ORGANIC LETTERS

2007
Vol. 9, No. 21
4127−4129

Isatisine A, a Novel Alkaloid with an Unprecedented Skeleton from Leaves of *Isatis indigotica*

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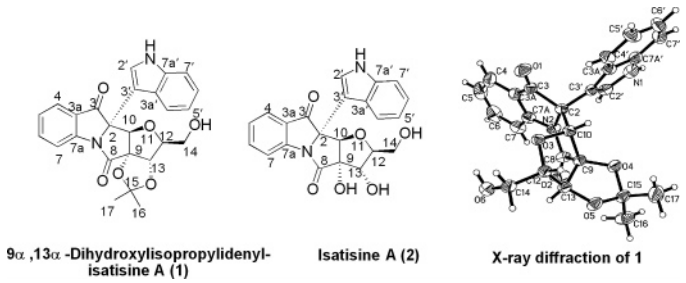
Received July 3, 2007

ABSTRACT



9α,13α-Dihydroxylisopropylidenylisatisine A (1), which was derived from isatisine A (2) and possessed an unprecedented fused pentacyclic skeleton, was isolated from the leaves of *Isatis indigotica* Fort. The structure and relative configuration were elucidated on the basis of extensive NMR analyses and finally determined by single-crystal X-ray diffraction. Compound 1 showed moderate anti-HIV-1 activity with EC_{50} = 37.8 μM and SI = 7.98.

Isatis indigotica Fort. (Cruciferae) is a biennial herbaceous plant species widely distributed and cultivated in China. The roots and leaves, respectively, named "Ban-Lan-Gen" and "Da-Qing-Ye" in Chinese, have been used as a traditional Chinese medicine for the treatment of viral diseases including influenza, viral pneumonia, mumps, and hepatitis for hundreds of years in China.[1] Diverse structures and significant biological activities of this plant have been attracting considerable interest. Chemical investigation of this plant has led to the isolation of indigotin, indirubin, epigotrin, 2-hydroxy-3-butenyl thiocyanate, 3-(2′-hydroxyphenyl)-4(3*H*)-quinazolinone, purin, isaindigotidione, organic acids, and many amino acids.[2−6] Recently an anti-influenza virus effect of indirubin has been documented.[7]

To find an active anti-HIV compound from this plant, the leaves of *I. indigotica* were investigated, and we reported

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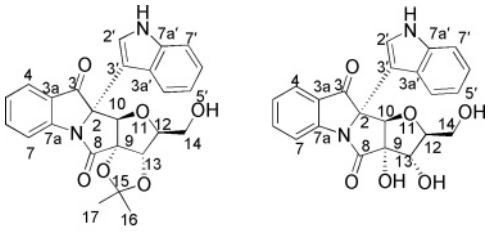
10.1021/ol701540y CCC: $37.00
Published on Web 09/13/2007

11 known compounds in our previous research.[8] During our study on this plant, a unique alkaloid was isolated. This paper deals with the isolation and structural elucidation of compound **1** through extensive spectroscopic analyses and single-crystal X-ray crystallography, as well as its anti-HIV-1 activity in vitro.

The leaves of *I. indigotica* were collected from Anhui province, China, in November 2004 and identified by professor Ya-qiu Zhou of Anhui College of Traditional Chinese Medicine (voucher No. 2004-11-5). The air-dried and powdered leaves (50 kg) were extracted three times with 80% EtOH for 2 h under reflux. The extract was concentrated under a vacuum to give a residue which was partitioned between petroleum ether, EtOAc, *n*-butanol, and water three times successively. After evaporation, the EtOAc fraction (120 g) was chromatographed on a silica gel column eluted with $CHCl_3$ and increasing amounts of MeOH (from 10:0 to 0:10, v/v) to give eight fractions A−H. Fraction C (6.5 g) was submitted to silica gel column chromatography (CC) with an eluent of petroleum ether/acetone (from 10:0 to 3:7) to afford fractions 1−6. Fraction 4 (1.2 g) was subjected to silica gel CC repeatedly eluting with petroleum ether/EtOAc (8:2) and further purified by Sephadex LH-20 (MeOH) to yield compound **1** (64 mg).



