

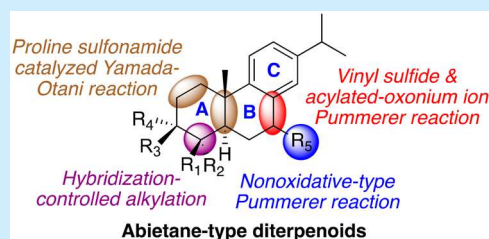
Total Syntheses of Aromatic Abietane Diterpenoids Utilizing Advances in the Pummerer Rearrangement

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S Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: The first total syntheses of triptobenzene T, vitexifolin C, 4-*epi*-triptobenzene L, triptobenzene L, and nepetaefolin F have been accomplished through an enantioselective, common intermediate approach and have enabled the confirmation and/or establishment of the absolute stereochemistry of each natural product synthesized. Application of three new and/or underutilized Pummerer reaction pathways proved critical to the synthetic work. A proline sulfonamide-catalyzed Yamada–Otani reaction was used to access the highly functionalized cyclohexane A ring core, including the C₁₀ all-carbon quaternary stereocenter. Additionally, the importance of the A ring unsaturation for controlling the stereoselectivity during the C₄ alkylation is showcased.



The abietane diterpenoid family of natural products represents a sizable collection of compounds that possess both an interesting tricyclic core and intriguing biological activity (Figure 1).^{1,2} Despite this appealing combination of

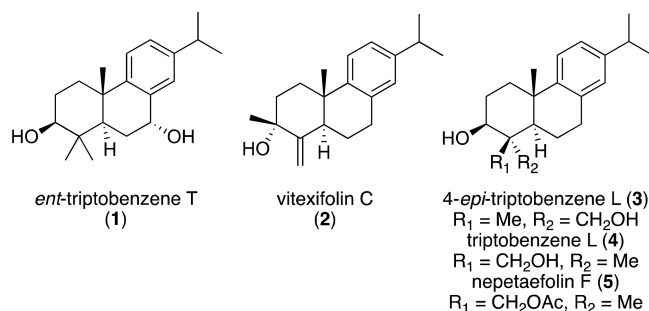
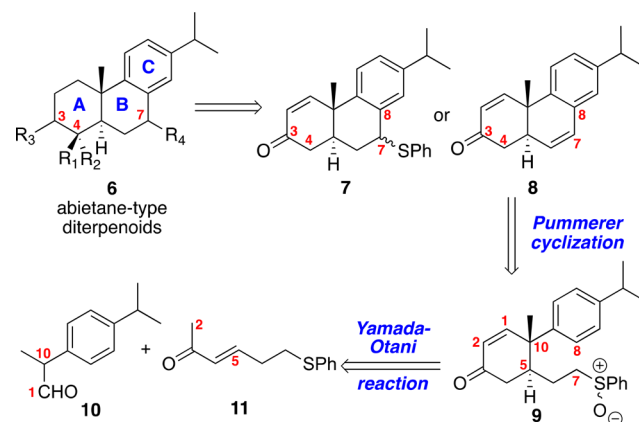


Figure 1. Abietane-type diterpenoid natural products.

attributes, significant cross sections of the family have not been previously synthesized.³ We became intrigued by the possibility of utilizing our proline sulfonamide-catalyzed Yamada–Otani chemistry⁴ to provide rapid access to the core carbon backbone, including the challenging all-carbon quaternary stereocenter at C₁₀. Herein, we describe the first total syntheses of five separate members of this natural product family through the efficient use of an enantioenriched common intermediate.

