Phytochemistry Letters 14 (2015) 138–142

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Phytochemistry Letters

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/phytol

Short communication

Using NMR to determine the relative stereochemistry of 7,7-diaryl-8,8′-dimethylbutan-1-ol lignans

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 9 July 2015
Received in revised form 25 September 2015
Accepted 28 September 2015
Available online 20 October 2015

Keywords:
Lignans
Butanol lignans
Seco lignans
Stereochemical analysis

ABSTRACT

Due to their linear, freely rotatable, structure many natural 7,7-diaryl-8,8′-dimethylbutan-7′-ol lignans are reported without any stereochemical assignment. Analysis of synthetic 8,8′-dimethylbutanol lignans and analogues reveals significant differences between the NMR data of *syn*- and *anti*-isomers. This information was then used to determine the relative stereochemistry of the C-8 and C-8′ methyl groups in previously undefined natural products.

Lignans are a broad class of plant secondary metabolites formed from the oxidative dimerization of two phenyl propanoid units. The different positions for oxidative coupling gives rise to the various structural classes of lignans. An interesting class of lignans, the 7,7-diarylbutanol seco-lignans, have been reported to have cytotoxic [1], anti-HIV-1 [2] and antioxidant [3] bioactivity (e.g. *Schisandra* lignan (**1**), Fig. 1) and synthetic analogues of these have shown even higher bioactivity [4]. Due to their acyclic structure with many freely rotatable bonds natural 7,7-diarylbutanol lignans are frequently reported in the literature with no relative stereochemical assignments and many of which are reported as having chirality. Kadangustin J (**2**), isolated from *Kadsura angustifolia* [5], has a reported α_D of +4.9° whereas a subsequent synthesis of the enantiomer of kadangustin J (**2**) found an α_D of −20.7° [6]. *Schisandra* lignan (**1**), isolated from *Schisandra propinqua* (Wall.) Baill. [1], also had dissimilar rotations from an asymmetrically prepared sample [7]. Syntheses of both *Schisandra* lignan (**1**) [7] and kadangustin J (**2**) [6,8] have allowed for the determination of a stereochemical relationship between the two methyl groups. Other lignans in this class, schilancifolignan D (**3**) – isolated from *Schisandra lancifolia* [9], marphenol G (**4**) – from *Schisandra wilsoniana* [10], and kadangustin K (**5**) – from *Kadsura angustifolia* [5], have been reported with undefined relative stereochemistry and have not been synthesised (Fig. 2). These lignans have three chiral centres compared to that of kadangustin J (**2**) and *Schisandra* lignan (**1**) which only have two chiral centres (Table 1). Therefore it would be helpful and important to understand the relative stereochemical relationship between the two methyl groups at C-8 and C-8′, as this would reduce the number of isomers required to determine the absolute stereochemistry of these interesting seco-lignans. Acetate forms of 7,7-diarylbutanol lignans have also been isolated, henricine B (**8**) – from *Schisandra henryi* [11], and lignan **9** – from *Schisandra sphenanthera* which has been reported as having anti-HSV and anti-adenovirus activity [12], and have been reported without stereochemical assignments (Table 2).

Previously, assignments of stereochemistry of these butanol type lignans have been achieved by chemical transformation to a known cyclic aryltetralone lignan (e.g. lignan **6** to lignan **6a**, Fig. 1) [13]. Others have used nOe analysis [14] and Newman projections [15] (lignan **7**), however due to the number of freely rotatable bonds in these butanol lignans, these methods of stereochemical analysis are non-reliable.

Our group has previously synthesised a range of *syn*-dimethyl-7,7-diarylbutanol lignans, including kadangustin J (**2**) [6]. During this previous work we observed that the NMR data from reported, but stereochemically undefined, lignans was significantly varied. This led us to speculate that these variations were due to the compounds being either *syn*- or *anti*-8,8′-dimethyl-7,7-diarylbutanols. We therefore theorized that if each stereoisomer was prepared it would allow for comparisons between the two isomers and perhaps differences could be seen that would allow for a simplified method of characterisation of isolated lignans.

The 7,7-diarylbutanol lignan analogues **10a–d** were synthesised following our reported procedure, which utilises the rearrangement of 1,4-diarylbutan-1,4-diols **11a–d** [16]. The *syn*-8,8′

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.phytol.2015.09.014
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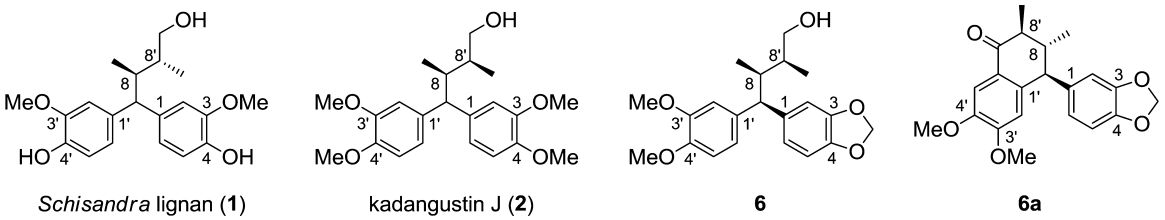


Fig. 1. Structures of 7,7-diaryl-8,8′-dimethylbutanol lignans: *anti-Schisandra* lignan, *syn*-kadangustin K, and lignan **6** with structure as determined via chemical transformation to give tetralone **6a**.

