

Short and Stereoselective Total Synthesis of Δ -11,13-Didehydroguaianes and -guaianolides: Synthesis of (\pm)-Achalensolide and (\pm)-Pechueloic Acid; Revision of the Structure of (+)-Rupestonic Acid

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Dedicated to Dr. Andrew Greene on the occasion of his 65th birthday

Keywords: Guaianes / Guaianolides / Conjugate addition / Isomerization / Total synthesis / Diastereoselectivity

(\pm)-Pechueloic acid (**1**), (\pm)-rupestonic acid (**3**), and (\pm)-achalensolide (**5**) (guaian-8–12-olide class) were prepared stereoselectively in only nine steps from the commercially available tropylium cation via central intermediate **6**, which is used as a general and efficient precursor to bicyclo[5.3.0]-decane sesquiterpenes. The method does not require function protection. It is highly regio- and stereoselective thanks

to an efficient C-1 epimerization, a selective C-8,9 hydrogenation, and a stereocontrolled 1,6 conjugate addition of an acrylate equivalent. These Δ -11,13-didehydroguaianes and -guaianolides are good Michael acceptors and hence biologically active.

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Introduction

Guaianes and guaianolides constitute one of the largest groups of natural sesquiterpenes^[1] with a wide spectrum of biological activities.^[1a,2,3] Guaianes such as pechueloic acid (**1**) and rupestonic acid (**3**) [and their methyl esters **2** and **4**, respectively], as well as guaianolides, like achalensolide (**5**) and xerantholide, are Δ -11,13-didehydro derivatives. This makes them good Michael acceptors and hence biologically active^[3] (Figure 1). As these natural compounds are not readily available, their total synthesis is an important objective.^[1,2,4] Moreover, their hydroazulene framework and their stereoselective polyfunctionalization represent further challenges. Up to now, only a limited number of short and stereoselective syntheses of these systems have been reported.^[5]

(+)-Methyl pechueloate (**2**) was first isolated in 1982 from *Pechuel-Loeschea leibnitziana*^[6a] together with xerantholide. Later, **2** was found in *Decachaeta scabrella*^[6b] together with the parent acid **1** (pechueloic acid), achalensolide (**5**), and 11 α ,13-dihydroachalensolide. A first total synthesis of (+)-pechueloic acid (**1**) has been reported by Pedro

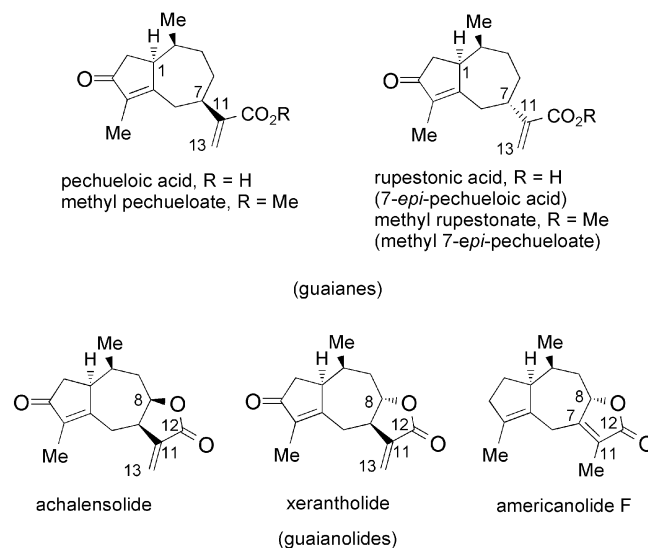


Figure 1. Δ -11,13-Didehydroguaiane and -guaianolide families.

and co-workers:^[7] **1** was derived from (+)-dihydrocarvone in 13 steps through a sequence of reactions involving a Barton's photochemical rearrangement.^[8] Rupestonic acid (**3**) was isolated in 1988 from *Artemisia rupestris* L. and converted into its methyl ester **4**.^[9a] Earlier, (+)-achalansolide (**5**) had been isolated by Bohlmann and co-workers^[10a] from the aerial parts of *Decachaeta thieleana* and by Hertz and co-workers^[10b] from *Stevia achalensis*. Methylene lactone **5** is a potent inhibitor of aromatase found in human placental

