

A Short Synthesis of the Erythrina Skeleton and of (\pm)- α -Lycorane

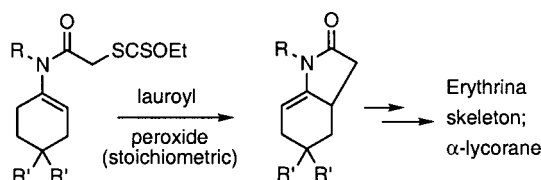
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Received January 9, 2002

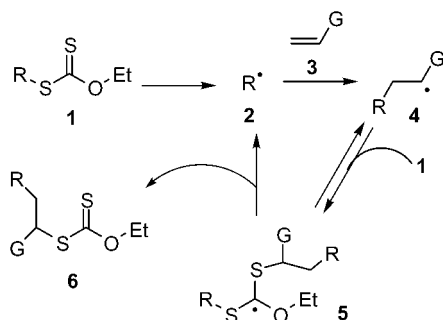
ABSTRACT



A new nonchain 5-*endo* radical cyclization starting with xanthates was exploited in a short synthesis of (\pm)- α -lycorane and the erythrina ring system.

We have shown, over the past few years, that xanthates and related derivatives were clean and efficient precursors of a variety of free radicals.¹ The underlying mechanism of the addition of an *O*-ethyl xanthate such as **1** to olefin **3** is outlined in Scheme 1. The process offers many advantages,

Scheme 1



most notably the absence of heavy metals and the possibility of performing both intra- and, especially, intermolecular additions to nonactivated olefins. It is important, if a chain

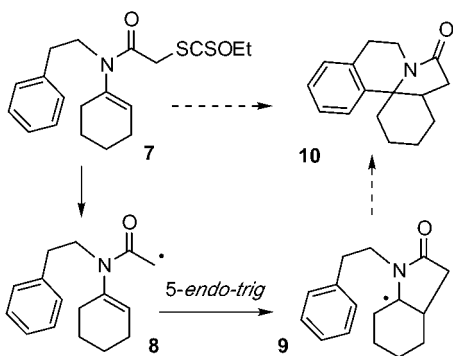
is to be sustained, that the initial radical **2** be at least as—and preferably—more stable than adduct radical **4**, to drive the equilibrium in the last two propagating steps forward. In other words, if radical **2** is more stable than radical **4**, intermediate radical **5** will evolve easily into the desired product **6** and radical **2**, which propagates the chain. This limitation may, however, be lifted by designing a nonchain sequence where the peroxide is used in stoichiometric amounts, becoming a full-fledged reagent rather than a mere initiator.

Starting with a xanthate such as **7**, we considered using this latter feature to combine a 5-*endo* ring closure with a cyclization onto an aromatic ring. This nonchain sequence would lead in one step to the erythrina skeleton **10**, as pictured in Scheme 2. Radical 5-*endo*-*trig* cyclizations involving enamides have been extensively explored.² Most are tin hydride-mediated reactions, whereby the stabilized

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(2) (a) Ishibashi, H.; Nakamura, N.; Sato, T.; Takeuchi, M.; Ikeda, M. *Tetrahedron Lett.* **1991**, 32, 1725–28. (b) Sato, T.; Nakamura, N.; Ikeda, K.; Okada, M.; Ishibashi, H.; Ikeda, M. *J. Chem. Soc., Perkin Trans. 1* **1992**, 2399–2407. (c) Ishibashi, H.; Fuke, Y.; Yamashita, T.; Ikeda, M. *Tetrahedron: Asymmetry* **1996**, 7, 2531–2538. (d) Ikeda, M.; Ohtami, S.; Okada, M.; Minakuchi, E.; Sato, T.; Ishibashi, H. *Heterocycles* **1998**, 47, 181–186. (e) Ishibashi, H.; Higuchi, M.; Ohba, M.; Ikeda, M. *Tetrahedron Lett.* **1998**, 39, 75–78. (f) Ikeda, M.; Ohtani, S.; Yamamoto, T.; Sato, T.; Ishibashi, H. *J. Chem. Soc., Perkin Trans. 1* **1998**, 1763–1768. (g) Goodall, K.; Parson, A. F. *J. Chem. Soc., Perkin Trans. 1* **1994**, 3257–3259. (h) Goodall, K.; Parson, A. F. *Tetrahedron* **1996**, 52, 6739–6758. (i) Goodall, K.; Parson, A. F. *Tetrahedron Lett.* **1997**, 38, 491–494. (j) Sato, T.; Chono, N.; Ishibashi, H.; Ikeda, M. *J. Chem. Soc., Perkin Trans. 1* **1995**, 1115–

