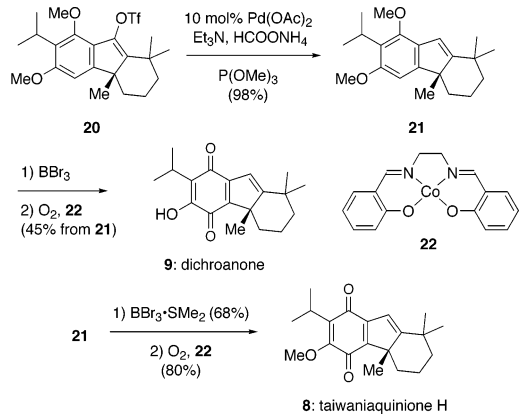
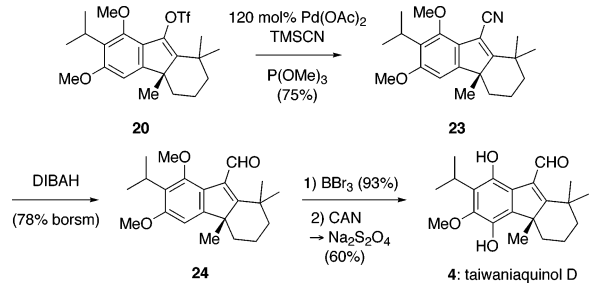
Scheme 2. Nazarov Cyclization/Triflation



Scheme 3. Total Syntheses of Taiwaniaquinone H and Dichroanone



Scheme 4. Total Synthesis of Taiwaniaquinol D



required to effectively carry out this reaction.[6] Yields decreased markedly if bulkier phosphine ligands were used. Global demethylation, followed by oxidation catalyzed by salcomine (**22**) gave (±)-dichroanone (**9**). Alternatively, a more selective demethylation and oxidation led to (±)-taiwaniaquinol H (**8**).

The further extension of this strategy toward the total synthesis of taiwaniaquinol D (**4**) is shown in Scheme 4. A challenging palladium-mediated cyanation of enol triflate **20** afforded nitrile **23**.[7] Reduction with diisobutylaluminum hydride, followed by regioselective demethylation of the resultant aldehyde **24** and oxidation/reduction gave (±)-taiwaniaquinol D (**4**). In accordance with the literature,[8] the DIBAH reduction of unsaturated cyanide **23** proceeded cleanly but was difficult to drive to completion. Attempts to perform the overall transformation **20** → **24** more directly through palladium-catalyzed carbonylation failed.

In summary, we have described a concise, unified approach to the taiwaniaquinoids that hinges on new variants of the aromatic Nazarov reaction. Asymmetric versions of this reaction are currently under investigation.

Acknowledgment. D.T. thanks the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation for generous support. G.L. gratefully acknowledges Bristol-Myers Squibb for a graduate fellowship. Financial support by Novartis, Glaxo Smith Kline, Eli Lilly, Astra Zeneca, and Amgen is also gratefully acknowledged.

Supporting Information Available: Synthetic procedures and spectroscopic data for compounds **11**, **15**, **18**, **20**, **21**, **23**, and **24**, as well as the natural products **2**, **4**, **8**, and **9**. Further investigations on the Nazarov triflation are also described. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

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JA062505G