

## Dimeric *Erythrina* Alkaloids from the Flower of *Erythrina variegata*

Bing-Jie Zhang,<sup>†,‡</sup> Mei-Fen Bao,<sup>†</sup> Chun-Xia Zeng,<sup>§</sup> Xiu-Hong Zhong,<sup>†,‡</sup> Ling Ni,<sup>†,‡</sup> Ying Zeng,<sup>\*,†</sup> and Xiang-Hai Cai<sup>\*,†</sup>

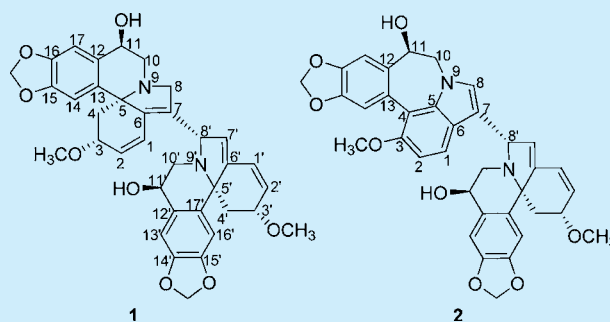
<sup>†</sup>State Key Laboratory of Phytochemistry and Plant Resources in West China, Kunming Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Kunming 650201, People's Republic of China

<sup>‡</sup>University of Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing 100039, People's Republic of China

<sup>§</sup>Germplasm Bank of Wild Species in Southwest China Kunming Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Kunming 650201, People's Republic of China

### Supporting Information

**ABSTRACT:** Unprecedented dimeric *Erythrina* alkaloids, spirocyclic (6/5/6/6) erythrarine A (**1**) and spiro-fused (6/5/7/6) rings erythrarine B (**2**), were isolated from the cultivated plant, *E. variegata*. The structures were determined on the basis of 1D and 2D NMR, FTIR, UV, and mass spectroscopic data and X-ray crystal diffraction. The biogenetic relationship of **1** and **2** is proposed.



The *Erythrina* alkaloid is derived from two tyrosine units via oxidative coupling and intramolecular rearrangement and consists of approximately 80 alkaloids.<sup>1</sup> Folkers and co-workers first carried out the systematic phytochemical research on *Erythrina* alkaloids in the 1930s.<sup>2</sup> Later, Mondon and Ito as well as other scientists made some new progress.<sup>3</sup> In addition to the simple *Erythrina* alkaloid, this class of compounds also includes other types with a six-membered lactone and pyridine ring D, respectively. The *Erythrina* alkaloid produces anxiolytic-like activity,<sup>4</sup> induced sleep,<sup>5</sup> anticonvulsant activity,<sup>6</sup> neuronal nicotinic acetylcholine receptor antagonism,<sup>7</sup> leishmanicidal activity,<sup>8</sup> antifeedant activity,<sup>9</sup> and anticataract activity.<sup>8</sup> However, there has not been a star molecule or lead compound in the *Erythrina* alkaloid to date. Thus, pharmaceutical chemists have not paid much attention to the natural products. The *Erythrina* alkaloids possess 6/6/5/6 spirocyclic systems with stable 5S chiral centers,<sup>11</sup> seemingly exhibiting a not very diverse or fascinating molecular architecture. Nevertheless, the spirocyclic and aromatic skeletons in *Erythrina* alkaloids recently captured researchers' imaginations and due to their challenging polycyclic molecular architectures.<sup>12</sup> The polymerization of natural products is an approach not only to structural complexity but also to new bioactive compounds, such as the bisindoles vinblastine and vincristine.<sup>13</sup> To date, the reported so-called dimeric alkaloids that incorporated a tryptophan moiety are not true dimeric *Erythrina* alkaloids.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, skeletal rearrangement has served as the main pathway to structural diversity. For example, monoterpene quinoline alkaloids (e.g., camptothecin and quinine) resulted in monoterpene indole alkaloids via rearrangement. Until now, there have been no reported polymeric and/or rearranged *Erythrina* alkaloids. As part of a

study on alkaloids from Yunnan plant resources, we reported three new representative alkaloids in 2007, 2008, and 2011.<sup>15</sup> In our continuing studies on the new alkaloids, two dimeric *Erythrina* alkaloids (**1** and **2**) have been isolated from cultivated *E. variegata* plants (Figure 1). This paper describes their isolation, structure determination, cytotoxicity, and possible biopathway.