Scheme 2



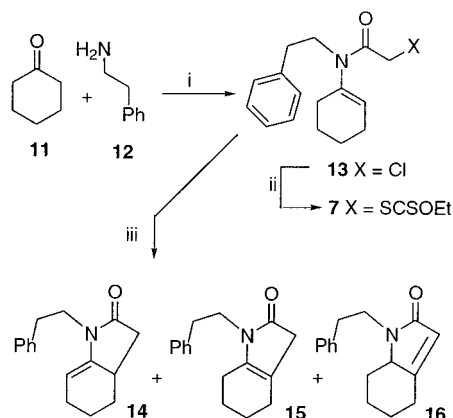
α -amino radical intermediate is ultimately reduced, affording saturated γ -lactams. We have, in contrast, succeeded in obtaining γ -lactams containing a diene system by starting with trichloroacetenamides and generating the radical by electron transfer from metallic nickel in combination with a weak acid such as acetic acid.³

We have used this transformation as the key step in the synthesis of γ -lycorane⁴ and 3-demethoxyerythridinone.⁵ Oxidative termination of the radical sequence has recently been accomplished using Mn(III)- and Cu(II)-based reagents.⁶

In the present study, it seemed to us that once the 5-endo-trig closure takes place, the subsequent xanthate transfer from the starting xanthate **7** to the stabilized, tertiary radical **9** would probably be unfavorable, and in any case quite reversible. We hoped therefore that this would allow cyclization of radical **9** onto the aromatic system to give ultimately compound **10** possessing the complete framework of the erythrina alkaloids, many members of which exhibit interesting biological activity (Scheme 2).⁷

The starting material for xanthate **7** was the corresponding chloroacetamide **13**, prepared by heating cyclohexanone

11 and phenethylamine **12** in refluxing toluene using a Dean–Stark apparatus, followed by trapping the corresponding imine with chloroacetyl chloride. Displacement of the chloride with commercially available potassium *O*-ethyl xanthate proceeded in excellent yield. However, when xanthate **7** was exposed to the action of a stoichiometric amount of lauroyl peroxide (added portionwise) in refluxing 1,2-dichloroethane, none of the desired tetracyclic derivative **10** was found. Instead, we isolated two isomeric lactams **14** and **15** in 62 and 20% yield, respectively (Scheme 3). When

Scheme 3^a

^a Conditions: (i) toluene, reflux, 3 h, then Et₃N, chloroacetyl chloride, CH₂Cl₂, rt; (ii) KSC(S)OEt, CH₃CN, rt; (iii) lauroyl peroxide, dichloroethane, reflux, 3 h.

the reaction mixture was heated for longer than 3 h, a more polar compound became more and more visible. It was identified as conjugated isomer **16**, presumably the most thermodynamically stable of the three isomers. By conducting the reaction in refluxing 2-propanol, lactam **16** was rapidly produced and could be isolated in 78% yield. The faster proton exchange in the more protic solvent allows the isomerization process to occur within the addition time of the peroxide.

The formation of unsaturated lactams **14**–**16** may occur through direct oxidation by the peroxide of the intermediate, ring-closed radical **9** into the cationic species **17**, which then loses a proton (Scheme 4). Compound **14** is kinetically the most favored product, but it readily evolves into **15** and ultimately **16** depending on the exact reaction conditions. Alternatively, the formation of the olefinic bond may arise from the disproportionation of the tertiary radical **9**, upon collision with another radical in the medium. Finally, if a xanthate transfer did indeed take place, a xanthate such as **18** would be expected to be thermally labile with respect to elimination of xanthic acid. Which of these processes is actually operating or is the dominant pathway remains at this point a matter of speculation.

