STEREOSELECTIVE TOTAL SYNTHESIS OF OPTICALLY ACTIVE TRANS- AND CIS-BURSERAN. DETERMINATION OF THE STEREOCHEMISTRY OF NATURAL ANTITUMOR BURSERAN

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Abstract — Optically pure trans- and cis-burseran were synthesized stereoselectively from (R)-(1-8-piperonyl-γ-butyrolactone (2). Both compounds gave satisfactory $^{13}$C NMR spectra. By comparing their behavior on gas chromatography, the naturally occurring burseran characterized as an antitumor agent was determined to be the trans-isomer.

As part of continuing studies directed towards the asymmetric total synthesis of antileukemic lignan lactones based on the novel approach to use easily available optically active γ-butyrolactone derivative (1) as a chiral synthon, we have reported the successful syntheses of optically active key intermediates (R)-(+) and (S)-(−)-2 and their application to the total syntheses of some optically active lignan lactones including, for example, (−)- and (+)-podorhizon, (−)- and (+)-deoxypodorhizon, (−)-hinokinin, (−)-isodeoxypodophyllotoxin, and (−)-isostegeane.1-4

Burseran was isolated as an antitumor compound from Bursera Microphylla (Burseraceae) and has been characterized as a lignan, 3-(3,4-methylenedioxybenzyl)-4-(3',4',5'-trimethoxybenzyl)tetrahydrofuran.5 Although the synthetic study in order to determine the stereochemistry of burseran has been undertaken, the synthetic burseran obtained was a mixture of the trans- and cis-isomer (3 and 4).
chromatographic analysis, however, showed that the natural product had a retention time identical to that component of the synthetic mixture which moved faster.\(^6\)

As this gas chromatographic behavior is the only available data to determine the diastereomeric configuration of natural burseran, it is highly necessary to achieve a new synthetic route to obtain trans- as well as cis-isomer in unequivocal way.

In the present study, we describe the stereoselective total synthesis of (-)-trans- and (+)-cis-burseran from the key intermediate (R)-(+-)-2 and also the determination of the stereochemistry of the naturally occurring antitumor burseran to be the trans-isomer based on the gas chromatographic analysis.

(-)-trans-Burseran (3) was synthesized as shown in Chart I. The key intermediate (R)-(+-)-2 was alkylated with 3,4,5-trimethoxybenzyl bromide (LDA, THF, -78°C) to give stereoselectively (-)-deoxypodorhizon (5) in 83\% yield,\(^7\) which was reduced with lithium aluminum hydride (THF) to afford the trans-diol (6) \([\alpha]_D^{20} -29.9^\circ \text{(CHCl}_3\text{)}, \text{mp} 95-96^\circ\text{C}\) in 84\% yield. Treatment of 6 with p-TsCl in pyridine
(-23°C, 4 h; reflux 1.5 h) gave, after column chromatography (SiO₂, Et₂O/CHCl₃ =1/4), (-)-trans-burseran (3) ([α] D⁰ -34.8° (CHCl₃)) in 72% yield. IR and MASS spectra of this synthetic 3 are identical with the reported spectra of natural burseran.⁵,⁸

(+)-cis-Burseran (4) was synthesized stereoselectively as shown in Chart II. The mixture of the crude hydroxyalkylation products (7) prepared from (R)-(+)2,⁴

Chart II
was tosylated (n-BuLi, p-TsCl, THF, -78~25°C, 3 h) followed by the treatment with KOBu in methanol to give (-)-anhydropodorhizol (8) ([α]_D^{21} = -54.1° (CHCl_3), lit., [α]_D^{21} = -55.2° (CHCl_3)) in 80% overall yield. Catalytic hydrogenation of 8 over 5% Pd-C in acetic acid gave, after column chromatography (SiO_2, Et_2O/CHCl_3=1/99), (+)-cis-dihydroanhydropodorhizol (9) containing trans-isomer (5) (ca. 30%) in 63% yield. Lithium aluminum hydride reduction of the mixture in THF gave, after careful separation using PTLC (SiO_2, Et_2O/CHCl_3=1/1), the pure cis-diol (10) ([α]_D^{20} = +9.65° (CHCl_3)) and the trans-diol (6), in 50 and 15% yields respectively. By the same way with that of the preparation of the trans isomer, the cis-diol (10) was converted to (+)-cis-burseran (4) ([α]_D^{20} = +5.4° (CHCl_3)) in 60% yield. IR and MASS spectra of this synthetic (+)-cis-burseran are also identical with the reported spectra of the natural burseran.\(^5\)

These trans- and cis-burseran gave the satisfactory $^{13}$C NMR spectra as shown in Table. It was expectedly shown that the peaks of the cis-compound were in higher field than those of the trans-isomer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carbon</th>
<th>3(trans)ppm</th>
<th>4(cis)ppm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1(or2)</td>
<td>73.2(T)</td>
<td>72.0(T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2(or1)</td>
<td>73.2(T)</td>
<td>71.9(T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3(or4)</td>
<td>46.6(D)</td>
<td>43.8(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4(or3)</td>
<td>46.3(D)</td>
<td>43.6(D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5(or6)</td>
<td>39.9(T)</td>
<td>33.9(T)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6(or5)</td>
<td>39.2(T)</td>
<td>33.4(T)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

JEOL FX100. TMS as an internal standard. CDCl_3 as a solvent. The figures in parenthesis are the multiplicities in the case of off resonance.

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1536
Finally it became clear from the gas chromatographic analysis using the same type column as reported before\textsuperscript{6,11} that the synthetic trans-isomer moved faster than the cis-isomer.\textsuperscript{12} Therefore it is concluded that the natural antitumor burseran is trans-burseran (3).\textsuperscript{6} However, since the optical rotation value of the natural burseran is not available,\textsuperscript{13} the absolute stereochemistry of burseran still remains unknown.

The successful stereoselective total synthesis of (-)-trans- and (+)-cis-burseran from (R)-(+)\textsuperscript{2}-2, as well as the reported synthesis of (S)-(−)-2,\textsuperscript{1} holds promise for the asymmetric total synthesis of natural burseran from the chiral synthon (1).

Biological activities of synthetic burserans will be reported in future.\textsuperscript{14}

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References and Notes

7. Satisfactory spectral (NMR, IR, and MASS) or analytical data were obtained for all compounds.
8. These spectra are also identical with those of the antipodal (+)-trans-burseran, which was previously synthesized applying the new method from the chiral butenolide. See reference 3.
10. Isomerization of the initial cis-product into the trans-isomer would occurred during the hydrogenation, or during the removal of acetic acid. See reference 9.
11. Stainless column, 1 m, 15% QF 1 on diasolid A, 258°C, carrier gas N₂ 1 Kg/cm².
12. Under the condition cited in reference 11, the retention times of the trans- and cis-burseran were 1.5 and 2.2 min respectively.
13. More information of natural burseran from Drs. J. R. Cole and E. R. Trumbull was not available. See references 5 and 6.
14. Studies are now in progress by Professor Den-ichi Mizuno and his coworkers of Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Tokyo.

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