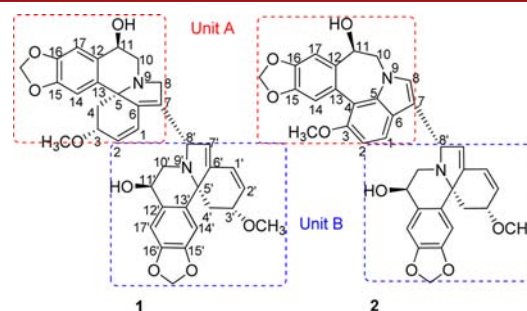


Figure 1. Structure of erythrarines A and B.

The dried and powdered flowers<sup>16</sup> of *E. variegata* L. (10.0 kg) were extracted with MeOH (25 L × 3) at room temperature, and the solvent was evaporated under reduced pressure. The residue was dissolved in 2% acetic acid and partitioned twice with EtOAc. The water layer was subsequently basified using ammonia–water to pH 8–9 and then again partitioned twice with EtOAc,

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Table 1.  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR Assignments of Alkaloids 1 and 2<sup>a</sup>

entry	$\delta_{\text{H}}$ (1)	$\delta_{\text{C}}$ (1)	$\delta_{\text{H}}$ (2)	$\delta_{\text{C}}$ (2)
1	6.91 (dd, 10.2, 1.8)	123.9 (d)	7.62 (d, 8.4)	120.9 (d)
2	5.93 (d, 10.2)	132.5 (d)	6.94 (d, 8.4)	108.0 (d)
3	3.76 (m)	77.0 (d)		153.5 (s)
4	2.38 (dd, 10.8, 4.8) 1.70 (t, 10.8)	41.0 (t)		112.5 (s)
5		69.6 (s)		135.9 (s)
6		137.7 (s)		124.3 (s)
7		136.5 (s)		115.4 (s)
8	3.92 (d, 13.8) 3.61 (d, 13.8)	60.2 (t)	7.03 (s)	130.0 d
10	3.54 (d, 12.6) 2.69 (dd, 12.6, 4.8)	53.6 (t)	4.45 (dd, 11.4, 1.2) 4.15 (dd, 11.4, 8.4)	60.0 (t)
11	4.74 (m, overlap)	64.5 (d)	4.99 (dd, 8.4, 1.2)	70.4 (d)
12		133.1 (s)		138.8 (s)
13		132.5 (s)		124.3 (s)
14	6.71 (s)	105.5 (d)	7.38 (s)	112.8 (d)
15		147.3 (s)		146.8 (s)
16		147.3 (s)		147.6 (s)
17	7.06 (s)	107.3 (d)	7.26 (br s)	104.4 (d)
–CH <sub>2</sub> –	5.97 (s) 5.96 (s)	101.5 (t)	6.04 (d, 1.2) 6.01 (d, 1.2)	102.0 (t)
3-OMe	3.27 (3H)	55.4 (q)	3.82 (3H, s)	57.5 (q)
11-OH	4.69 (d, 4.8)			
1'	6.52 (dd, 10.2, 2.4)	125.4 (d)	6.64 (dd, 9.6, 2.4)	125.7 (d)
2'	6.01 (d, 10.2)	133.3 (d)	6.09 (d, 9.6)	132.2 (d)
3'	3.82 (m)	76.6 (d)	3.93 (m)	77.0 (d)
4'	2.44 (dd, 11.4, 5.4) 1.72 (t, 11.4)	41.5 (t)	2.49 (dd, 11.0, 5.4) 1.91 (t, 11.0)	42.8 (t)
5'		68.6 (s)		68.6 (s)
6'		143.5 (s)		142.0 (s)
7'	5.39 (s)	125.9 (d)	5.76 (s)	129.3 (d)
8'	4.96 (s)	67.0 (d)	5.19 (s)	67.7 (d)
10'	3.40 (dd, 12.6, 4.8) 2.74 (d, 12.6, 5.4)	52.3 (t)	3.35 (dd, 13.2, 4.8) 2.77 (dd, 13.2, 6.0)	51.7 (t)
11'	4.73 (m, overlap)	64.5 (d)	4.73 (m)	65.0 (d)
12'		133.1 (s)		133.3 (s)
13'		132.5 (s)		132.5 (s)
14'	6.74 (s)	105.0 (d)	6.82 (s)	106.1 (d)
15'		147.3 (s)		147.4 (s)
16'		147.3 (s)		147.3 (s)
17'	7.01 (s)	107.1 (d)	7.07 (s)	108.0 (d)
–C'H <sub>2</sub> –	5.95 (2H, br s)	101.5 (t)	5.97 (2H, s)	101.8 (t)
3'-OMe	3.27 (3H, s)	55.4 (q)	3.32 (s)	56.3 (q)
11'-OH	4.57 (d, 4.8)			

