Natural Products

DOI: 10.1002/anie.200905892

The Twisted Side Chain of Antillatoxin is Important for Potent Toxicity: Total Synthesis and Biological Evaluation of Antillatoxin and Analogues**

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Voltage-gated sodium channels (VGSC) are transmembrane proteins which initiate action potentials in nerve, muscle, and other electrically excitable cells, thereby playing a central role in neurotransmission.[1] VGSC modulators are therefore useful research tools for neuroscience, as well as therapeutic agents for neurological disorders.[2] Its six distinct specific binding sites are classified with respect to the binding characteristics of the molecules.[3]

Antillatoxin (**1**, Scheme 1), a cyclic peptide and potent toxin, was isolated from the marine cyanobacterium *Lyngbya majuscula*.[4,5] It has been shown to act as a VGSC activator and to bind to a hitherto unknown site of the protein distinct from other known binding sites.[6] The specific functional properties of **1** confer it with the potential as a new tool for investigating the VGSC functions.

One of the characteristic structural features of antillatoxin is a 9-*tert*-butyl-6,8-dimethyl-6,8-diene unit attached to C5 of the cyclic peptide backbone. We speculated that the unique three-dimensional shape of the lipophilic side chain may play an important role in allosteric activation of the channels through hydrophobic interactions. Herein we report total syntheses of **1** and three side-chain analogues, which were used to uncover the structural basis for the importance of the side chain in the neurotoxicity of **1**.

We planned to devise a unified strategy for synthesizing **1** and its analogues with distinct side chains (Scheme 1). Therefore, the diene was envisioned to be appended to the common intermediate **21** through C7–C8 bond formation by a Suzuki–Miyaura coupling reaction.[7] This synthetic scheme would allow us to access a variety of side chain modified analogues by varying the final reaction. As an initial phase in the study of the structure-activity relationship at an atomic level, we designed the C8-demethyl antillatoxin **2** to investigate the impact of one methyl substitution. Deletion of the CH_3 group (C15) would specifically modify the conformation of the 6,8-diene without changing the overall shape and the chemical properties of **1**.

The synthesis of **1** and **2** started from an *anti*-selective asymmetric aldol reaction[8] between aldehyde **4**[9] and silyl enol ether **5** to set the two stereocenters at C4 and C5. The resulting adduct **6** (96% *ee*) was recrystallized to give an enantiopure material. After protection of the secondary alcohol of **6** as a TES ether, ester **7** was reduced to the primary alcohol **8**. One-carbon homologation from **8** to **10**, through tosylate **9**, and subsequent DIBAL-H reduction of the nitrile afforded aldehyde **11**. Next, a Mannich reaction of **11** at C3 installed the requisite *exo*-methylene moiety to provide **12**,[10] which was reduced to alcohol **13** using DIBAL-H. The primary alcohol of **13** was in turn converted into the highly unstable allylic triflate, which was displaced in situ by the carbanion generated from methylthiomethylphenyl sulfone,[11] leading to **14**. Finally, TBAF treatment of TES ether **14** produced fragment **15**, the right half of antillatoxin and its analogues.

Coupling of the fragment **16**,[5] the left half of the molecule, with **15** using EDC·HCl and DMAP resulted in the formation of ester **17**, and the next two steps efficiently transformed the phenylsulfonyl methylthiomethyl group at C1 of **17** into the thioester of **19**. Chemoselective *m*CPBA oxidation of sulfide **17** generated sulfoxide **18**, which underwent a Pummerer reaction by the action of trifluoroacetic anhydride and 2,6-di-*tert*-butyl-pyridine in toluene.[12] The reaction led to thioester **19** after PhSH attack on the resultant trifluoroacetate with concomitant ejection of phenyl sulfinic acid.[13] In the sequence going from **14** to **18**, the use of the C1-acetal structure as a thioester surrogate was particularly important for the success of the synthesis, because premature formation of an sp^2 carbon center at C1 allowed the C3/C12 *exo* olefin to isomerize into a C2/C3 conjugated olefin under the conditions used.

