HETEROCYCLES, Vol. 55, No. 12, 2001, pp. 2305 - 2313, Received, 6th September, 2001

# NOVEL FORMALDEHYDE-MEDIATED DIMERIZATION REACTION OF *N*-ALKYL-1-NAPHTHYLAMINE DERIVATIVES UNDER MILD/NEUTRAL CONDITIONS; APPLICATION TO SYNTHESIS OF NAPHTHYLAMINE-DERIVED MACROCYCLES

Hiroyasu Takahashi, Yuichi Hashimoto, and Kazuo Nagasawa*

Institute of Molecular and Cellular Biosciences,
The University of Tokyo, 1-1-1 Yayoi, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113-0032, Japan

Abstract - The dimerization reaction of *N*-methyl-1-naphthylamine (**1**) with formaldehyde is described. Reaction of **1** with formaldehyde under mild/neutral conditions gave bis-4-(1-*N*-methylaminonaphthyl)methane (**2**) in high yield as a single dimerization product. This formaldehyde-mediated aromatic condensation reaction is chemo- and regio-selective, and it takes place particularly with *N*-monoalkyl-1-naphthylamines as substrates. The novel naphthylamine-derived macrocyclic compounds 1,6,28,33-tetraaza-[6.1.6.1]paranaphthalenophane (**13a**) and 1,13-diaza[13,1]paranaphthalenophane (**12c**) were synthesized by application of this formaldehyde-mediated mild/neutral condensation reaction as the key step.

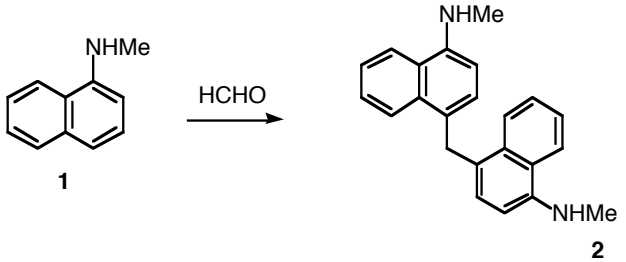
Many studies on formaldehyde (FA)-related reactions have been reported over the past few decades.[1-5] FA reacts with nucleophiles as a C1 unit to give a variety of useful functional groups in organic synthesis, e.g., in alkylation at carbonyl α-positions,[1] hydroxymethylation of aromatic rings,[2] addition to alkenes

(ene reaction),[3] condensation with alkenes in the presence of Brϕnsted acids (known as the Prins reaction),[4] and the Mannich reaction.[5]

On the other hand, FA is also well known as an embalming agent and as a genotoxic substance that causes DNA-protein or DNA-DNA cross-link formation.[6] In the course of our recent work on FA-mediated modification of nucleic acids with aromatic amines,[7] we found that the reaction of *N*-methyl-1-naphthylamine (**1**) with FA under neutral and very mild conditions gave bis-4-(1-*N*-methylaminonaphthyl)methane (**2**) in good yield as a single product. In general, in the presence of FA, *N*-methylaniline is known to be converted into iminal derivatives ($R_1R_2N$-$CH_2$-$NR_1R_2$: $R_1$=Ph, $R_2$=Me) *via* an imine intermediate,[8] or Friedel-Crafts type alkylation or condensation of aromatic compounds with aldehyde usually takes place under acidic or basic conditions.[2,9] Thus, FA-mediated reaction of *N*-methyl-1-naphthylamine (**1**) appears to be a novel chemo- and regio-selective alkylation under neutral conditions.

We were interested in this novel and facile FA-mediated C-C bond-forming reaction of naphthylamine derivatives.[10] In this paper, we describe the FA-mediated dimerization of naphthylamine derivatives and its application to macrocyclic compound syntheses.

**Table 1**. Formaldehyde-Mediated Dimerization of *N*-Methyl-1-naphthylamine[a]




**1** **2**

| Entry | Solvent | Temp | Time | Yield (%)[b] |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| i | MeOH | rt | 5 h | 84 |
| ii | MeCN | rt | 5 h | 85 |
| iii | THF | rt | 48 h | 20 |
| iv | MeOH-5% AcOH | rt | 1 h | 90 |
| v | 5% HCl aq | rt | 1 min | 95 |