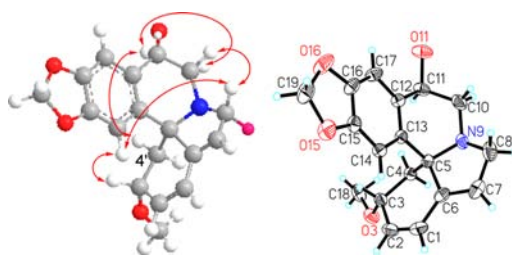
<sup>a</sup>Data were recorded in acetone-*d*<sub>6</sub> on Bruker Avance-III 600 MHz spectrometers ( $^1\text{H}$ ,  $^{13}\text{C}$ ,  $^1\text{H}$ – $^1\text{H}$  COSY, HSQC, HMBC, ROESY); chemical shifts ( $\delta$ ) are given in parts per million with references to the most downfield signal of acetone-*d*<sub>6</sub> ( $\delta$  2.04 ppm) for  $^1\text{H}$  and to the center peak of the downfield signal of acetone-*d*<sub>6</sub> ( $\delta$  30.0 ppm) for  $^{13}\text{C}$ . Multiplicities and *J* values (in Hz) are given in parentheses.

affording the aqueous phase and EtOAc phase (total alkaloids). The total alkaloids (120 g) were collected and then dissolved in MeOH, and the resulting solution was subjected to column chromatography (CC) over silica gel with  $\text{CHCl}_3/\text{MeOH}$  as eluent (from  $\text{CHCl}_3$  to  $\text{CHCl}_3/\text{MeOH}$  (5/1)) to afford seven fractions (I–VII). Erythrinine (alkaloid 3; 31.2 g) was crystallized from fraction III. Fraction IV (8.5 g) was further chromatographed on a  $\text{C}_{18}$  MPLC column using aqueous methanol (1/9–1/0) as eluent to give the six subfractions IV-1–IV-6. Subfraction IV-6 (2.4 g) was subjected to CC over silica gel and eluted with  $\text{CHCl}_3/\text{acetone}$  (4/1, v/v) to afford four subfractions (A–D). Fraction D (24 mg) was further purified by

a preparative column with gradient flow from 70% to 80% aqueous methanol to give 2 (10 mg). Fraction V (12 g) was subjected on Rp-18 silica gel CC and eluted with 10–100% aqueous methanol to give the six subfractions V-1–V-6. Fraction V-4 (0.8 g) was placed on a Sephadex LH-20 column, eluted with 50% aqueous methanol, and then purified by a  $\text{C}_{18}$  HPLC column with 60–70% aqueous methanol to afford 1 (16 mg).

The UV absorptions of 1<sup>17</sup> at 204, 238, and 289 nm indicated a tetrahydroisoquinoline chromophore.<sup>18</sup> However, its IR absorption bands at 3441  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  and at 1629, 1503, and 1482  $\text{cm}^{-1}$  resulted from the –OH and aromatic rings, which were consistent with the characteristics of an *Erythrina* alkaloid. The