Our overarching synthetic approach is outlined in Scheme 1. The pioneering work using the polyene cyclization⁵ to access the abietane diterpenoids⁶ laid an important foundation for how to construct these ring systems. While powerful, these approaches do limit the wealth of functionality that can be built into the cyclization precursor(s). In contrast, we envisioned exploiting our recently discovered advances in the Pummerer cyclization⁷ of a prerequisite sulfoxide 9 to access the tricyclic cyclohexenones 7 or 8. This approach allows for the early and efficient

Scheme 1. Retrosynthetic Analysis



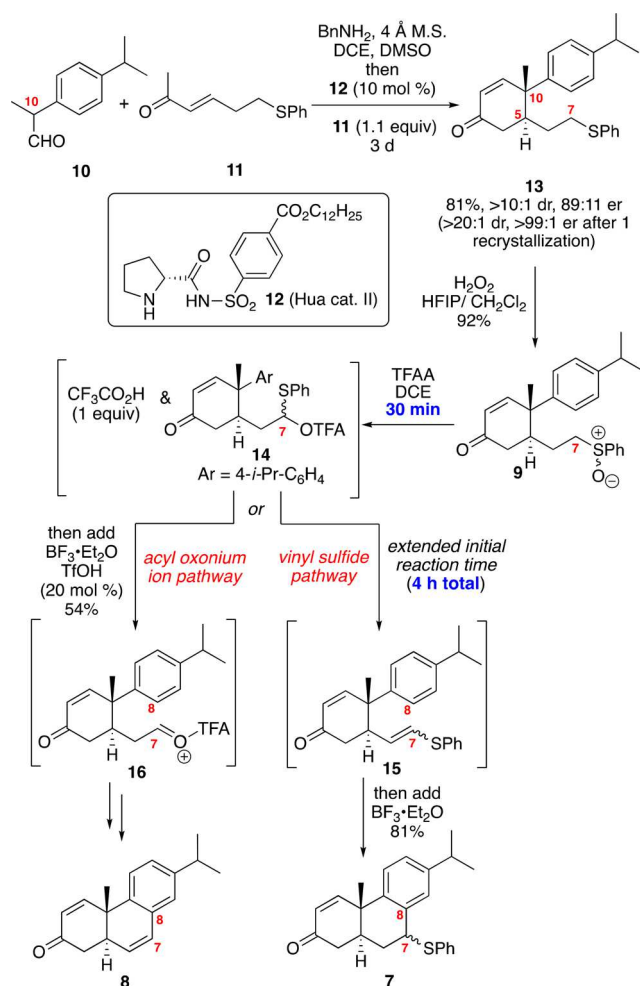
incorporation of more functionality in both the A and B rings. In turn, this sulfoxide 9 could be readily accessed through our enantioselective proline sulfonamide-catalyzed Yamada–Otani reaction⁴ from the benzylic aldehyde 10 and the enone 11.

Our successful construction of the common intermediate 9 and its utilization in divergent Pummerer cyclization pathways is showcased in Scheme 2. Starting from aldehyde 10 (two steps from 4-isopropylacetophenone), proline sulfonamide-catalyzed Yamada–Otani reaction with known enone 11⁸ using our improved DMSO conditions⁸ gave the desired sulfide 13 in high diastereo- and enantioselectivity. The stereoselectivity of this process could be further enhanced from a single recrystallization to >20:1 dr and >99:1 er. Subsequent oxidation using H₂O₂ with 1,1,1,3,3,3-hexafluoroisopropanol (HFIP)⁹ smoothly provided the Pummerer cyclization precursor 9. In accord with our

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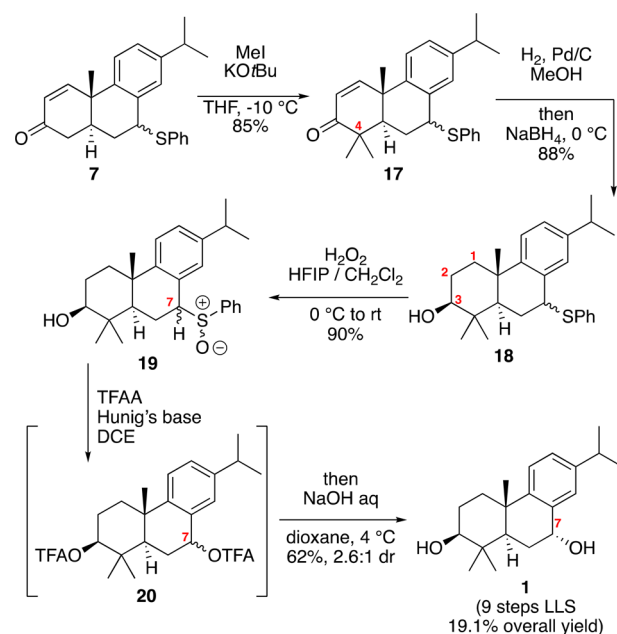
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Scheme 2. Synthesis of Key Intermediates via Pummerer Cyclizations