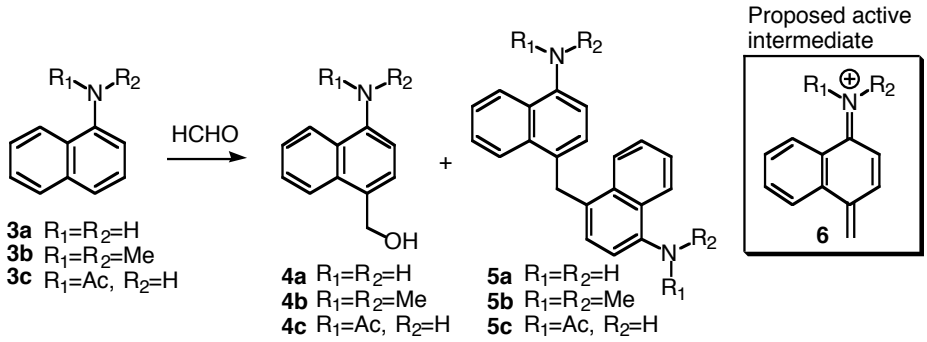
[a] 0.3 mol/L of **1** and 10 equiv. of 35% HCHO were used. [b] Isolated yield.

Reaction of **1** with FA in MeCN or MeOH under neutral conditions gave bis-4-(1-*N*-methylaminonaphthyl)methane (**2**) in high yield (Table 1. Entries i, ii). The structure of the adduct (**2**) was determined by NMR and MS spectroscopic analysis after acetylation of the amino group.[11] The dimerization reaction was suppressed in THF (Entry iii), but remarkably accelerated in acidic media. In aqueous hydrogen chloride solution, this reaction was completed within 1 min and gave **2** almost quantitatively (Entries iv, v) without forming Mannich-type reaction products of **1** *via* an iminium ion intermediate, which is usually observed under acidic reaction conditions. Thus, this FA-mediated dimerization of *N*-methyl-1-naphthylamine (**1**) appears to be chemo- and regio-specific under both neutral and acidic conditions.

To investigate the generality of this FA-mediated dimerization reaction with naphthalene derivatives having an electron-donating group at the C1-position, reactions of 1-substituted naphthalenes with FA were examined (Table 2). Treatment of 1-naphthylamine (**3a**) with an excess amount of FA gave a complex mixture of polymeric products (Entry i). *N,N'*-Dimethyl- and *N*-acetyl-1-naphthylamines (**3b**, **3c**), did not react with FA under neutral conditions even at higher temperature (Entries ii, v). On the other hand, when the reaction was performed in AcOH as a solvent, *N,N'*-dimethyl-1-naphthylamine (**3b**) gave the 4-hydroxymethylated product (**4b**) together with the dimer (**5b**) (Entries iii, iv).[12] Dimerization of *N*-acetyl-1-naphthylamine (**3c**) did not take place in AcOH solution (Entry. vi). Condensation of the 4-hydroxymethylated product (**4b**) with an equal amount of **3b** gave the corresponding dimer (**5b**) quantitatively, just upon heating in AcOH at 80°C.

Though this 4-hydroxylmethylnaphthylamine (**4**) is a possible intermediate in the FA-mediated condensation reaction, **4** could not be observed in the reaction of *N*-methyl-1-naphthylamine (**1**). These dimerization reactions of the 1-naphthylamine derivatives (**1**) and (**3b**) with FA may proceed *via* the putative reactive intermediate dienoiminium ion (**6**).

**Table 2**. Formaldehyde-Mediated Dimerization of 1-Naphthylamine Derivatives[a]




**3a** $R_1$=$R_2$=H
**3b** $R_1$=$R_2$=Me
**3c** $R_1$=Ac, $R_2$=H

**4a** $R_1$=$R_2$=H
**4b** $R_1$=$R_2$=Me
**4c** $R_1$=Ac, $R_2$=H

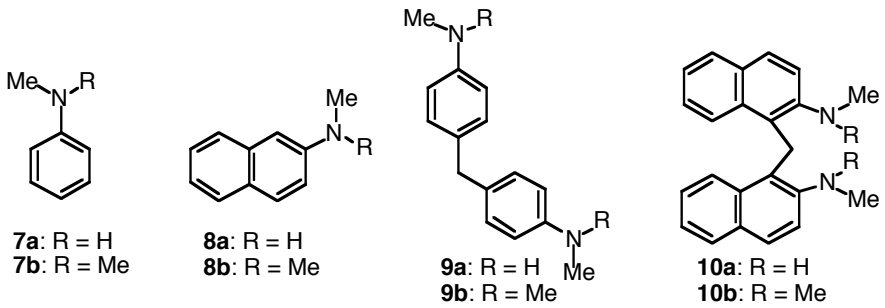
**5a** $R_1$=$R_2$=H
**5b** $R_1$=$R_2$=Me
**5c** $R_1$=Ac, $R_2$=H