After removal of the Boc group of **19** under acidic conditions, thioester **20** was effectively activated by silver nitrate in the presence of HOAt and $i\mathrm{Pr_2NEt}$ to give the common intermediate **21** through a high yielding macrolactam formation.

The two boronic esters **22**[14] and **23** were then coupled with vinyl iodide **21** using a reagent combination of $[PdCl_2(dppf)]$, Ph_3As, and Cs_2CO_3,[15] giving rise to antillatoxin **1** and its C8-demethylated analogue **2**, respectively. Hence, a unified synthetic route to the antillatoxin structures was successfully developed.

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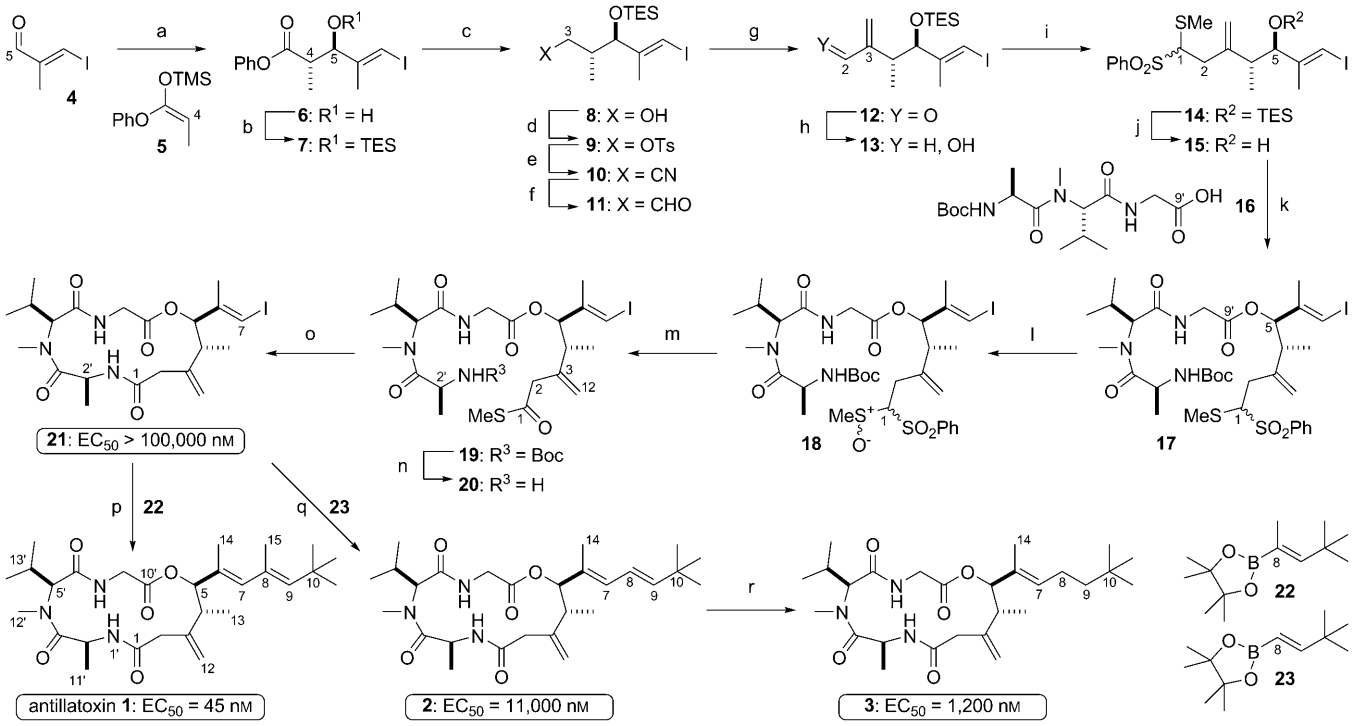
[**] This work was supported financially by Grant-in-Aids for Young Scientists (S) and the Kato Memorial Bioscience Foundation through grants awarded to M.I. The Research Foundation for Opto-Science and Technology are acknowledged for support for S.M. We thank Prof. M. Hirama (Tohoku University) for valuable suggestions, and Dr. N. Lee and M. Iida for technical assistance.

Supporting information for this article is available on the WWW under http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/anie.200905892.