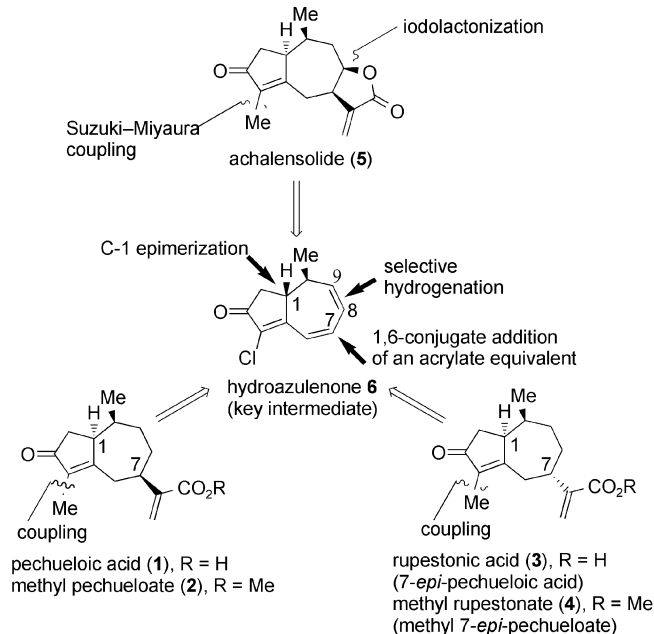
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microsome.^[11] A first synthesis of (\pm)-**5** has been reported recently by Mukai and co-workers^[11] and requires 27–29 steps (overall yield 0.3–0.4%) starting from D-(–)-isoascorbic acid. A key step of this synthesis is the construction of the bicyclo[5.3.0]decane skeleton by applying Pauson–Khand cyclization.

Results and Discussion

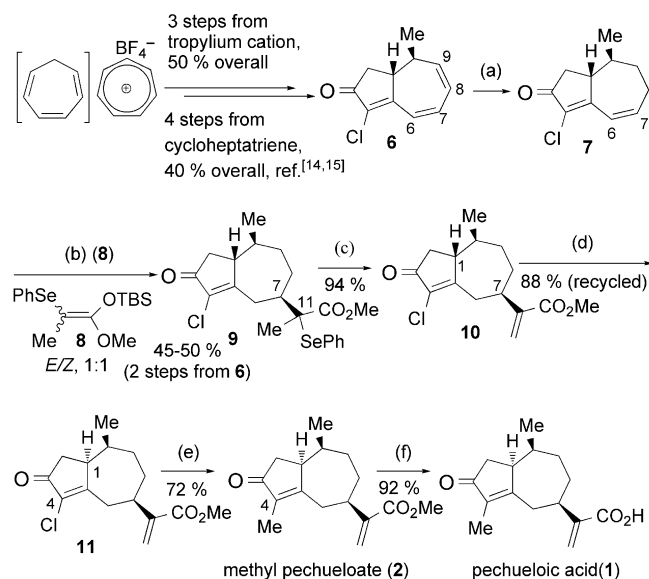
Starting from the inexpensive cycloheptatriene, we report here short syntheses, no more than ten steps long, of *rac*-**1** and its methyl ester **2** as well as the first total syntheses of *rac*-**3** and its methyl ester *rac*-**4**, and that of *rac*-achalensolide (**5**). Our retrosynthetic analysis (Scheme 1) suggested that all five compounds **1–5** should be derived from the same hydroazulenone **6** obtained in four steps (40% overall yield) from cycloheptatriene.^[12,13] Our approach was inspired by the total synthesis of (\pm)-geigerin (eight steps from the tropylium cation^[5b,14]) that we reported recently, which starts from our key intermediate **6**.^[15] Stereodivergency at C-1 and C-7 should be available through C-1 epimerization of **6** or of a subsequent product of reaction.



Scheme 1. Retrosynthetic analysis of Δ -11,13-didehydroguaiane and -guaianolide from hydroazulenone **6**.

