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Transfer of the R¹C-N(*t*Boc)-CR² Unit from 2,4-Dihydropyrrolo[3,4-*b*]indoles to Dienophiles by Diels-Alder and Retro-Diels-Alder Reactions

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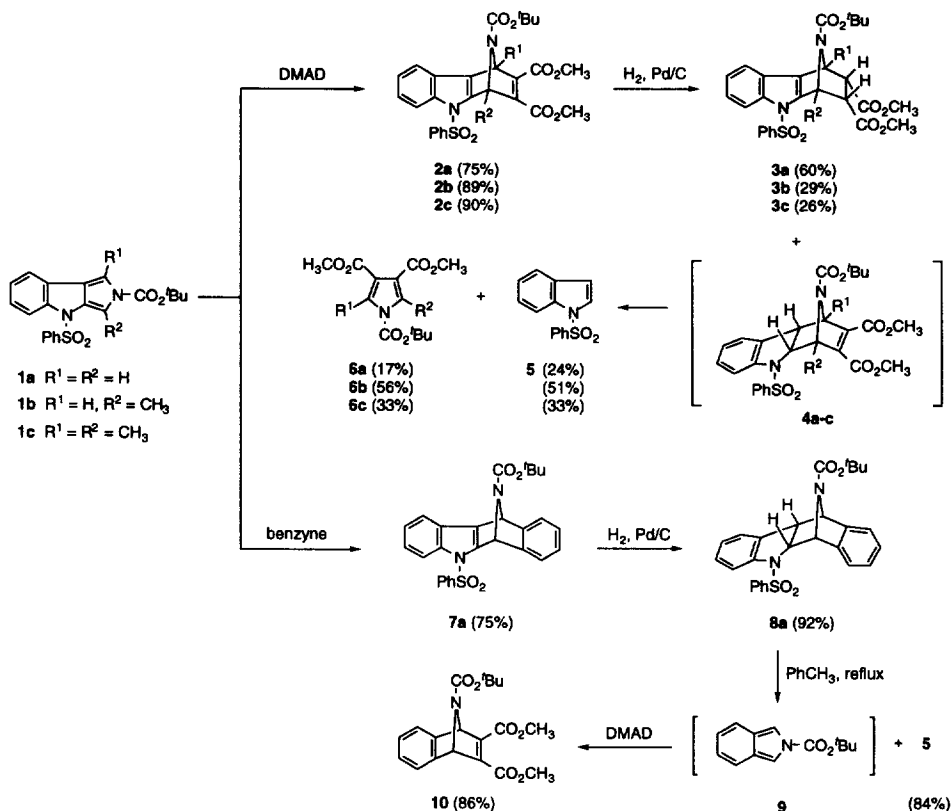
Abstract: Hydrogenation of Diels-Alder Adducts **2a-c** and **7a** of 2,4-dihydropyrrolo[3,4-*b*]indoles **1a-c** and DMAD or benzyne induced retro-Diels-Alder reactions to give indole **5** and pyrroles **6a-c** or isoindole **9**.

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In our previous study we had reported the efficient synthesis of 2,4-dihydropyrrolo[3,4-*b*]indole ring systems **1**, and their facile Diels-Alder reactions with reactive dienophiles.¹ This cycloaddition reaction of 2,4-dihydropyrrolo[3,4-*b*]indole was later applied to the total synthesis of anticancer alkaloid ellipticine.² In this letter, we describe the interesting Diels-Alder and retro-Diels-Alder reactions of 2,4-dihydropyrrolo[3,4-*b*]indole,³ which effect the transfer of R¹C-N(*t*Boc)-CR² unit⁴ from 2,4-dihydropyrrolo[3,4-*b*]indoles to dienophiles.

Diels-Alder reaction of **1a-c** with dimethyl acetylenedicarboxylate (DMAD) gave cycloadducts **2a-c** in good to excellent yields (75-90%). Hydrogenation of **2a-c** using 10% Pd on carbon as catalyst afforded compounds **3a-c** and retro-Diels-Alder products **5** and **6a-c**. Apparently hydrogenation **2a-c** occurred not only at the electron-deficient double bond but also at the indole portion to give **3a-c** and **4a-c**. Indolines **4a-c** immediately underwent retro-Diels-Alder reactions to give indole **5** and pyrrole derivatives **6a-c**. In order to make hydrogenation to occur specifically at the indole double bond, benzyne was used as the dienophile. Thus, Diels-Alder reaction of **1a** with benzyne, generated from benzenediazonium-2-carboxylate, gave cycloadduct **7a** (75%). Hydrogenation of **7a** with 10% Pd on carbon as catalyst yielded a stable compound **8a** (92%). Heating **8a** in refluxing toluene in the presence of DMAD produced indole **5** (84%) and cycloadduct **10** (86%).

In conclusion, we have demonstrated the transfer of the R¹C-N(*t*Boc)-CR² unit of 2,4-dihydropyrrolo[3,4-*b*]indole to dienophiles, such as DMAD and benzyne, by Diels-Alder



and retro-Diels-Alder reaction. It is important to note that the indole double bond in the bridged bicyclic systems **2a-c** and **7a** can be hydrogenated readily. We also found that compound **8a**, the formal cycloadduct of indole and isoindole, is unusually stable at room temperature. Other closely related Diels-Alder and retro-Diels-Alder reaction sequences are currently under investigation in our laboratory.

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