Scheme 1. Total synthesis and cytotoxicity of antillatoxin **1** and the side chain modified analogues. Reagents and conditions: a) **5** (1.2 equiv), $Zr(OtBu)_4$ (0.1 equiv), (*R*)-3,3′-I_2-binol (0.12 equiv), *n*PrOH (0.8 equiv), H_2O (0.2 equiv), toluene, 0 °C, 80% (83% *de*, 96% *ee*); recrystallization from AcOEt, 89% (>99% *ee*); b) TESCl, imidazole, DMF, RT, 100%; c) DIBAL-H, CH_2Cl_2, −78 °C, 100%; d) TsCl, pyridine, RT, 94%; e) NaCN, DMSO, 45 °C, 94%; f) DIBAL-H, CH_2Cl_2, −78 °C; g) pyrrolidine, propionic acid, aq HCHO, *i*PrOH, 45 °C, 82% (2 steps); h) DIBAL-H, CH_2Cl_2, −78 °C, 87%; i) Tf_2O, 2,6-lutidine, 4 Å M.S., CH_2Cl_2, −78 °C then $PhSO_2CH_2SMe$, NaH, DMF, −78 °C to −50 °C, 69%; j) TBAF, THF, 0 °C, 96%; k) **16** (2.0 equiv), EDC·HCl, DMAP, CH_2Cl_2, RT, 83%; l) *m*CPBA, CH_2Cl_2, −78 °C to −20 °C; m) $(CF_3CO)_2O$, 2,6-di-*tert*-butylpyridine, toluene, −78 °C to −40 °C, then PhSH, −40 °C, 67% (2 steps); n) CF_3COOH/CH_2Cl_2 = 1:5, RT; o) $AgNO_3$, HOAt, *i*Pr_2NEt, DMF, 0 °C, 71% (2 steps); p) **22** (4.0 equiv), $[PdCl_2(dppf)\cdot CH_2Cl_2]$ (0.25 equiv), Ph_3As (0.5 equiv), Cs_2CO_3, THF, RT, 78%; q) **23** (4.0 equiv), $[PdCl_2(dppf)\cdot CH_2Cl_2]$ (0.25 equiv), Ph_3As (0.5 equiv), Cs_2CO_3, THF, RT, 92%; r) H_2, 20% $Pd(OH)_2$/C, benzene, RT, 72%. binol = 2,2-dihydroxy-1,1-binaphthyl, *m*CPBA = *meta*-chloroperbenzoic acid, DIBAL-H = diisobutylaluminum hydride, DMF = *N*,*N*-dimethylformamide, DMAP = 4-dimethylaminopyridine, DMSO = dimethylsulfoxide, dppf = 1,1′-bis(diphenylphosphino)ferrocene, EDC = 1-ethyl-3-(3-dimethylaminopropyl)carbodiimide, HOAt = 1-hydroxy-7-azabenzotriazole, M.S. = molecular sieves, TBAF = tetra-*n*-butylammonium fluoride, TES = triethylsilyl, THF = tetrahydrofuran, Tf = trifluoromethanesulfonyl, TMS = trimethylsilyl, Ts = *para*-toluenesulfonyl.

The biological activities of **1**, **2**, and **21** as VGSC activators were evaluated by a neurotoxicity assay using Neuro 2a mouse neuroblastoma cells, which express VGSCs on their membrane (Scheme 1).[6c] In sharp contrast to potent toxicity of the parent natural product **1** (EC_{50} = 45 nM), vinyl iodide **21** exhibited more than 2000-fold weaker activity (EC_{50} > 100000 nM), indicating the significance of the bulky *tert*-butyl-substituted group at C7. Most interestingly, the C8-demethylated analogue **2** was found to be approximately 250 times less toxic than **1** (EC_{50} = 11000 nM), even though the dienes of **1** and **2** had the similar steric bulk. This result clearly shows that the methyl substituent at C8 has a decisive role in the potent neurotoxicity of antillatoxin.