Chemoselective hydrogenation of the C-8,9 alkene moiety of **6** to afford **7** was possible by applying a Lindlar type catalyst^[16] (Scheme 2). Thus, in the presence of Pd/Al₂O₃^[17,18] 3:1 to 4:1 mixtures of **7** and dihydrogenated (C-6,7 and C-8,9 double bond) products were obtained. The subsequent introduction of the acrylic moiety at C-7 was realized by reaction of *tert*-butyldimethylsilyl bromoketene acetal with chlorotrienone **6**. This gave the desired 1,6 adduct in 82% yield. Unfortunately, the various elimination conditions applied to this adduct led only to the corresponding Δ -7,11-didehydro derivative (Saytzeff product).

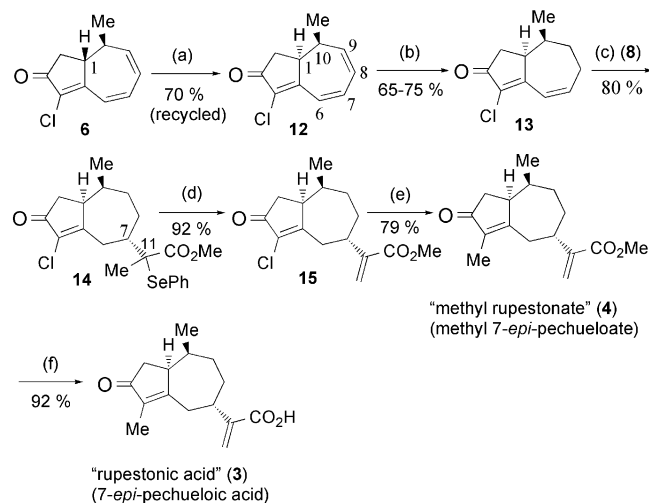
We thus investigated addition of the corresponding selenoketene acetal **8**^[19] (1:1 *E/Z* mixture) to **6**. In the presence of TiCl₄ at –78 °C, the desired 1,6 adduct **9** (isomer β) was obtained with high regio- and stereoselectivity (*dr* at C-7, 95:5) in 45–50% overall yield (two steps from **6**). Oxidative elimination of the selenium moiety with hydrogen peroxide provided methyl acrylate **10** in 94% yield (ca. 44% overall yield or ca. 34% with the transformation of **7** to **10** in one pot, from **6**).



Scheme 2. Synthesis of (\pm)-pechueloic acid (**1**) and its methyl ester **2**. Reagents and conditions: (a) 5% Pd/Al₂O₃ (cat), H₂ (1.0–1.5 equiv.), EtOAc; (b) **8**, TiCl₄ (1.1 equiv.), CH₂Cl₂, –78 °C, overnight, 45–50% (over 2 steps); (c) H₂O₂ (3 equiv.), Et₃N, (2 equiv.) THF, 94%; (d) RhCl₃(H₂O)_n, toluene/methanol (4:1), 100 °C, 20 h, 88% (recycled twice); (e) MeB(OH)₂ (3 equiv.), Pd(OAc)₂ (0.2 equiv.), dpdb (0.4 equiv.), K₃PO₄ (2 equiv.), toluene, 60 °C, 24 h, 72%; (f) LiOH(H₂O)_n, THF/H₂O (95:5), 10 d, 92%; dpdb = dicyclohexylphosphanyl-2',6'-dimethoxybiphenyl.

Epimerization at the C-1 position could be achieved on heating **10** in a 4:1 mixture of toluene/methanol to 100 °C and in the presence of RhCl₃(H₂O)_n catalyst.^[20] This gave a 2:5 thermodynamic mixture of **10** and **11**. Interestingly, when using classical epimerization (100 °C, in 1:1 toluene/ethanol), migration of the acrylic C-11,13 double bond to the C-7,11 position was observed.^[21] Flash column chromatography on silica gel separated **10** and **11** (isolated in 65%) readily. On recycling **10**, the yield of **11** climbed to 88%. Suzuki–Miyaura methylation at C-4 of chlorocyclopentenone **11** gave (\pm)-methyl pechueloate (**2**)^[6] in 72% yield.^[22] Finally, saponification of **2** with LiOH in aqueous THF afforded (\pm)-pechueloic acid (**1**) in 92% yield (racemic **1** is amorphous) in nine steps and with 7.6–8.5% overall yield from cycloheptatriene (nine steps, 12.3–13.7% overall yield from the commercially available tropylium cation with the transformation of **7** to **10** in two steps). Its ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectroscopic data as well as those of its methyl ester were identical to those previously reported for the natural products.^[6,7]