methodological work,⁷ Pummerer cyclization under short initial reaction time (30 min) proceeded through our novel acyl oxonium ion pathway (compound 16) to yield the eliminated tricycle 8 in 54% yield. In contrast, the tricyclic sulfide can be accessed via the vinyl sulfide pathway (compound 15) in high yield (81%) through extended initial reaction time prior to addition of the $\text{BF}_3\cdot\text{Et}_2\text{O}$.⁷

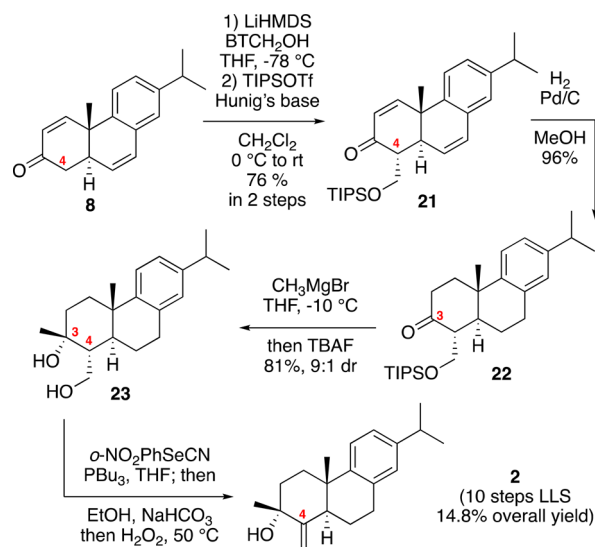
With rapid routes established for accessing the prefuctionalized tricyclic core, our efforts shifted to the synthesis of the abietane diterpenoid natural products. Our first target was triptobenzene T¹⁰ (1) (Scheme 3). Dimethylation of the tricyclic enone 7 provided the adduct 17. Selective hydrogenation of the enone alkene in the presence of the benzylic sulfide was smoothly accomplished with Pd/C and H_2 in methanol. Subsequent reduction produced the alcohol 18 as a single observed stereoisomer. Sulfide oxidation using H_2O_2 /HFIP oxidation⁹ cleanly provided the sulfoxide 19 as a mixture of stereoisomers on sulfur. While we had planned to conduct a traditional Pummerer rearrangement of sulfoxide 19, we were pleased to find that a nonoxidative-type Pummerer rearrangement¹¹ had, in fact, occurred to provide the *ent*-triptobenzene T (1) directly in 2.6:1 dr favoring the desired stereochemistry (62% isolated yield of the pure diastereomer). To our knowledge, this is the first example of nonoxidative-type Pummerer rearrangement that has occurred without neighboring group participation. We have observed the key bis-

Scheme 3. Total Synthesis of 3 α ,7 β -Dihydroxyabiet-8,11,13-triene (*ent*-Triptobenzene T)

trifluoroacetate ester 20 derivative as an intermediate through in situ analysis (^1H NMR, ^{19}F NMR) of the reaction prior to NaOH (aq) treatment as well as through HRMS. This reaction likely proceeds through formation of a benzylic carbocation after acylation of the sulfoxide by TFAA, which is in turn trapped by the trifluoroacetate counterion. Compound 1 was in agreement (^1H NMR, ^{13}C NMR, $[\alpha]_D$) with the literature values^{10,12} for the *ent*-triptobenzene T (1). This synthesis enabled the definitive assignment of the absolute configuration of this natural product where some confusion previously existed.¹³

Our next synthetic target was vitexifolin C (Scheme 4). Starting from tricycle 8, enolization and formylation at C_4 generated the desired aldol product in excellent dr (>20:1). Subsequent silylation with TIPSOTf generated the silyl ether 21. Standard hydrogenation of both alkenes produced the