HRESIMS ( $m/z$  625.2546) and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectroscopic data (Table 1) of **1** established the molecular formula  $\text{C}_{36}\text{H}_{37}\text{N}_2\text{O}_8$  [ $\text{M} + \text{H}$ ] $^+$ , appropriate for 20 degrees of unsaturation. In the  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of **1** (Table 1), four singlets ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  7.06, 7.01, 6.74, 6.71), four doublets ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  6.91 (d,  $J = 10.2$  Hz), 5.93 (d,  $J = 10.2$  Hz), 6.52 (d,  $J = 10.2$  Hz), 6.01 (d,  $J = 10.2$  Hz)), two methylenedioxy groups ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  5.97, 5.96, and  $5.95 \times 2$ ), and two methoxyl groups ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$   $3.27 \times 2$ ) indicated that **1** might be an *Erythrina* alkaloid dimer. In the  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectrum (Table 1 and Figure S-2 (Supporting Information)), 13 quaternary carbons ( $\delta_{\text{C}}$   $147.3 \times 4$ , 143.5, 137.7, 136.5,  $133.1 \times 2$ ,  $132.5 \times 2$ , 69.6, 68.6), 7 methylenes ( $\delta_{\text{C}}$   $101.5 \times 2$ , 60.2, 53.6, 41.5, 52.3, 41.0), 14 methines ( $\delta_{\text{C}}$  133.6, 132.5, 125.4, 123.9, 125.9, 107.3, 107.1, 105.5, 105.0, 77.0, 76.6, 67.0,  $64.5 \times 2$ ), and 2 methoxyl groups ( $\delta_{\text{C}}$   $55.4 \times 2$ ) further suggested that **1** was a dimeric alkaloid, consisting of an erythrinine unit.<sup>19</sup> The C-11/11' hydroxyl groups were determined using the HMBC correlations of 11-OH ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  4.69)/C-10 ( $\delta_{\text{C}}$  53.6) and C-12 ( $\delta_{\text{C}}$  133.1), and of 11'-OH ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  4.57)/C-10' ( $\delta_{\text{C}}$  52.3) and C-12' ( $\delta_{\text{C}}$  133.1). Two typical C-3(3') methoxyl groups were supported by HMBC correlations of  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  3.76 (H-3)/ $\delta_{\text{C}}$  69.6 (C-5), 123.9 (C-1), and 55.4 (OMe) and of  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  3.82 (H-3')/ $\delta_{\text{C}}$  68.6 (C-5'), 125.4 (C-1') and 55.4. The 11(11')-OH that resonated at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  4.74/4.73 was assigned as  $\beta$  because of ab  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  4.76 (H-11) in the  $\beta$  isomer and ab  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  4.14 in the  $\alpha$  isomer.<sup>20</sup> This presumption was supported by the ROESY correlations of H-11(11')/H-4(4') (Figure 2). The OMe groups

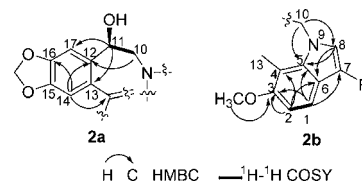


**Figure 2.** Key ROESY correlations of unit B in **1** and structure determined by X-ray diffraction of the erythrinine (**3**) unit of **1** and **2**.

at C-3(3') were  $\alpha$ -oriented through the ROESY correlations of H-3(3')/H-14(14'). Alkaloid **1** lacked a methylene group and a singlet  $\text{sp}^2$  methine signal on the basis of a comparison with the  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR data from a pair of erythrinines; instead,  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  67.0 (d) and 136.5 (s) were present in **1**. Additionally, the HMBC correlations from a singlet at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  4.96 (s, H-8') to  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  60.2 (C-8), 136.5 (C-7), 137.7 (C-6), 143.5 (C-6'), 52.3 (C-10'), 68.6 (C-5'), and 125.9 (C-7') indicated that both units were connected via C-7/8'. H-8' was determined to be the  $\alpha$  configuration through the NOEs of H-8'/H-10' $\beta$ , H-10' $\alpha$ /H-11', and H-8'/14', which was its preferred conformation. Unfortunately, attempts to prepare a single crystal of this molecule have not been successful. However, the X-ray diffraction of the alkaloid **3**<sup>21</sup> unit of **1** ( $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{22} = 206^\circ$  (c 0.36,  $\text{CH}_3\text{OH}$ ), for NMR spectral data see Figures S-14 and S-15 in the Supporting Information) (Figure 2) indicated that its configuration was 3R,5S,11R: namely, erythrinine. In addition, the configuration of C-5 was S in all reported *Erythrina* alkaloids. Nevertheless, the absolute configuration of **1** was determined to be 3(3')R,5R,5'S,8'S,11(11')R rather than 3(3')R,5(S')S,8'S,11(11')R due to polymerization. All the signals of  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR were assigned by HSQC, HMBC,  $^1\text{H}$ - $^1\text{H}$  COSY, and ROESY spectra.