Molecular models suggested that the 1,6-conjugate addition stereoselectivity found with reaction $7 + 8 = 9$ could be inverted for steric reasons through C-1 epimerization of dienone **7**. We thus studied the C-1 epimerization of **6** and established a ratio toluene/alcohol and solvent effect.^[21] On heating **6** in a 1:1 mixture of toluene/ethanol to 100 °C and in the presence of $\text{RhCl}_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})_n$ catalyst^[20] afforded a 3:2 mixture of **12** and **6** with only traces of C-8,9 double bond migration.^[21] After flash column chromatography **12** was isolated in 48% yield (70% considering recycling of **6**) (Scheme 3).

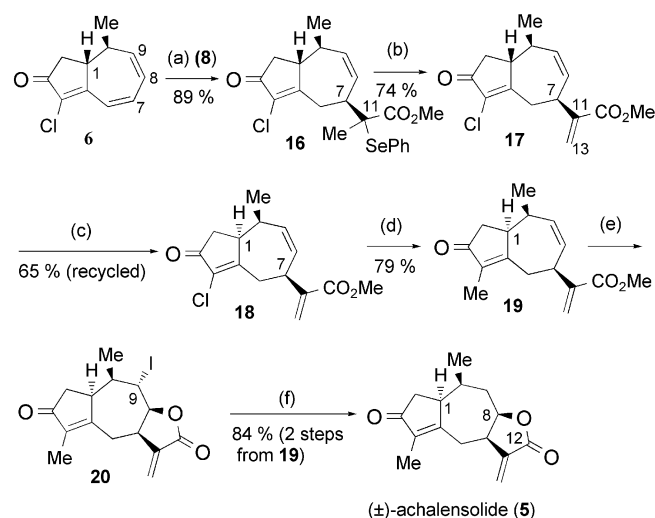


Scheme 3. Synthesis of “(±)-rupestonic acid” (**3**) and “(±)-methyl rupestonate” (**4**). Reagents and conditions: (a) $\text{RhCl}_3(\text{H}_2\text{O})_n$, toluene/ethanol (1:1), 100 °C, 20 h, 70% (twice recycled); (b) 5% Pd/ Al_2O_3 (cat), H_2 (1.0–1.5 equiv.), EtOAc, 65–75%; (c) **8**, TiCl_4 (1.0 equiv.), CH_2Cl_2 , –78 °C, overnight, 80%; (d) H_2O_2 (3 equiv.), Et_3N (2 equiv.), THF, 92% (55% one pot from **13**); (e) $\text{MeB}(\text{OH})_2$ (3 equiv.), $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2$ (0.2 equiv.), dpdb (0.4 equiv.), K_3PO_4 (2 equiv.), toluene, 60 °C, 24 h, 79%; (f) $\text{LiOH}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_n$, THF/ H_2O (95:5), 10 d, 92%; dpdb = dicyclohexylphosphanyl-2',6'-dimethoxybiphenyl.

Controlled hydrogenation^[17,18] of chlorotrienone **12** over Pd/ Al_2O_3 catalyst afforded **13** in 65–75% yield as the major component of a 4:1 mixture of mono- and dihydrogenated (C-6,7 and C-8,9 double bond) products. In this case, the hydrogenation is slightly more regioselective (4:1) than in the case of $6 + \text{H}_2 = 7$ (3:1 to 4:1). Conjugate addition of the selenoketene acetal^[9] **8** to **13** afforded the desired 1,6 adduct **14** in 80% yield with a high regio- and stereoselectivity (*dr* at C7, 95:5). Standard oxidation of **14** with hydrogen peroxide gave the expected acrylic intermediate **15** in 92% yield (conversion of **13** to **15** can be realized in a one-pot operation in 55% yield). Suzuki–Miyaura methylation of the chloroenone **15**^[22] afforded (±)-methyl rupestonate (**4**) (methyl-7-*epi*-pechueloate) in 79% yield (m.p. 55–57 °C). Finally, saponification of **4** afforded *rac*-rupestonic acid (**3**) (7-*epi*-pechueloic acid; m.p. 140 °C^[23]) in 92% yield (Scheme 3, in nine steps from cycloheptatriene with 7.4–8.4% overall yield or in nine steps with 12.3–14.0% overall yield, from the tropylium cation, with the transformation of **13** to **15** in two steps). The structure of **3** was confirmed

by single-crystal X-ray diffraction studies.^[24] Surprisingly, the ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectroscopic data of *rac*-**3** and its methyl ester *rac*-**4** were different from those reported in the literature for the (+)-rupestonic acid isolated from *Artemisia rupestris* L.^[9a]