Although we could not accomplish the ring closure onto the aromatic ring, the presence of the olefinic bond in the product could be exploited in a more classical Friedel–Crafts type approach to the erythrina framework.^{4,7} Moreover, by

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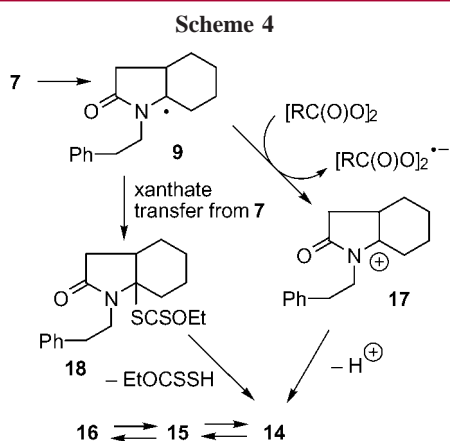
(3) (a) Quiclet-Sire, B.; Saunier, J.-B.; Zard, S. Z. *Tetrahedron Lett.* **1996**, *37*, 1397–1400. (b) Cassayre, J.; Quiclet-Sire, B.; Saunier, J.-B.; Zard, S. Z. *Tetrahedron* **1998**, *54*, 1029–1040. (c) Cassayre, J.; Dauge, D.; Zard, S. Z. *Synlett* **2000**, 471–474.

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(5) Cassayre, J.; Quiclet-Sire, B.; Saunier, J.-B.; Zard, S. Z. *Tetrahedron Lett.* **1998**, *39*, 8995–8998.

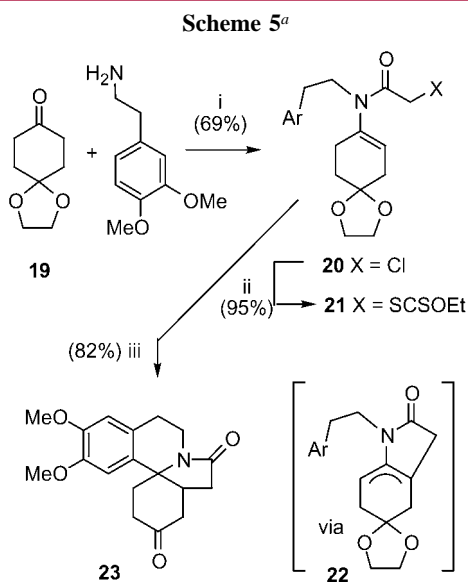
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(7) For a review of Erythrina alkaloids, see: Tsuda, Y.; Sano, T. In *The Alkaloids*; Cordell, G. A., Ed.; Academic Press: San Diego, 1996; Vol. 48, pp 249–337.



modifying the substituent on the nitrogen atom, a simple entry into the galanthan skeleton of the lycoranes could be implemented.

For the synthesis of the erythrina system, we started with commercially available monoprotected 1,4-cyclohexanedione **19**, which when condensed with homoveratrylamine and the intermediate Schiff base directly converted into chloroacetamide **20** by treatment with chloroacetyl chloride (Scheme 5). The corresponding xanthate **21**, obtained by



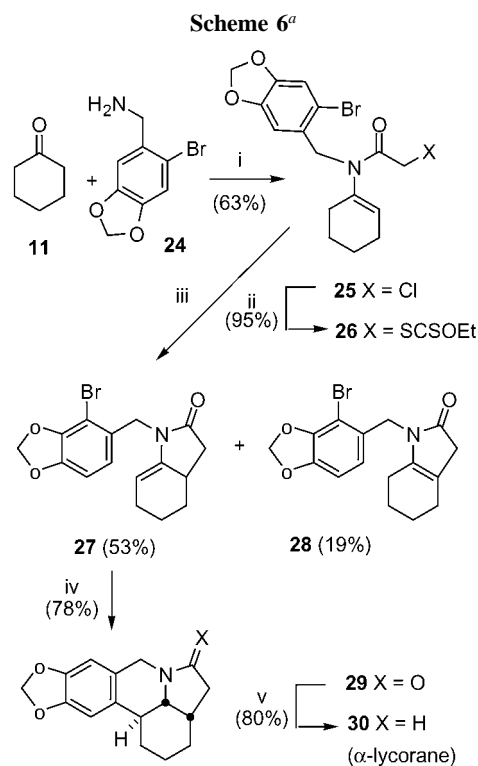
^a Conditions: (i) toluene, reflux, 3 h, then chloroacetyl chloride, Et₃N; (ii) KSC(S)OEt, acetonitrile, rt; (iii) lauroyl peroxide, 1,2-dichloroethane, reflux, 3 h, then *p*-toluenesulfonic acid, catalytic, reflux 30 min.