1 **2**

Compound **1**, $[\alpha]^{14}_{D}$ −283.15 (*c* 0.46, MeOH), was obtained as yellow needle crystals (MeOH/EtOH = 99:1, v/v).[9] The negative FAB MS gave a quasimolecular ion peak at 445 $[M - 1]^-$, in aggrement with the molecular formula of $C_{25}H_{22}N_2O_6$ revealed by negative HR-ESIMS, demonstrating 16 degrees of unsaturation in the molecule. The IR spectrum showed the absorptions for hydroxyl (3415 cm^{-1}), carbonyl (1717 cm^{-1}), and the aromatic ring (1603, 1470 cm^{-1}). The ^{13}C NMR spectrum exhibited 25 carbon resonances due to two methyls, one methylene, twelve methines, and ten quaternary carbons. The ^{13}C NMR and HSQC spectra allowed the assignments of all the protons to their bonding carbons. The ^1H NMR spectrum displayed eight aromatic protons at δ_H 8.02 (1H, br d, J = 8.1 Hz, H-7), 7.94 (1H, br d, J = 8.0 Hz, H-4′), 7.78 (1H, dd, J = 8.1, 7.5 Hz, H-6), 7.65 (1H, br d, J = 7.6 Hz, H-4), 7.38 (1H, br d, J = 8.2 Hz, H-7′), 7.33 (1H, dd, J = 7.6, 7.5 Hz, H-5), 7.16 (1H, dd, J = 7.9, 7.4 Hz, H-6′), and δ_H 7.09 (1H, dd, J = 7.4, 7.4 Hz, H-5′) (Table 1).

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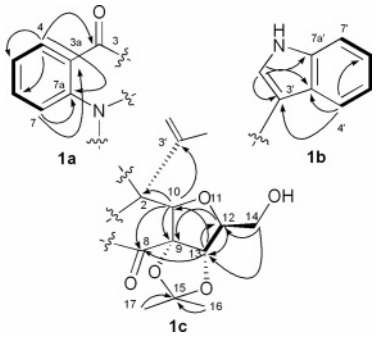
(9) Compound **1**: mp 209−210 °C; UV (MeOH) λ max (log ϵ) 217 (4.66), 240 (4.41), 258 (4.22) nm; IR (KBr) ν_{max} 3415, 2936, 1717, 1603, 1513, 1470, 1374, 1112, 1090, 748 cm^{-1}, NMR data found in Tabel 1; negative FAB MS *m*/*z* (rel. int.) 445 (100, $[M - H]^-$), 327 (15), 245 (30); the negative HR-ESIMS found 445.1410, calcd for $C_{25}H_{21}N_2O_6$ 445.1399.

Table 1. ^1H and ^{13}C NMR Data of Compound **1** (in CD_3OD)[a]

no.	δ_H (mult., J, Hz)	δ_C
2		76.3, s
3		195.7, s
3a		127.3, s
4	7.65, br d, 7.6	126.2, d
5	7.33, dd, 7.6, 7.5	127.0, d
6	7.78, dd, 8.1 7.5	137.9, d
7	8.02, br d, 8.1	117.4, d
7a		151.2, s
8		171.4, s
9		99.4, s
10	4.91, s	85.9, d
12	4.17, m	87.1, d
13	4.81, d, 3.3	87.8, d
14a	3.51, dd, 12.0, 4.2	62.5, t
14b	3.44, dd, 12.0, 4.4	
15		119.4, s
16	1.51, s	26.3, q
17	1.38, s	27.3, q
2′	7.26, s	124.3, d
3′		111.0, s
3a′		125.7, s
4′	7.94, br d, 8.0	121.2, d
5′	7.09, dd, 7.4, 7.4	120.7, d
6′	7.16, dd, 7.9, 7.4	123.3, d
7′	7.38, br d, 8.2	112.9, d
7a′		139.1, s

[a] ^1H NMR recorded at 500 MHz; ^{13}C NMR recorded at 125 MHz.

