Structural Revision and Biomimetic Synthesis of Goupiolone B
Yosuke Matsuo*, Ayane Yoshida, Yoshinori Saito, and Takashi Tanaka*

Abstract: Goupiolones A and B are unique phenolic compounds with significant DNA-damaging activity. In this study, the structure of goupiolone B was revised on the basis of DFT calculations of the $^{13}$C NMR chemical shifts and biosynthetic considerations. The dibenzobicyclo[3.2.2]nonane skeleton of the revised structure suggested that goupiolone B was produced by oxidative coupling between catechol and goupiolone A, which was strongly supported by this biomimetic synthesis. Furthermore, the racemization of goupiolone B was observed during the examination for the chiral separation of its racemic mixture. A plausible racemization mechanism involving α-ketol rearrangement was also proposed.

Goupiolones A (1) and B (2) are unique phenolic compounds isolated from the leaves of Goupia glabra (Goupiaceae), and reported to show significant toxicity against a panel of DNA damage-checkpoint defective yeast mutants (Figure 1). [1] Since 1 and 2 behave as genotoxins that are stronger than the antineoplastic agent doxorubicin, they are candidates for anticancer drugs. [1] Goupiolone A (1) is a benzotropolone derivative [1,2] and presumed to be produced from catechol (3) and ethyl gallate (4) by oxidative coupling via a benzobicyclo[3.2.1]octane-type intermediate (Scheme 1). Other benzotropolone derivatives from natural sources, such as purpuragallin glycosides, [3] theaflavins, [4] fomentariol, [5] aurantricholone, [6] and crocipodin, [7] are also produced by the coupling between catechol and pyrogallol derivatives. [8] On the other hand, goupiolone B (2) was reported as a Diels–Alder adduct between a tropolone and a naphthalene derivative. [1] However, the proposed precursor, that is 1,2,3,4-naphthalenetetral, has not yet been found in nature. In addition, the reported spectroscopic data of 2 include several problems. For example, the $^{13}$C NMR signal of the β-position in the α,β-unsaturated carbonyl is normally observed lower field, such as at 150.9 ppm for 2-cyclohexen-1-one. [9] However, the signal at 118.1 ppm was assigned as the β-position (C-6) of 2. [1] Moreover, the assignment of the $^{13}$C NMR chemical shifts of the 1,2,3,4-tetrahydroxybenzene moiety in 2 were inappropriate (C-5$: δ 145.1; C-6$: δ 152.5; C-7$: δ 142.7; C-8$: δ 140.5; C-9$: δ 144.0; C-10$: δ 137.0). In this study, we reinvestigated the structure of goupiolone B using computational calculations and biosynthetic considerations and proposed the revised structure 5. Furthermore, the structure was confirmed via biomimetic synthesis.

We speculated that goupiolone B is biosynthetically derived from goupiolone A (1) and reinvestigated its structure on the basis of the reported $^{1}$H and $^{13}$C NMR data along with biosynthetic considerations. As a result, we constructed the more reasonable structure 5 with a dibenzobicyclo[3.2.2]nonane skeleton (Figure 1). The biosynthesis of 5 could be explained as follows: Goupiolone A (1) is apparently produced by the oxidative condensation between catechol-quinone (3a) derived from catechol (3) and ethyl gallate (4) through a benzobicyclo[3.2.1]octane-type intermediate. Then, a series of intermolecular 1,4- and intramolecular 1,2-additions between 3a

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and 1 and the subsequent reduction of o-quinone affords 5 (Scheme 1). Furthermore, the experimental NMR data of goupiolone B was very similar to those of the dibenzobicyclo[3.2.2]nonane unit of 6, which is an oxidative condensation product of theaflavin (7) and epicatechin (8) (Scheme 2).[11] The structural similarity strongly supported the biosynthetic mechanism of 5.[11] The validity of structure 5 was confirmed by DFT calculations for the 13C NMR chemical shifts of 2 and 5,[10] followed by comparison with the reported data. As shown in Figure 2, the correlation between experimental and calculated data for 2 was very low ($R^2 = 0.8318$), whereas the calculated data for 5 was in good agreement with the experimental data ($R^2 = 0.9980$). On the basis of these considerations, we performed the biomimetic synthesis of 5 from 3 and 4 via 1.

Firstly, we synthesized goupiolone A (1). Thus far, there have been two reports for the total synthesis of 1; however, these methods required many steps [19 steps (2012),[2] 9 steps (2017)].[12] In this study, the non-enzymatic biomimetic method developed for theaflavins, black tea pigments with a benzotropolone moiety,[13] was applied to the synthesis of 1. Catechol (3) was oxidized with the 2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH) radical in acetone to afford o-quinone (3a); then, ethyl gallate (4) was added to give a dibenzobicyclo[3.2.1]octane-type intermediate. Finally, the addition of water to the reaction mixture caused ring cleavage, followed by spontaneous oxidation and decarboxylation to afford goupiolone A (1) (34% from 4) along with a small amount of 5 (1.1% from 4) (Scheme 3a). The spectroscopic data of synthesized 1 were in full agreement with those of natural 1.[1,2] In addition, the $^1$H and $^{13}$C NMR data of synthesized 5 were completely consistent with those of the natural goupiolone B, except for the $^{13}$C NMR chemical shift of C-2' ($\Delta\delta_{C} = 5.7$ ppm) (Table 1). The previously reported value of C-2' is presumably a typographical error. $^1$H-$^1$H COSY, HSQC, and HMBC spectra of synthesized 5 were also measured, and the results strongly supported this structure. However, several HMBC correlations of the synthesized 5 were inconsistent with the reported data for goupiolone B (Table 1). This was probably caused by incorrect interpretations based on the incorrect structure (2) in the original report.[14] There are several steps during the production of 1 from 3 and 4. (Scheme 1). In this process, 3a derived from 3 can also act as an oxidant along with DPPH. In the final step of the synthesis of 5, the o-quinone form of 5 is reduced to 5 (Scheme 1). This reduction process is considered to be coupled with the oxidation of 3 or the oxidation steps during the synthesis of 1.

