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Manganese(III) acetate mediated oxidation of aporphines: a convenient and useful synthesis of oxoaporphines

Om V. Singh,*,† Wei-Jan Huang,‡ Chung-Hsiung Chen and Shoei-Sheng Lee*

School of Pharmacy, College of Medicine, National Taiwan University, 1 Jen-Ai Road, Sec. 1, Taipei 100, Taiwan, ROC

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Abstract—Manganese(III) acetate mediated oxidation of aporphines to oxoaporphines is described. The developed methodology was conveniently applied for the synthesis of naturally occurring oxoaporphine alkaloids, oxoglaucine, and atheroline, starting from commercially available boldine.

Oxoaporphines are a subclass of isoquinoline alkaloids and widely distributed in plants of the families: annonaceae, araceae, hernandiaceae, lauraceae, papaveraceae, rannunculaceae, menispermaceae, etc., although in minor amounts.[1] These are most probably derived in the plants by the oxidation of corresponding aporphines. Oxoaporphines are bright yellow or orange colored compounds, which turn pink or red upon the addition of mineral acids.[1b] Oxoaporphines possess a broad range of biological activities such as antimicrobial,[2] antiviral,[3] cytotoxic,[4] and platelet aggregation inhibition.[5] Oxoglaucine and liriodenine (Fig. 1) are the most commonly available among oxoaporphine alkaloids and hence, their pharmaceutical properties have been studied in detail. Oxoglaucine had immunomodulatory activity[6] while liriodenine displayed topoisomerase II inhibitory activity[7] as well as anti-arrhythmic activity[8] by influencing the production of nitric oxide in the cell.

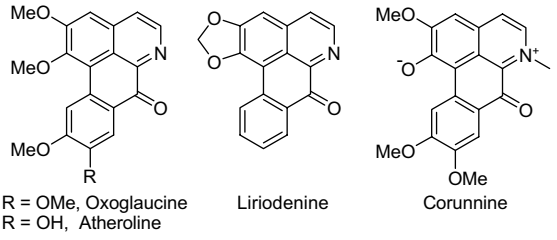

Figure 1. Some of the naturally occurring oxoaporphines alkaloids.

The non-degradative oxidation of aporphines to oxoaporphines has been the subject of a limited number of publications. Thus, treatment of glaucine (1,2,9,10-tetramethoxyaporphine) with chromium trioxide (CrO_3) in pyridine,[9] manganese dioxide,[10] lead(IV) acetate (LTA),[11] ceric ammonium nitrate (CAN),[12] and periodic acid[13] afforded oxoglaucine in varying yields. LTA and periodic acid gave 69%[11] and 70% yield, respectively, while CrO_3 and MnO_2 furnished very poor yields (≈10%). However, the oxidation of glaucine with CAN provided a mixture of 3-nitroglaucine and 3-nitrooxoglaucine along with glaucine by in situ nitration of glaucine with nitric acid generated from CAN followed by oxidation. All these reagents have only been utilized for the oxidation of glaucine and never been applied to the other derivatives of aporphines.

Among all the above reported reagents for the oxidation of glaucine to oxoglaucine, only periodic acid gave good yield and is also non-toxic. Therefore, we decided to study the oxidation of different aporphines with periodic acid. However, the oxidation of diisopropylboldine **1b**[14] in acetic acid afforded a mixture of 2,9-diisopropyloxy-1,10-dimethoxy-7-oxoaporphine **2b** and a characteristic green colored zwitterion compound **3b** in the ratio of 1:2 (Table 1, entry 4). Most probably **3b** might have

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* Corresponding authors. Fax: +886 2 23916127 (O.V.S.); e-mail addresses: singhov@gmail.com; shoeilee@ha.mc.ntu.edu.tw
† Present address: Department of Chemistry, The University of Texas at San Antonio, One UTSA Circle, San Antonio, TX 78249-0698, USA.
‡ Present address: Graduate Institute of Pharmacognosy, Taipei Medical University, Taipei, Taiwan.

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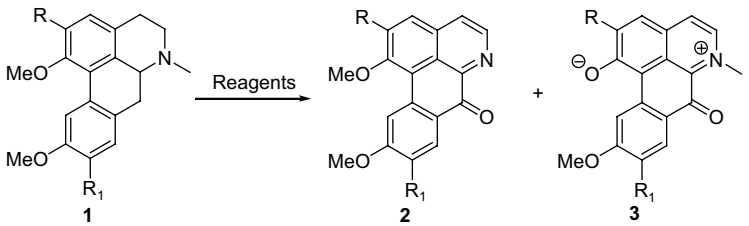
Table 1. Oxidation of aporphines with different reagents