The partial structure of an ortho-substituted aromatic ring **1a** (Figure 1) was established by $^1H-^1H$ COSY (H-4/H-5, H-5/H-6, and H-6/H-7) and HMBC (H-4/C-3). Similarly, the detected correlations in $^1H-^1H$ COSY (H-4′/H-5′, H-5′/H-6′, and H-6′/H-7′) and HMBC (δ_H 7.26 correlated with C-3′, C-3a′, and C-7a′) established the fragment **1b** (Figure 1). Besides the partial structures of **1a** and **1b**, an isopropylidenyl unit was observed in the ^1H NMR (δ_H 1.38 and 1.51) and ^{13}C NMR [δ 119.4 (s), 26.3 (q), and 27.3 (q)] spectra. The presence of an isopropylidenyl unit in the molecule of compound **1** can also be supported by the HMBC spectrum in which the correlations between H-16 (δ_H 1.51, s, 3H), H-17 (δ_H 1.38, s, 3H), and C-15 were



1a **1b** **1c**

Figure 1. Fragment structures and key COSY (−) and HMBC (→) corrections of compound **1**.

displayed. The other correlations in the HMBC spectrum of compound **1** can be found as follows: H-10 (δ_H 4.91, s) with C-2, C-8, C-9, and C-3′; H-12 (δ_H 4.17, m) with C-9 and C-13; H-13 (δ_H 4.81, d, J = 3.3 Hz) with C-8, C-10, C-12, and C-14; H-14a (δ_H 3.51, dd, J = 12.0, 4.2 Hz) and H-14b (δ_H 3.44, dd, J = 12.0, 4.4 Hz) with C-12 and C-13. The above-mentioned HMBC correlation evidence, combined with the cross-peaks of H-14/H-12 and H-12/H-13 in the ^{1}H−^{1}H COSY, led to the establishment of fragment **1c** (Figure 1).

Unfortunately, the 1D and 2D NMR spectra did not provide enough information to establish the linkages of C-2, C-3, C-3′, and N-1. Thus, a single crystal of compound **1** was obtained from MeOH/EtOH (99:1, v/v), and X-ray crystallographic analysis was conducted (Figure 2),[10] which

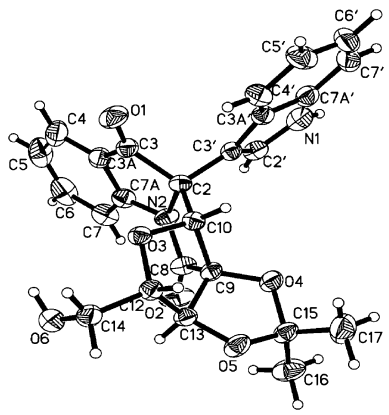


Figure 2. X-ray structure of **1** showing relative configuration.

clarified the uncertain structure and the relative stereochemistry of compound **1** as proposed and named as 9α,13α-dihydroxylisopropylidenylisatisine A. According to the IUPAC nomenclature rule and based on the chiral carbon atom with the lowest locant, the absolute stereochemistry of C-2, 9, 10, 12, and 13 was deduced as *R**, *S**, *R**, *S**, and *S**, respectively.

As far as we know, this is the first report of an alkaloid from *I. indigotica* possessing such a unique skeleton. Natural compounds containing the isopropylidenyl group have often been reported;[11−15] however, we did not know whether compound **1** was a natural product or an artifact from the experimental procedure considering the acetone as a solvent used in our purification process. To confirm the origin of compound **1**, the EtOAc fraction (1.8 g) was chromatographed on a silica gel column (petroleum ether/EtOAc, 9:1 to 1:9, v/v) to give seven fractions (1−7). TLC and HPLC were used to detect this component by comparison with the authentic sample of compound **1** (for detailed experiments, see Supporting Information), and compound **1** could not be detected in fractions 1−7, which suggested that compound **1** might be an artifact from the isolation procedure as reported.[16] Furthermore, compound **1** was acid-hydrolyzed to afford isatisine A (**2**) ($C_{22}H_{18}N_2O_6$).[17] TLC and HPLC analyses of hydrolysates demonstrated that isatisine A (**2**) could be detected in fraction 5 (for detailed experiments, see Supporting Information). Therefore, we were inclined to consider that compound **1** was an artifact and that isatisine A (**2**) was a genuine natural product in this plant.