To gain insight into the relationship between the assay data and the conformational behavior of the molecules, detailed NMR analyses of **1** and **2** were carried out (Figure 1). The ^1H NMR chemical shifts for the core of **2** were in excellent agreement with those of **1**.[16] Thus, the structure of the macrolactam core of **2** was virtually identical to that of **1**, and deletion of the CH_3 group (C15) had no influence over the specific conformation of the macrocycle. In contrast, the conformations of the side-chains of **1** and **2** were different

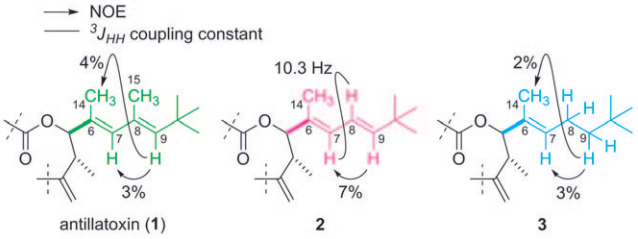


Figure 1. NOE and $^3J_{HH}$ coupling data of the diene moieties of antillatoxin (**1**), 8-demethyl-antillatoxin (**2**), and 8-demethyl-8,9-dihydro-antillatoxin (**3**). The side chains are shown in green (**1**), magenta (**2**), and cyan (**3**).

based on the ^1H NMR chemical shifts as well as $^3J_{HH}$ and NOE data (Figure 1). The C8-demethylated antillatoxin **2** shows a NOE only between the hydrogen atoms on C9 and C7 (designated C9–H and C7–H), and the value of $^3J_{HH}$ between C7–H and C8–H was measured as 10.3 Hz. Both of these findings indicated that the conjugated diene moiety of **2** adopts a planar *s-trans* conformation around the C7–C8 bond

as a single stable isomer, and thus that the C6=C7–C8=C9 torsion angle (ϕ) should be approximately 180°. In contrast, the diene of antillatoxin **1** apparently deviates from the planar conjugated conformation, since C9–H of **1** is in spatial proximity not only to C7–H in a 1,3-relationship, but also to the C14–H in a 1,5-relationship, based on the NOE data.

To clarify the conformational preference of the dienes of **1** and **2**, ab initio calculations were carried out using model structures at the RHF/6-31G** level (Figure 2a).[16] The C6=C7–C8=C9 torsion angle (ϕ) was varied from 0° to 360° and the energy was minimized using MMFF[17] prior to the MO calculations, while the coordinates of the macrolactam core (shown in gray in Figure 2a) were fixed as the energy minimized conformation of **1** which satisfied the NMR data. The diene moiety of C8-demethylated **2** was found to exhibit a single most-stable *s-trans* conformation ($\phi = 181°$), which agreed with the results of the NOE experiment, while the diene of **1** was found to have a distinctive energy profile. The high energy of the *s-trans* conformation ($\phi = 180°$) of **1** would be explained by a greater destabilization energy from the steric interactions between the CH_3 groups (C14 and C15) in a 1,3-relationship compared to the stabilizing conjugation energy gained from the planar conformation.[18] Instead, the diene of **1** has two stable twisted conformations ($\phi = 57°$ and 296°), in which C9–H is proximal to both C7–H and C14–H, as shown in the NOE data. Importantly, the three-dimensional orientation of the bulky *tert*-butyl group in these two conformations of **1** is significantly different from that of **2**.[19]