The HRESIMS ( $m/z$  621.2229) of **2**<sup>22</sup> suggested the molecular formula as  $\text{C}_{36}\text{H}_{33}\text{N}_2\text{O}_8$  [ $\text{M} + \text{H}$ ] $^+$ : two additional

degrees of unsaturation in comparison to **1**. The partial signals in the  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectrum of alkaloid **2** (Table 1 or Figures S-7 and S-8 in the Supporting Information) were close to those of **1**, also possessing an erythrinine unit. In comparison with the  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR data of erythrinine, the remaining data for **2** resulted from  $\text{sp}^2$  signals, except for an oxymethine ( $\delta_{\text{C}}$  70.4) and nitrogen-substituted methylene ( $\delta_{\text{C}}$  60.0), which were coupled with each other in the  $^1\text{H}$ - $^1\text{H}$  COSY spectrum (Figure 3). In addition, a



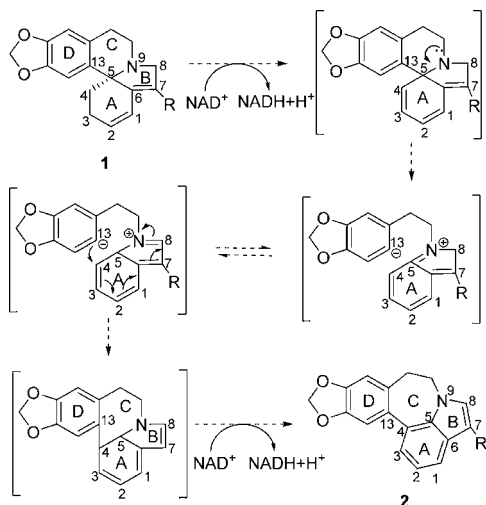
**Figure 3.** Key HMBC and  $^1\text{H}$ - $^1\text{H}$  COSY correlations of structural fractions of erythrivarine B (**2**).

missing  $\text{sp}^3$  quaternary signal of ab  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  67 (C-5) in **2** indicated the erythrinine skeleton rearranged at the bond concerned with C-5. In the HMBC spectrum, the correlations from  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  4.99 (H-11) to  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  104.4 (d) and 124.3 (s) were assigned to the two carbon signals to C-17 and C-13, respectively. Another singlet at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  7.38 (H-14) showed the same correlations to  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  147.6 (s), 138.8 (s), and 112.5 (s), and the three carbon signals were assigned to C-16, C-12, and C-4, respectively. Thus, the **2a** moiety was determined (Figure 3). One of a pair of olefinic protons at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  6.94 (d,  $J = 8.4$  Hz) correlated with C-4, and  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  124.3 (s) and 153.5 (s), together with the other proton at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  7.62 (d,  $J = 8.4$  Hz), correlated with  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  153.5 (s) and 135.9 (s), suggesting the presence of another benzene ring adjacent to C-13. The methoxy was positioned at C-3 because of its HMBC correlation with  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  153.5. The signal at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  4.45 (H-10) showed HMBC correlations to  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  130.0 (d) and 135.9 (C-5), and the fourth carbon was assigned to C-8. In addition, the correlation between  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  7.03 (H-8) and  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  124.3 (C-6) indicated the presence of a pyrrole ring, considering its degree of unsaturation. The proposed pyrrole ring was confirmed by the HMBC cross peaks of  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  7.62 (H-1) with  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  115.4 (C-7) and of  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  5.19 (H-8') in the erythrinine unit with C-7, C-6, and C-8. These cross peaks and the correlations of  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  7.03 with  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  67.7 (C-8') indicated that both units were connected via C-7/8'. Thus, **2b** was determined. Alkaloid **2** was sequentially named as erythrivarine B.

The skeleton of alkaloid **1** consisted of two 6/6/5/6-ring spiro benzyloisoquinolines (**3**), while **2** possessed a new 6/7/5/6 fused ring system. Alkaloid **2** had the same stereoconfiguration as **1** on the basis of the chemical shifts, ROESY correlations, and biosynthetic pathway. This new fused ring system might be derived from the erythrinine unit via oxidation and rearrangement. First, oxidation of **1** by  $\text{NAD}^+$  (or FAD) gave a triene system, 3,4-dehydro erythrivarine A. Then an intermediate with a  $\text{C}_5/\text{N}_9$  iminium ion and an anion in the benzene ring was generated. Simultaneously, the  $\text{C}_5/\text{N}_9$  iminium ion in the intermediate tautomerized to  $\text{C}_8/\text{N}_9$ , which was a better conjugation system. Subsequently, attack from the anion in the benzene ring at the ring A and successive migration of the double bonds yielded the new seven-membered ring C. Finally, the A ring was oxidated again by  $\text{NAD}^+$  (or FAD) to produce **2** (Scheme 1). Thus, the genus *Erythrina* of the family leguminosae could be considered as a possible new source for unique natural products.