Although compound **1** has been proved to be an acetonide of compound **2**, isatisine A (**2**) is a novel alkaloid possessing an unprecedented fused-pentacyclic skeleton (fragment C-9 to C-13) which cannot be well explained from the biogenetic view. Compound **1** was tested for cytotoxicity activity against C8166 cells (CC_{50}) using the MTT method as reported,[18] and anti-HIV-1 activity was evaluated by the inhibition assay for cytopathic effects of HIV-1(EC_{50}).[19] The compound exerted cytotoxicity against C8166 with CC_{50} = 302 μM and showed anti-HIV-1_{IIIB} activity with EC_{50} = 37.8 μM and SI (selectivity index) = 7.98.

Acknowledgment. The authors are grateful to the staff of the analytical group of the State Key Laboratory of Phytochemistry and Plant Resources in West China, Kunming Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences, for measurements of all spectra. The authors also express thanks to Prof. Ming-Jin Xie (Yunnan University, mjxie@ynu.edu.cn) for his professional measurement of the X-ray diffraction.

Supporting Information Available: General experiment and spectra (UV, IR, MS, NMR) of compound **1**. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

OL701540Y

(10) Crystallographic data of compound **1**: $C_{25}H_{22}N_2O_6$, M = 446.51, orthorhombic, space group $P222$, a = 9.8873 (16) Å, b = 11.8185 (19) Å, c = 20.1890 (3) Å, α = 90.000, β = 90.000, γ = 90.000, V = 2359.2 (7) Å^3, Z = 4. Crystal dimensions 0.09 × 0.21 × 0.38 mm^3 were used for measurements on a MAC DIP-2030K diffractometer with a graphite monochromator (ω scan, 2θ max = 56.74), Mo Kα radiation. The total number of independent reflections measured was 15 384, of which 5539 were observed ($|F|^2 \geq 2\sigma|F|^2$). Final indices: R_f = 0.0579, wR2 = 0.1220 ($w = 1/\sigma|F|^2$), S = 1.004. The crystal structure (**1**) was solved by the direct method SHELXS-97, expanded using geometrical calculations and difference Fourier techniques, and refined by least-squares calculations. Crystallographic data for the structure of compound **1** have been deposited in the Cambridge Crystallographic Date Centre (deposition number: CCDC 652447). Copies of these data can be obtained free of charge via http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/deposit (or from Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1EZ, U.K., Facsimile: (44) 01223 336033, e-mail: deposit@ccdc.cam.ac.uk).

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(17) Compound **2**: $C_{22}H_{18}N_2O_6$, ^{1}H NMR (500 MHz, CD_3OD) δ = 7.99 (1H, d, J = 8.5 Hz, H-7), 7.93 (1H, d, J = 8.0 Hz, H-4′), 7.77 (1H, dd, J = 7.5, 7.5 Hz, H-6), 7.63 (1H, d, J = 7.5 Hz, H-4), 7.33 (1H, d, J = 8.0 Hz, H-7′), 7.32 (1H, dd, J = 7.5, 7.5 Hz, H-5), 7.28 (1H, s, H-2′), 7.12 (1H, dd, J = 8.0, 7.0 Hz, H-6′), 7.05 (1H, dd, J = 7.5, 7.5 Hz, H-5′), 4.63 (1H, s, H-10), 4.05 (1H, d, J = 4.0Hz, H-13), 3.83 (1H, m, H-12), 3.38 (1H, dd, J = 11.5, 4.5 Hz, H-14a), 3.33 (1H, dd, J = 11.5, 4.5 Hz, H-14b). The negative FAB MS: m/z (%) = 405 ([M − H]$^-$, 10), 353 (10), 339 (100), 325 (90), 311 (40).

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