Enzymatic methods for the synthesis of benzotropolone derivatives using polyphenol oxidase or peroxidase are known,[7,15] therefore, we also performed the enzymatic synthesis of goupiolone A (1). An aqueous solution of catechol (3) and ethyl gallate (4) was treated with a Japanese pear (Pyrus pyrifolia) fruit homogenate, which has strong polyphenol oxidase activity,[15d,16] to afford goupiolone A (1) (71%) along with 5 (0.24%) (Scheme 3b). This relatively high yield of 1 is
considered to be attributed to the substrate specificity of polyphenol oxidase for 3.

To confirm that goupiolone B (5) was produced by oxidative coupling between goupiolone A (1) and catechol (3), next we examined direct reactions of 1 with 3. Addition of 1 to the mixture containing 3a yielded 5 in 7.2% yield (Scheme 4a). To improve the yield, various oxidants were examined. After screening with multiple oxidants, (NH4)2Ce(NO3)6 and K3[Fe(CN)6] were found to afford 5 from 1 and 3. The addition of (NH4)2Ce(NO3)6 to a solution containing 1 and 3 in CH3CN-H2O (4:1) afforded 5 in 22% yield (Scheme 4b). Under similar conditions, oxidation using K3[Fe(CN)6] afforded 5 in 11% yield. The reason for the low yield for 5 is considered to be the other oxidation reaction of 1 and further oxidation of 5. These results confirmed that 5 was produced from 1 and 3. Therefore, we concluded that the correct structure of goupiolone B is 5.

In this study, goupiolone B (5) was synthesized as a racemic mixture. However, natural 5 was optically active ([α]D20 −40).1 To determine the absolute structure of natural 5, an attempt was made to separate two enantiomers of synthesized 5 using chiral HPLC. Several conditions were found for the chiral separation of racemic 5 in reversed phase and normal phase conditions, which afforded two separated peaks (Figures S1, S2). However, separated 5 showed no optical rotation and Cotton effect in the ECD spectra. In addition, the reanalysis of separated 5 using chiral column exhibited two peaks, indicating that the racemization of 5 occurs easily. To comprehensively investigate the condition, chiral separation was performed at three different temperatures (40 °C, 25 °C, and 5 °C) using Chiralpak IB N-5 (n-hexane–2-ProH–TFA; 55:45:0.1) (Figure S3). Two peaks were completely separated at a temperature of 5 °C; however, a saddle-shaped curve was observed between two peaks at 40 °C. The experimental results strongly indicated the occurrence of racemization of 5 during chiral separation at 40 °C. A reasonable mechanism for the racemization of 5 involves α-ketol rearrangement shown in Scheme 5.[17,18] This rearrangement had been observed in several natural products.[19] Natural 5 may also be a racemic mixture, and its optical activity may be attributable to its impurity. However, no evidence is currently available.

In summary, we proposed the correct structure of goupiolone B (5), which was assisted by biosynthetic considerations. DFT calculations of the 13C NMR chemical shifts strongly supported this structure. The biomimetic synthesis of 5 from catechol (3) and ethyl gallate (4) via goupiolone A (1) confirmed the revised structure. Furthermore, the racemization of 5 was observed during its chiral separation, indicating that natural 5 may also be a racemic mixture. A plausible racemization mechanism involving α-ketol rearrangement was

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**Scheme 4. Synthesis of goupiolone B (5) from 1 and 3.**

**Scheme 5. Plausible racemization mechanism of goupiolone B (5).**

**Table 1.** 1H and 13C NMR data for goupiolone B (5) (in CDCl3, δ in ppm, J in Hz)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>δ1H</th>
<th>δ13C</th>
<th>HMBC (H to C)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>S</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>194.1</td>
<td>143.6</td>
<td>1, 2, 4, 5, 11 (J), 1', 3'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>84.3</td>
<td>140.5</td>
<td>3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 1', 3', 4', 5', 10, 11, 1', 4', 5'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7.26'</td>
<td>6.64 (d, J = 8.1)</td>
<td>6.98 (d, J = 8.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>140.5</td>
<td>140.5</td>
<td>121.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>6.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.30 (t, J = 7.1)</td>
<td>1.30 (t, J = 7.0)</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>117.4</td>
<td>117.4</td>
<td>131.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>6.82 (d, J = 8.1)</td>
<td>6.82 (d, J = 8.0)</td>
<td>114.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.77 (d, J = 8.1)</td>
<td>6.77 (d, J = 8.0)</td>
<td>8, 9, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-OH</td>
<td>11.72 (s)</td>
<td>11.72 (s)</td>
<td>8, 9, 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 500 MHz, ** 300 MHz, *** 125 MHz, **** 75 MHz, * reassigned based on the structure of 5, + overlapped with solvent signal
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proposed. These results indicated that the biosynthetic consideration combined with the theoretical calculation of NMR data is helpful to accurately elucidate the complicated structure of natural products.\[20\]

Acknowledgements

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of financial interest.

Keywords: natural products • biomimetic synthesis • structure elucidation • oxidation • rearrangement

[14] In reference 1, HMBC correlations of goupilone B were described; however, its copy of the HMBC spectrum was not shown.
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