displacement of the chloride with potassium *O*-ethyl xanthate, was heated in refluxing 1,2-dichloroethane with a portionwise addition of a stoichiometric amount of lauroyl peroxide. A catalytic amount of *p*-toluenesulfonic acid was then added to induce the Friedel–Crafts ring closure onto the aromatic ring. There was thus no need to isolate the mixture of the

isomeric, intermediate unsaturated lactams **22** since they both give the same iminium ion in the presence of acid. The dioxolane ring does not survive these acidic conditions, and it is ketone **23** (mp 162–165 °C) that is ultimately isolated in good overall yield (82% from xanthate **21**). As far as we are aware, this three-step sequence represents the shortest route to an erythrina derivative.

A concise approach to (±)- α -lycorane could also be implemented by simply modifying the substituent on the nitrogen atom and by combining the first 5-*endo* ring closure with the 6-*endo* radical cyclization described a few years ago by Rigby and Mateo.⁸ We have applied a similar ring closure to a short synthesis of the epimeric (±)- γ -lycorane.⁴

α -Lycorane **30** belongs to the large class of Amarylidacea alkaloids, which have attracted much attention due to the wide spectrum of biological activity exhibited by many of its members.⁹ Our synthesis of (±)- α -lycorane begins with the condensation of cyclohexanone with bromobenzylamine **24** and direct chloroacetylation of the resulting Schiff base to give chloroacetamide **25** in 63% overall yield (Scheme 6). Displacement of the chloride with the xanthate salt



^a Conditions: (i) toluene, reflux 3 h, then chloroacetyl chloride, Et₃N; (ii) KSC(S)OEt, acetonitrile, rt; (iii) lauroyl peroxide, 1,2-dichloroethane, reflux 3 h; (iv) *n*-Bu₃SnH, AIBN, benzene; (v) LiAlH₄, THF.

furnished the radical precursor **26**, which was subjected to the action of lauroyl peroxide in refluxing 1,2-dichloroethane, to induce the key oxidative cyclization. As anticipated, this

(8) Rigby, J. H.; Mateo, M. E. *Tetrahedron* **1996**, *52*, 10569–10582.

operation produced a mixture of the isomeric tetrahydroindolones **27** and **28** in 53 and 19% yield, respectively. In accord with the literature,⁸ reaction of the major isomer with tributyltin hydride and AIBN in boiling benzene gave the desired tetracyclic structure **29** in 78% yield. Finally, reduction with LiAlH₄ completed the synthesis of (±)-α-lycorane **30** (mp 152–155 °C from CH₂Cl₂/hexane; lit.⁸ mp 155–156 °C). This expeditious synthesis is, as far as we are aware, the shortest route to this substance.

(9) For a review of Amaryllidaceae alkaloids, see: Martin, S. F. In *The Alkaloids*; Brossi, A., Ed.; Academic Press: New York, 1987; Vol. 30, pp 251–376. (b) Hoshino, O. In *The Alkaloids*; Cordell, G. A., Ed.; Academic Press: San Diego, 1998; Vol. 51, pp 323–424.

In conclusion, the present routes to the erythrina ring system and to (±)-α-lycorane underscore the synthetic potential of this new xanthate-mediated tin-free cyclization. The essentially neutral, mild reaction conditions are in principle compatible with a wide variety of functional groups. Extension to more complex structures is currently under investigation.

Supporting Information Available: Experimental details and full spectral data for the main new compounds. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

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