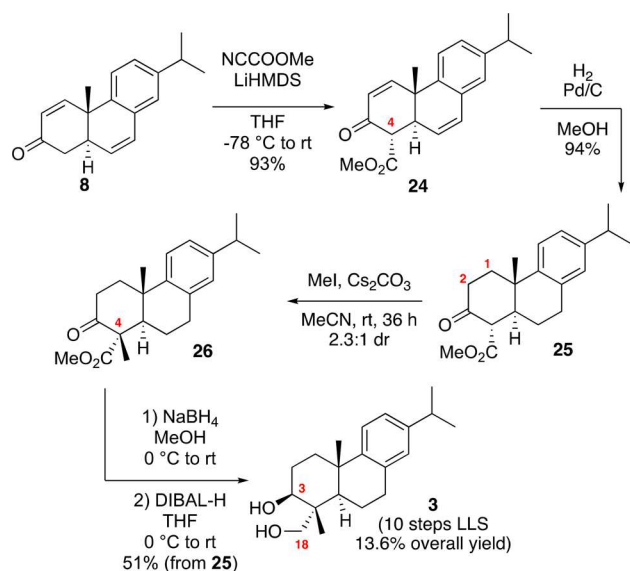
Scheme 4. Total Synthesis of Vitexifolin C



saturated ketone **22**. Stereoselective addition of MeMgBr to the C₃ ketone provided the desired isomer in 9:1 dr. The selectivity in this process was likely governed by the steric bulk of the neighboring and nonchelating CH₂OTIPS moiety. Removal of the silyl ether produced the diol **23**. Finally, Grieco–Nishizawa elimination provided vitexifolin C (**2**) in good yield and excellent agreement with the isolation data¹⁴ (¹H NMR, ¹³C NMR, [α]_D).

We next set out to access C₁₉-oxygenated triptobenzene L and nepetaefolin F from the same eliminated tricycle **8** (Scheme 5).

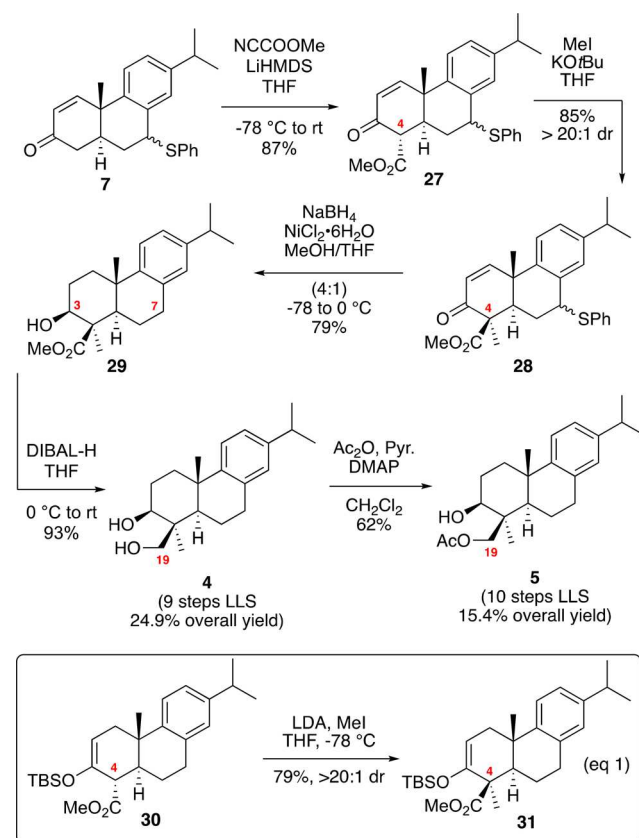
Scheme 5. Total Synthesis of 4-*epi*-Triptobenzene L



Use of Mander's reagent cleanly incorporated the methyl ester moiety as the equatorial isomer **24**, likely through an epimerization process due to the acidity of the C₄ methine proton. We were concerned about the stereoselectivity in the subsequent alkylation of **24** based on the literature examples of related structures which showed a strong preference for the β -epimer of the methyl moiety, particularly for a C_{1,2}-unsaturated enone ester system.¹⁵ Based on work by Mander and Deslongchamps,¹⁶ we hypothesized that removal of the unsaturation might reduce the preference for the β -epimer in this transformation. Unfortunately, the alkylation of this hydrogenated β -ketoester **25** provided the undesired stereochemistry (2.3:1 dr) at C₄, in alignment with prior reports on related scaffolds.¹⁶ We attribute this modest stereoselectivity to the conflicting preferences between stereoelectronic factors of half-chair alkylations¹⁷ and the C₁₀ methyl moiety. Subsequent conversion further confirmed this assignment as natural product 4-*epi*-triptobenzene L (**3**) based on comparison with the literature values.¹⁸