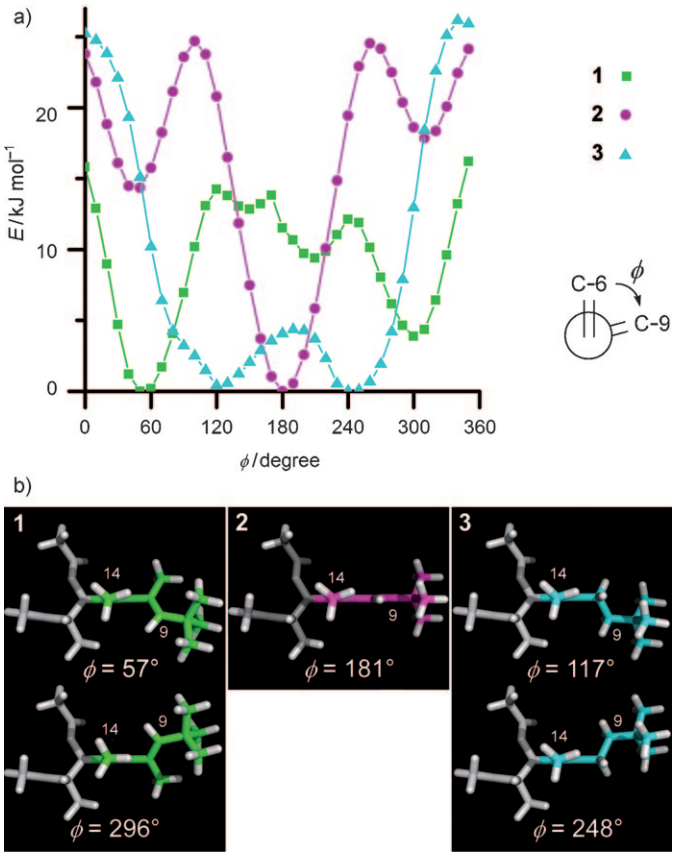


Figure 2. a) Ab initio conformation energy profiles of the ϕ [C6=C7–C8=C9] dihedral angles of **1**, **2**, and **3**. b) The optimized geometries for the most stable conformations are presented in stick model (**1**: 57°, **2**: 181°, **3**: 248°). The second most stable conformations are also shown for **1** (296°, 3.2 kJ mol^{-1}) and **3** (117°, 0.54 kJ mol^{-1}).

Based on the NMR and simulation data for **1** and **2**, we hypothesized that the twisted shape of the *tert*-butyl-substituted diene of **1** was critical in the allosteric activation of the sodium channel, resulting in neurotoxicity.

This hypothesis was additionally corroborated by the synthesis and biological evaluation of analogue **3**. It had tetrahedral sp^3 carbon atoms at C8 and C9 in place of the planar sp^2 carbon atoms of **2**, and is therefore expected to provide more rotational freedom around the C8–C9 bond (Scheme 1). Chemoselective hydrogenation of the C8–C9 double bond of triene **2** was accomplished using $Pd(OH)_2/C$ under a hydrogen atmosphere in benzene, giving rise to 8-demethyl-8,9-dihydro-antillatoxin **3**. Whereas the ^1H NMR spectrum of the cyclic peptide core of **3** indicated that the molecular topology of the cycle of **1** and **2** is preserved,[16] **3** showed NOEs between C9–H and both C7–H and C14–H, suggesting a twisted conformation of the side chain (Figure 1). Nonplanar gauche conformations with $\phi = 117°$ and 248° were found to be the two most stable conformations based on ab initio calculations (Figure 2b). Notably, the shapes of these two conformations of **3** are similar to those of **1** at 57° and 298°. Compound **3**, possessing the saturated twisted side chain, indeed exhibited approximately 10 times stronger neurotoxicity than the planar demethyl compound **2** (EC_{50} = 1200 nM, Scheme 1). Therefore, we were able to regain the biological activity for **3** only by introducing two hydrogen atoms at C8 and C9 of **2**.

In summary, we achieved the unified total synthesis of antillatoxin **1** and several analogues. Use of a phenylsulfonyl methylthiomethyl group as a thioester surrogate and the introduction of carbon chains by Suzuki–Miyaura coupling reaction at the last stage are two key features of this synthesis. Structural and biological studies of **1**, **2**, **3**, and **21** revealed that the twisted shape of the *tert*-butyl-substituted diene groups plays a critical role in the potent neurotoxicity of **1**. Our strategy for total synthesis is expected to generate other new antillatoxin analogues having a variety of structures at the lipophilic side chain without changing the overall molecular topology of the macrolactam core. Additional manipulation of the side-chain structure of **1** is currently underway in our group with the aim of developing useful molecular probes for modulating the structures and functions of VGSCs.

Received: October 20, 2009
Published online: December 8, 2009

Keywords: biological activity · conformation analysis · natural products · structure–activity relationships · total synthesis

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[19] Only one of the two twisted conformations could be important for the biological activity, and its determination necessitates additional SAR studies.