| Entry | $R_1$ | $R_2$ | Solvent | Temp | Time (h) | Yield (%)[b] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | **4** | **5** |
| i | H | H | MeOH | rt | 5 | polymerized | |
| ii | Me | Me | MeOH | 70°C | 48 | - | - |
| iii | Me | Me | AcOH | rt | 48 | 17 | 19 |
| iv | Me | Me | AcOH | 70°C | 2 | 15 | 50 |
| v | Ac | H | MeOH | rt | 48 | - | - |
| vi | Ac | H | AcOH | 70°C | 3 | - | - |

[a] 0.3 mol/L of **3** and 10 equiv. of 35% HCHO were used. [b] Isolated yield.

FA-mediated dimerization reactions of other aromatic amines were examined (Figure 1). Alkylation of both *N*-methylaniline (**7a**) and *N*-methyl-2-naphthylamine (**8a**) with FA under neutral conditions selectively proceeded onto nitrogen and gave iminal derivatives.[13] Under acidic conditions (in AcOH), **7a** and **8a** were polymerized with FA. On the other hand, *N,N*-dimethylaniline (**7b**) and *N,N'*-dimethyl-2-naphthylamine (**8b**) gave the corresponding dimers (**9b**) and (**10b**) in AcOH as a solvent in 82 and 45% yields, respectively,[12,14] while this dimerization reaction of **7b** and **8b** did not proceed under neutral conditions.

**Figure 1**. Dimerized Aromatic Amines by Formaldehyde-Mediated Condensation



**7a**: R = H
**7b**: R = Me

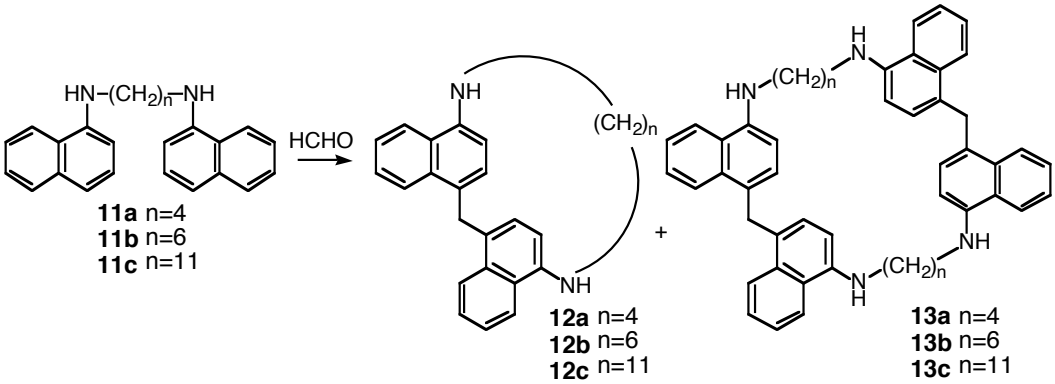
**8a**: R = H
**8b**: R = Me

**9a**: R = H
**9b**: R = Me

**10a**: R = H
**10b**: R = Me

We applied this specific condensation reaction of naphthylamine for construction of macrocyclic compounds. The FA-mediated direct alkylation and subsequent condensation of aromatic compounds are a useful synthetic method to create macrocyclic compounds such as calix[n]arene or porphyrin derivatives,[9] and the biarylaminomethane skeleton is a basic component of cyclophanes,[15] which are widely utilized as artificial organic hosts. Thus, we examined naphthylamine-type cyclophane (naphthalenophane)[16] synthesis by applying this condensation reaction to the *N*-alkyl-1-naphthylamine derivatives (**11a-c**),[15a] and the results are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3**. Synthesis of Naphthalenophanes *via* the FA-mediated Condensation




| Entry | n | Solvent | Concentration (mmol/L) | HCHO (eq) | Temp | Time (h) | Yield (%)[a] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | **12** | **13** |
| i | 4 | MeOH | 1 | 25 | rt | 17 | - | 27 |
| ii | 6 | MeCN[b] | 3 | 80 | 60°C | 30 | - | 3[c] |
| iii | 11 | MeOH | 1 | 80 | 60°C | 48 | 45 | - |

[a] Isolated yield. [b] Compound (**11b**) was hardly desolved in MeOH. [c] Linear dimer of **11b** was obtained in 8% yield.