The completion of the total syntheses of both triptobenzene L and nepetaefolin F is shown in Scheme 6. As noted in Scheme 5, alkylation of saturated β -ketoester **25** with methyl iodide provided poor selectivity. Interestingly, alkylation of enone ester **27** using KOtBu and MeI smoothly gave the desired α stereoselectivity (>20:1 dr) in excellent yield. Similarly, methylation of the TBS-enol ether **30** (derived from β -ketoester **25**) also exclusively provided the desired stereoisomer **31** (eq 1). These results are in stark contrast to the work by Wenkert and co-workers on a similar tricyclic system.¹⁵ Next, stereoselective reduction of enone **28** using NiCl₂/NaBH₄ produced the C₃

Scheme 6. Total Syntheses of Triptobenzene L and Nepetaefolin F



alcohol with concomitant removal of the C₇ sulfide. Finally, DIBAL-H reduction of the ester **29** produced triptobenzene L (**4**). Selective acylation of **4** completed a protecting-group free total synthesis nepetaefolin F (**5**). In both cases, synthetic **4** and **5** were in excellent agreement (¹H NMR, ¹³C NMR, [α]_D) with the literature values^{19,20} for the isolated natural products.

The unexpected selectivity in the C₄ alkylation of compounds **27** and **30** is worthy of further comment (Figure 2). We hypothesized that further flattening of the A ring (32 and 33) should maximize the steric hindrance on the top face (due to the

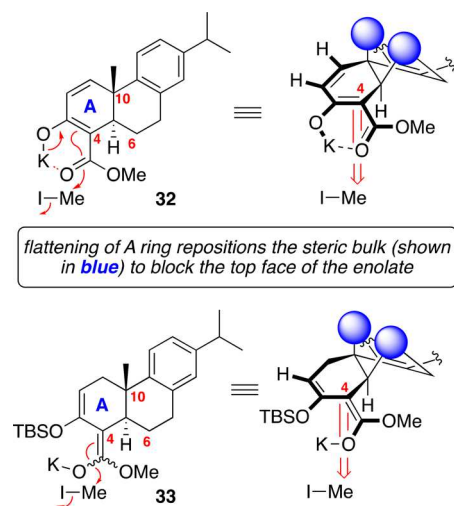


Figure 2. Possible explanation for stereoselective in alkylations.

C₁₀ methyl and the C₆ methylene moieties) while diminishing the stereoelectronic factors (half chair product vs chair product) that guide enolate alkylations in more conformationally flexible six-membered rings (e.g., substituted cyclohexanones).²¹ This strategy should provide synthetic chemists with a valuable method for accessing high levels of α facial selectivity in related tricyclic systems.

In summary, the enantioselective total syntheses of multiple abietane diterpenoids (specifically *ent*-triptobenzene T, vitexifolin C, 4-*epi*-triptobenzene L, triptobenzene L, and nepetaefolin F) have been accomplished using a unified, common intermediate approach and have enabled the confirmation and/or establishment of the absolute stereochemistry of each natural product. In each case, these natural products had not been previously prepared synthetically. Key to these syntheses was the discovery of new insights for the Pummerer reaction—including the utilization of three separate mechanisms (vinyl sulfide, acylated oxonium ion and nonoxidative pathways). Additionally, the importance of A ring unsaturation for the stereoselective alkylation^{16b,22} has been unearthed during the syntheses of triptobenzene L (4) and nepetaefolin F (5). Our highly efficient approaches open the door for biological evaluation of these natural products as well as related analogues. Further application of this work will be reported in due course.

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website at DOI: 10.1021/acs.orglett.8b02060.

Complete experimental details (PDF)

¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra (PDF)

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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