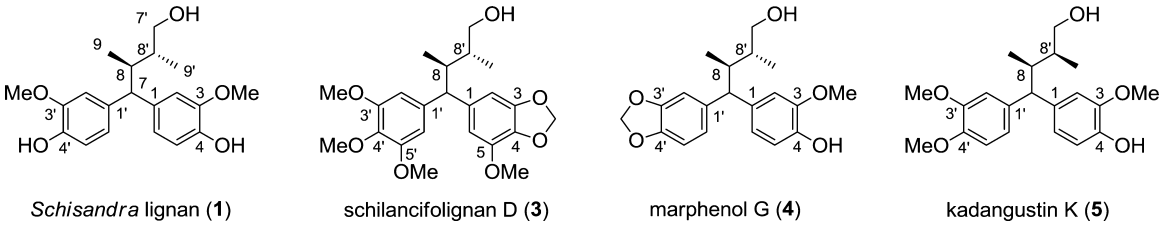


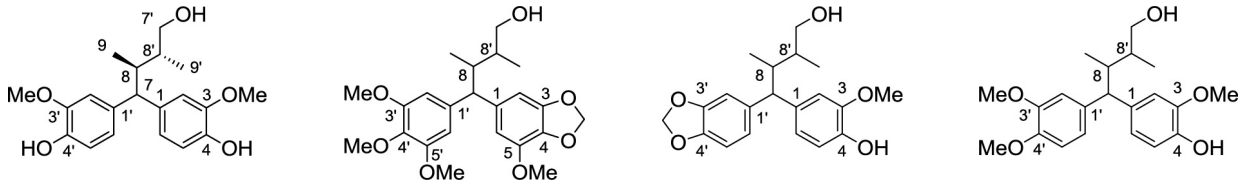
Fig. 2. Proposed relative stereochemistry of natural lignans based on NMR analysis.

stereochemistry in diols **11a**,**b** is provided by an acyl-Claisen rearrangement of *E*-crotyl morpholine (**12**) which gives only *syn*-amide **13**. Using a mixture of *E*- and *Z*-crotyl morpholine (**14**), prepared from commercial *E*/*Z*-crotyl chloride, in the acyl-Claisen rearrangement gave a mixture of *syn*-(major) and *anti*-(minor) amides **13** from which the *anti*-diastereomers of butanols **10c**,**d** were able to be obtained (Schemes 1–3).

Syn- and *anti*-isomers of *Schisandra* lignan (**1**) were prepared using an alternative method involving the Ireland-Claisen rearrangement which in this case favours the *anti*-product to give dimethylpentenoic acid **15** which was then coupled to morpholine to give *anti*-amide **13**, as the major isomer. From amide **13** our previously reported procedure was applied to give a mixture of *syn*- and *anti-Schisandra* lignan (**1**) [6].

Comparison of the NMR data of synthetic compounds **1** and **10a-d** (Table 3) showed that four characteristic signals in the ^{1}H NMR spectra and four characteristic signals from the ^{13}C NMR spectra were found to vary significantly between *syn*- and *anti*-7,7-diaryl-8,8′-dimethylbutanol lignans and lignan analogues (full data can be found in the S.I.). In the ^{1}H NMR spectra of *syn*-7,7-diaryl-8,8′-dimethylbutanols H-7 was observed in a range of δ 3.48–3.56 whereas in the *anti*-butanols the range was δ 3.61–3.77. Whilst the H-7 values are significantly different between *syn*- and *anti*-compounds they are not significantly different if C-7 is a chiral or achiral centre, thus the stereochemistry at this centre cannot be determined using NMR alone. The methyl groups at H-9 and H-9′ also showed significant differences between the *syn*- and *anti*-butanols with the signals arising from the *syn*-compounds showing a lower chemical shift compared to that of the *anti*-compounds. The H-7′ and selected signals arising from the ^{13}C NMR also showed characteristic differences with observations recorded in Table 4. Combining these results and examining the ^{1}H NMR values for H-7, H-7′, H-9 and H-9′ and the ^{13}C NMR values for C-8, C-7′, C-8′ and C-9′ for *syn*- or *anti*- lignans one can define key differences in the chemical shift ranges (Table 4).

Table 1
Selected ^{1}H and ^{13}C NMR data of *Schisandra* lignan (**1**) and natural 7,7-diarylbutanol lignans of unknown stereochemistry.



	Schisandra lignan (1)[a]	Schilancifolignan D (3)[b]	Marphenol G (4)[b]	Kadangustin K (5)[a]
^{1}H				
H-7	3.65, m	3.99, d, 11.4 Hz	3.83, d, 7.9 Hz	3.53, d, 11.8 Hz
H-9	0.84, d, 7.2 Hz	0.91, d, 6.9 Hz	0.91, d, 7.9 Hz	0.68, d, 6.8 Hz
H-7′α	3.22, m	3.79, d, 13.6 Hz	3.73–3.81, m	3.47–3.50, m
H-7′β	3.69, m	3.93, dd, 11.2, 6.6 Hz		
H-9′	0.99, d, 6.4 Hz	0.94, d, 7.1 Hz	0.93, d, 7.9 Hz	0.76, d, 7.0 Hz
^{13}C				
C-8	36.1	36.7	36.5	35.9
C-7′	63	66.8	66.5	67
C-8′	40.7	36.6	36.8	36
C-9′	15.6	10.2	12.3	9.6

[a] Run in $CDCl_3$.
[b] Run in C_5D_5N.