1 2 3

Entry	Compounds	Substituents	Reagent	Temperature (°C)	Time (h)	Products	Yield[a] (%)
1	**1a**	$R = R_1 = OMe$	$Pb(OAc)_4$	25	12	**2a**	50
2	**1b**	$R = R_1 = OPr^i$	$Pb(OAc)_4$	25	12	**2b**	50
3	**1a**	$R = R_1 = OMe$	HIO_4	70	1.5	**2a**	70
4	**1b**	$R = R_1 = OPr^i$	HIO_4	70	1.5	**2b**	25
						3b	50
5	**1a**	$R = R_1 = OMe$	$PhI(OAc)_2$	115[b]	1	**2a**	50
						3a	5
6	**1a**	$R = R_1 = OMe$	$PhI(OAc)_2$	115[b]	18	**2a**	10
						3a	60
7	**1b**	$R = R_1 = OPr^i$	$PhI(OAc)_2$	115[b]	1	**2b**	15
						3b	40
8	**1a**	$R = R_1 = OMe$	$Mn(OAc)_3$	70	2	**2a**	75
9	**1b**	$R = R_1 = OPr^i$	$Mn(OAc)_3$	70	5	**2b**	68
10	**1c**	$R = R_1 = H$	$Mn(OAc)_3$	70	3	**2c**	80
11	**1d**	$R = OMe$; $R_1 = OTf$	$Mn(OAc)_3$	70	5	**2d**	75
12	**1e**	$R = OTf$; $R_1 = OMe$	$Mn(OAc)_3$	70	2	**2e**	70

[a] Yields are based upon isolated crystalline solid products.
[b] Reflux temperature of acetic acid.

formed from **2b** by the migration of methyl group from C_1–O to N_6 atom of oxoaporphine under the reaction conditions. This phenomenon is precedence in the literature and corunnine **3a** was synthesized[11] by heating of oxoglaucine at 180 °C for 24 h. The structure of **3b** was determined by 1D NMR (^1H, ^{13}C) and 2D NMR (COSY, NOESY, HMQC, and HMBC) analysis.[15] Hence, due to the lack of general applicability of periodic acid and the toxicity of LTA, the search for environment friendly reagents for the above transformation, which is widely applicable and amenable to different functional groups, is highly desirable.

Thus, glaucine **1a** and diisopropylboldine **1b** were subjected to the oxidation with different reagents such as LTA, HIO_4, iodobenzene diacetate (IBD) and manganese(III) acetate (MTA) under different reaction conditions and the results are summarized in Table 1. IBD[16] and MTA[17] have similar chemical properties, as LTA except MTA is a single-electron oxidant while IBD and LTA are two-electron oxidants. Moreover, IBD and MTA are also considered environment friendly reagents due to their non-toxic property. The oxidation of **1a** and **1b** with LTA in acetic acid afforded the respective oxoaporphines **2a** and **2b** in 50% yield (entries 1 and 2). Similarly, the oxidation of **1a** with HIO_4 in acetic acid at 70 °C gave only **2a** (entry 3) while **1b** provided a mixture of **2b** and **3b** in the ratio of 1:2 under similar reaction conditions (entry 4). The oxidation of **1a** with IBD in refluxing acetic acid for 1 h furnished **2a** as the major product along with a small amount of corunnine (**3a**) as minor product (5%). Upon prolonged heating of reaction mixture for 18 h (entry 6), **3a** was obtained as the major product, which has been isolated from the species of *Glaucium*[18] and *Thallictrum*.[19] This is the first direct conversion of glaucine to corunnine in a single step. Similarly, the oxidation of **1b** with IBD gave a mixture of **2b** and **3b** and the latter being a major one (entry 7). Surprisingly, oxidation of **1a**–**b** with MTA in acetic acid furnished only the respective oxoaporphines **2a**–**b** even after heating at 70 °C for 5 h and no trace of other products **3a**–**b** could be detected via TLC.

The generality of the above transformation was checked by treating different aporphines (**1a**–**e**) with MTA and the respective oxoaporphines (**2a**–**e**)[20] were obtained as the sole products in 68–80% yields (Table 1). The identities of all the oxoaporphines **2a**–**e** were confirmed by analyses of their ^1H and ^{13}C NMR and high-resolution mass spectra.

The developed methodology was applied for the synthesis of atheroline (**7**),[21] a phenolic oxoaporphine alkaloid starting from commercially available (+)-boldine (**4**) as depicted in Scheme 1. Monomethylation of boldine with trimethylphenylammonium chloride[22] in DMF under high dilution afforded an inseparable mixture of 2- and 9-boldine methyl ether (**5** and **6**) which were separated by converting them to their respective triflate derivatives (*N*-methyllaurotetanine triflate **1d** and predicentrine triflate **1e**) by treatment with *N*-phenyl-bis(trifluromethylsulfonimide).[23] The oxidation of **1d** with MTA in acetic acid furnished oxoaporphine, atheroline triflate **2d**, which on deprotection of triflate group by treatment with KOH–MeOH produced atheroline (**7**) in four steps and overall 20% yield starting from boldine. Similarly, **1e** yielded 2-hydroxy-1,9,10-trimethoxy-7-oxoaporphine (oxopredicentrine, **8**)[24] by oxidation with MTA followed