Scheme 1. Possible Skeletal Rearrangement between 1 and 2



Alkaloids **1** and **2** were evaluated for their cytotoxicity against three human cancer cell lines, HeLa, SGC-7901 gastric cancer, and A-549 lung cancer, using the MTT method reported previously.<sup>15a</sup> Unfortunately, none of them showed positive activity.

## ■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### Supporting Information

Figures giving 1D and 2D NMR data of erythrivarines A and B. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

## ■ AUTHOR INFORMATION

### Corresponding Authors

\*E-mail for Y.Z.: [biochem@mail.kib.ac.cn](mailto:biochem@mail.kib.ac.cn).

\*E-mail for X.-H.C.: [xhcai@mail.kib.ac.cn](mailto:xhcai@mail.kib.ac.cn).

### Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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(16) The flowers of *E. variegata* were collected in February 2014 in Simao of Yunnan Province, People's Republic of China, and identified by Dr. Chun-Xia Zeng. A voucher specimen (Cai20140207) has been deposited in the State Key Laboratory of Phytochemistry and Plant Resources in West China, Kunming Institute of Botany, the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

(17) Erythrivarine A: white powder;  $[\alpha]_D^{23} = -165^\circ$  (*c* 0.10, CH<sub>3</sub>OH); UV (CH<sub>3</sub>OH)  $\lambda_{\max}$  204 (4.22), 238 (3.88), and 289 (3.46) nm; IR (KBr)  $\nu_{\max}$  3441, 2924, 1629, 1503, 1482, 1234, 1100, and 1040 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR data, Table 1; positive ESIMS *m/z* 625 [M + H]<sup>+</sup>, HRESIMS *m/z* 625.2546 [M + H]<sup>+</sup> (calcd for C<sub>36</sub>H<sub>37</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>8</sub> 625.2550).

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(21) (a) Crystal data for *cu\_wec1\_0m*: C<sub>18</sub>H<sub>19</sub>NO<sub>4</sub>, *M* = 313.34, monoclinic, *a* = 19.1884(7) Å, *b* = 9.1223(3) Å, *c* = 8.7982(3) Å,  $\alpha$  = 90.00°,  $\beta$  = 90.5400(10)°,  $\gamma$  = 90.00°, *V* = 1539.99(9) Å<sup>3</sup>, *T* = 296(2) K, space group C2, *Z* = 4,  $\mu$ (Cu K $\alpha$ ) = 0.784 mm<sup>-1</sup>, 7056 reflections measured, 2563 independent reflections (*R*<sub>int</sub> = 0.0376). The final *R*1 value is 0.0391 (*I* > 2 $\sigma$ (*I*)). The final *wR*2(*F*<sup>2</sup>) value is 0.1043 (*I* > 2 $\sigma$ (*I*)). The final *R*1 value is 0.0392 (all data). The final *wR*2(*F*<sup>2</sup>) value is 0.1045 (all data). The goodness of fit on *F*<sup>2</sup> is 1.079. The Hooft parameter is 0.14(6) for 1147 Bijvoet pairs. The CCDC deposit number is 1022542. Copies of these data can be obtained, free of charge, on application to the CCDC via [www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/conts/retrieving.html](http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/conts/retrieving.html) (or Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1EZ, U.K., fax +44 1223 336033, e-mail [deposit@ccdc.cam.ac.uk](mailto:deposit@ccdc.cam.ac.uk)). (b) Hooft, R. W. W.; Straver, L. H.; Spek, A. L. *J. Appl. Crystallogr.* **2008**, *41*, 96–103.

(22) Erythrivarine B: yellow powder;  $[\alpha]_D^{23} = -114^\circ$  (*c* 0.10, CH<sub>3</sub>OH); UV (CH<sub>3</sub>OH)  $\lambda_{\max}$  203 (4.01), 233 (3.80), 297 (3.30), 312 (3.31), and 438 (2.43) nm; IR (KBr)  $\nu_{\max}$  3441, 1629, 1503, 1480, 1235, 1098, and 1038 cm<sup>-1</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR data, Table 1; positive ESIMS *m/z* 621 [M + H]<sup>+</sup>, HRESIMS *m/z* 621.2229 [M + H]<sup>+</sup> (calcd for C<sub>36</sub>H<sub>33</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>8</sub> 621.2237).