In order to build the α -methylene- γ -butyrolactone of *rac*-achalansolide (**5**) by iodolactonization, it was necessary to maintain the C-8,9 double bond (Scheme 4). Consequently, 1,6-conjugate addition of selenoketene acetal^[16] **8** to hydroazulenone **6** was attempted. To our delight, it afforded a 1:1 mixture of the expected 1,6 adducts **16** (mixture of C-11 epimers) with high regio- and good stereoselectivity (*dr* at C-7: > 4:1). The purified mixture of four isomers (isolated in 89% yield) was treated with hydrogen peroxide to give acrylate **17**, which was easily isolated by flash chromatography in 74% yield. Its C-1-epimerization with RhCl_3 catalyst in toluene/methanol (4:1) at 100 °C gave a 5:3 thermodynamic mixture of **17** and **18**, whereas in 1:1 toluene/ethanol (100 °C), migration of the double bond from C-8,9 to C-6,7 was observed.^[21] Compound **17** was easily removed by flash chromatography and **18** was isolated in 35% yield (65% after recycling **17** twice). Suzuki–Miyaura methylation of chloroenone **18**^[22] afforded **19** in 79% yield. Saponification of **19** furnished the corresponding lithium carboxylate, which was immediately subjected to the iodolactonization conditions.^[25] This afforded **20**, which was reduced under radical conditions with $n\text{Bu}_3\text{SnH}$ to give *rac*-**5** in 84% yield (ten steps from cycloheptatriene with 11.4% overall yield or nine steps from the commercially available tropylium cation with 14.2% overall yield) (Scheme 4).



Conclusions

In conclusion, we have developed a highly efficient total synthesis of (\pm)-pechueloic acid (**1**) and of its methyl ester **2**. We also disclose the first total synthesis of (\pm)-7-*epi*-pechueloic acid ("rupestonic acid") (**3**) and of its methyl ester **4**, as well as a short total synthesis of (\pm)-achalensolide (**5**) starting from the inexpensive cycloheptatriene. The method does not require function protection and deprotection steps. It is highly regio- and stereoselective thanks to the very effective 1,6-conjugate addition of a selenoketene acetal (acrylate equivalent), the face selectivity of the reaction being controlled by the configuration of the bridgehead center C-1 of the azulenone moiety. Complementary studies are undergoing in our group to generalize this strategy to other members of this family of natural compounds, and especially to guaianes with a *trans*-annulated lactone such as xerantholide,^[6b] and to Δ -7,11-didehydroguaianes such as americanolide F^[26] (Figure 1).

Supporting Information (see footnote on the first page of this article): Experimental procedures and characterization data for **1–5**, **10–13**, **15**, **17**, **18** and **19**, ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra for **1–5**, **10**, **11**, **15**, **17**, **18** and **19**, ORTEP drawing of **3**.

Acknowledgments

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- [24] Crystallographic data for (\pm)-**3** (C₁₅H₂₀O₃): monoclinic space group *P*2₁/*c*, *a* = 8.651(2) Å, *b* = 16.431(2) Å, *c* = 9.74(1) Å, β

= 93.62(4)°, $V = 1381(1) \text{ \AA}^3$, $\rho_{\text{calcd.}} = 1.194 \text{ g cm}^{-3}$, $Z = 4$, $R_1 = 0.0571$ [$I > 2.0\sigma(I)$], $R_w = 0.0809$ (all data), 3043 measured reflexions, 2923 independent reflections and $R = 0.0571$ [$I > 2.0\sigma(I)$]; diffractometer: CAD4-Enraf-Nonius. CCDC-714117 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge from The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif.

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