Reaction of **11a** with FA took place to give the cyclodimerized cyclophane (**13a**) in 27% yield (Entry i). Elongation of the methylene spacer from butyl to hexyl essentially blocked this cyclodimerization. Even at a higher concentration (3 mmol/L) and with an excess of FA, **11b** gave only a trace amount of the cyclophane (**13b**), while the linear dimer of **11b** was formed predominantly (Entry ii). This remarkable difference of reactivity in the cyclization step is presumably due to the different conformation and/or solubility of the linear precursor. Solubility of **11b** and the cyclodimerized product (**13b**) in MeOH or MeCN is very poor compared to that of **11a** and **13a**. In contrast to the cyclization of **11a** and **11b**, the

intramolecularly cyclized cyclophane (**12c**) was obtained in a good yield from **11c**, which has a further elongated spacer (Entry iii). This novel naphthylamine oligomer is a new variety of cyclophane, and this new cyclophane synthetic method has potential applications in the field of supramolecular chemistry.

In summary, we found selective C-C bond formation in the reaction of *N*-methyl-1-naphthylamine (**1**) with FA under very mild neutral conditions. This novel condensation reaction is classified as a substrate-specific aromatic substitution reaction for *N*-alkyl-1-naphthylamines, such as **1** or **11**. Moreover, we succeeded in applying this novel FA-mediated dimerization reaction to naphthylamine-derived cyclophane synthesis.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The work described in this paper was partially supported by Grants-in-Aid from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan, and funds for the Promotion of Fundamental Studies in Health Science from the Organization for Pharmaceutical Safety Research.

**EXPERIMENTAL**

The general procedure of the reaction. To 1-naphthylamine derivatives (**1** or **3**) in appropriate solvents was added 35% formaldehyde solution (10 eq), and then the mixture was stirred with monitoring of the reaction. After the usual work up, the adduct (**2**, **4**, **5**) was purified by silica gel column chromatography.

***N,N'*-Dimethyl-4-hydroxymethyl-1-naphthylamine** (**4b**): Colorless oil; $^{1}$H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 500 MHz) $\delta$ 2.89 (6H, s), 5.06 (2H, s), 7.01 (1H, d, $J$ = 7.5 Hz), 7.40 (1H, d, $J$ = 7.5 Hz), 7.51 (1H, t, $J$ = 7.5 Hz), 7.54 (1H, t, $J$ = 7.5 Hz), 8.13 (1H, d, $J$ = 7.5 Hz), 8.28 (1H, d, $J$ = 7.5 Hz); $^{13}$C NMR ($CDCl_3$, 125 MHz) $\delta$ 45.23, 63.80, 113.28, 124.25, 124.79, 125.19, 125.98, 126.26, 129.06, 130.91, 132.60, 151.26; HRFABMS. Calcd for $C_{25}H_{26}N_2$ ($M^+$): 354.2096. Found: 354.2115.

**Bis-4-(1-*N*,*N*'-dimethylaminonaphthyl)methane** (**5b**): Colorless solid, mp 103-105°C (hexanes-ethyl acetate); $^1$H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 500 MHz) $\delta$ 2.87 (12H, s), 4.75 (2H, s), 6.95 (2H, d, $J$ = 7.6 Hz), 6.98 (2H, d, $J$ = 7.6 Hz), 7.46 (2H, t, $J$ = 7.5 Hz), 7.51 (2H, t, $J$ = 7.5 Hz), 8.02 (2H, d, $J$ = 8.0 Hz), 8.33(2H, d, $J$ = 8.0 Hz); $^{13}$C NMR ($CDCl_3$, 125 MHz) $\delta$ 35.23, 45.41, 113.93, 124.49, 124.68, 124.99, 125.90, 126.94, 129.00, 133.34; FABMS. 354 $(M)^+$. HRFABMS. Calcd for $C_{27}H_{27}N_2O_2$ $(MH^+)$: 411.2073. Found: 411.2054.

**Bis-4-(1-*N*,*N*'-dimethylaminoanilino)methane** (**9b**): $^1$H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 500 MHz) $\delta$ 2.89 (12H, s), 3.80 (2H, s), 6.88 (4H, d, $J$ = 8.8 Hz), 7.05 (4H, d, $J$ = 8.8 Hz); $^{13}$C NMR ($CDCl_3$, 125 MHz) $\delta$ 39.85, 40.93, 113.06, 129.38, 130.37, 149.02; HRFABMS. Calcd for $C_{17}H_{22}N_2$ $(M^+)$: 254.1783. Found: 254.1883.

**Bis-1-(2-*N*,*N*'-dimethylaminonaphthyl)methane** (**10b**): Colorless solid, mp 100-103°C (hexanes-ethyl acetate); $^1$H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 500 MHz) $\delta$ 2.18 (12H, s), 5.14 (2H, s), 7.10 (2H, t, $J$ = 7.5 Hz), 7.14 (2H, t, $J$ = 7.2 Hz), 7.46 (2H, d, $J$ = 8.9 Hz), 7.58 (2H, d, $J$ = 8.0 Hz), 7.62 (2H, d, $J$ = 8.9 Hz), 8.28 (2H, d, $J$ = 8.2 Hz); $^{13}$C NMR ($CDCl_3$, 125 MHz) $\delta$ 24.88, 45.63, 119.21, 123.84, 124.85, 126.22, 127.43, 127.74, 131.21, 132.24, 134.03, 148.77; HRFABMS. Calcd for $C_{25}H_{26}N_2$ $(MH^+)$: 354.2096. Found: 354.2145.

**1,6,28,33-Tetraaza[6.1.6.1]paranaphthalenophane** (**13a**): Colorless amorphous solid (gradually colored green); mp 160°C< decomp (hexanes-ethyl acetate); $^1$H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 500 MHz) $\delta$ 1.83-1.95 (8H, m), 3.27~3.33 (8H, m), 4.62 (4H, s), 6.45 (4H, d, $J$ = 8.0 Hz), 6.86 (3H, d, $J$ = 8.0 Hz), 6.89 (1H, d, $J$ = 8.0 Hz), 7.30-7.43 (8H, m), 7.80 (4H, d, $J$ = 8.1 Hz), 7.98 (4H, d, $J$ = 8.1 Hz); $^{13}$C NMR ($CDCl_3$, 125 MHz) $\delta$ 26.40, 43.57, 49.50, 104.57, 120.30, 123.91, 124.30, 124.72, 125.63, 127.72, 132.81, 142.00; HRFABMS. Calcd for $C_{50}H_{48}N_4$ $(M^+)$: 704.3879. Found: 704.3896.

**1,8,30,37-Tetraaza[8.1.8.1]paranaphthalenophane** (**13b**): Colorless amorphous solid (gradually colored green); mp 160°C< decomp (hexanes-ethyl acetate); $^1$H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 500 MHz) $\delta$ 1.55 (8H, br), 1.78 (8H, br), 3.25 (8H, t, $J$ = 7.0 Hz), 4.63 (4H, s), 6.45 (4H, d, $J$ = 7.8 Hz), 6.88 (4H, d, $J$ = 7.8 Hz), 7.43

(8H, m), 7.84 (4H, m), 8.00 (4H, m); HRFABMS. Calcd for $C_{54}H_{56}N_4$ ($M^+$): 760.4505. Found: 750.4563.

**1,13-Diaza[13.1]paranaphthalenophane** (**12c**): Colorless amorphous solid (gradually colored green); mp 101-103°C (hexanes-ethyl acetate); $^1$H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 500 MHz) $\delta$ 1.02-1.27 (14H, m), 1.56 (4H, quintet, $J$ = 7.0 Hz), 3.38 (4H, t, $J$ = 7.0 Hz), 4.67 (2H, s), 6.55 (2H, d, $J$ = 8.0 Hz), 6.69 (2H, d, $J$ = 8.0 Hz), 7.40-7.48 (4H, m), 7.84 (2H, d, $J$ = 7.8 Hz), 8.08 (2H, d, $J$ = 8.0 Hz); $^{13}$C NMR ($CDCl_3$, 125 MHz) $\delta$ 26.23, 27.54, 28.72, 29.54, 30.19, 33.56, 43.93, 106.31, 120.55, 124.25, 124.65, 125.63, 125.97, 127.56, 133.16, 141.99; HRFABMS. Calcd for $C_{32}H_{38}N_2$ ($M^+$): 450.3035. Found: 450.3083.

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