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Reliable method for the synthesis of aryl β-D-glucopyranosides, using boron trifluoride-diethyl ether as catalyst

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Stereospecific formation of aryl 2,3,4,6-tetra-O-acetyl-β-D-glucopyranosides was achieved by reaction of penta-O-acetyl-β-D-glucose 1 with substituted phenols in the presence of boron trifluoride. Yields of the purified products varied from 52-85%. Benzyl alcohol could also be glucosylated using similar conditions. All products were purified by crystallization from ethanol. The purity and the anomeric configuration of the products were determined by means of 1H and 13C NMR spectroscopy, melting points and optical rotation.

Introduction

Our interest in the preparation of new carbohydrate-derived liquid crystals prompted us to take a closer look at the synthesis of aryl glucopyranosides. The formation of the glycosidic bond is an important step in the synthetic strategy pertinent to our investigations, and also in the synthesis of naturally occurring glycocolides. The major leaf metabolites of members of the genus Protea (of the family Proteaceae), which are aromatic esters of aryl glucosides, are good examples. Finding an efficient and generally applicable procedure for the preparation of aryl β-D-glucopyranosides was troublesome. Various glucosylation methods have been developed since the classical Koenig-Knoor synthesis. Usually, these procedures require either an activated glucosyl donor, e.g., a glucosyl halide, trimethylsilyl 2,3,4,6-tetra-O-acetyl-β-D-glucopyranoside, or a trichloroacetimidate, a glucosyl acceptor with a good leaving group or a precious metal catalyst. Glucosylation can also be performed enzymically; the unprotected monosaccharide is derivatized in a water-poor system using the glucosyl acceptor (e.g., allyl or benzyl alcohol) as the solvent. However, most of these methods involve purification by means of column chromatography, which is not convenient for the synthesis of multigram quantities of glycosides.

Previously, we have used Lewis-acid catalysis (BF3·Et2O) for the synthesis of alkyl 2,3,4,6-tetra-O-acetyl-1-thio-α- or -β-D-glucopyranosides. Leporrievin et al. described a convenient direct coupling of penta-O-acetyl-β-D-glucose 1 to 3-n-alkylcatechols by using BF3·Et2O in dichloromethane at ambient temperature. Isomers substituted on the 1- and 2-0H groups of the 3-alkylcatechol were formed, in favour of the former, but both with exclusively the β-configuration at the anomeric centre of the carbohydrate. Reactions of substituted phenols other than these catechol derivatives were not described.

In this paper, we present the results of a study on the scope and limitations of this procedure for the synthesis of various aryl β-D-glucopyranosides. This method is easy to carry out and is applicable for a range of substituted phenols and benzyl alcohols. The starting materials are inexpensive or can be prepared on a large scale without difficulty. The purification of the aryl 2,3,4,6-tetra-O-acetyl-β-D-glucopyranosides is achieved conveniently by recrystallization from ethanol.

Results and discussion

The glucosylation which yields compounds 3 requires the reaction of equimolar amounts of pentaacetate 1 and a substituted phenol 2 under the influence of the Lewis acid catalyst BF3·Et2O in dichloromethane at room temperature. The rate of reaction is dependent on the substituent on the phenol ring. An average reaction time of 24 h is sufficient for complete transformation. After aqueous work-up the aryl 2,3,4,6-tetra-O-acetyl-β-D-glucopyranosides 3 are obtained in almost quantitative yields. Crystallization from ethanol affords the anomerically pure products 3 in 52-85% yield.

The yields of the individual reactions and the physical constants of purified products 3a-1 are reported in Table 1. The crude reaction products from different runs were analysed by means of 1H NMR spectroscopy. The aryl β-D-glucopyranosides were contaminated with both starting phenol, in those cases in which the substituted phenols are not soluble in aq. hydrogen carbonate, and traces of unchanged (and anomerized) penta-O-acetyl-β-D-glucose. Aryl α-D-glucopyranosides were not detected. The recrystallized aryl glucosides have the β-configuration as was established with 1H and 13C NMR spectroscopy. The coupling constants between H-1 and H-2 are in the range 7.3-7.7 Hz. The optical rotations were measured and, if reported, are in close agreement with literature data.

There is no need for activation of the glucosyl acceptor, e.g., by converting the phenol into a trialkylstannyl phenoxide as reported by Mottadelli et al., nor for activation of the glucosyl donor. Shorter reaction times appear to be the only advantage of the activation of either the donor or the acceptor. Since no side-reactions were observed in the method presented here, the longer reaction time is not a problem.

Only for the mono-glucosylation of dihydroxy aromatic compounds is it necessary to use a more selective system, because hydroquinone 4a, resorcinol 4b and 4,4'-dihydroxybiphenyl 4c are glucosylated on both oxygens in the BF3·Et2O-catalysed reaction (Table 2). Due to the poor solubility of compounds 4 in dichloromethane, only a small amount of the starting material is dissolved and this reacts twice with pentaacetate 1. Hence, the synthesis of the di-glycosylated derivatives proceeds smoothly. The use of a modified procedure, in which a solution of substrate 1 and catalyst BF3·Et2O was added very slowly to a suspension of hydroquinone, resulted in a mixture of mono- and di-glycosylated products in the ratio 10:7. Other methods appear to be better for selective monoglucosylation.

The rate and the extent of the glucosylation are dependent on...
the nucleophilicity of the phenols 2. An electron-donating alkoxy group on the 4-position of the phenol ring enhances the nucleophilicity of compounds 2 and speeds up the reaction. In the reaction of 4-pentyloxyphenol 2c with compound 1, NMR analysis of the crude product indicated a conversion of 92% of acetate 1 into the glucopyranoside after 15 h. The degree of conversion of methyl 4-hydroxybenzoate 2h was 64% after 15 h. 4-Nitrophenol 2f reacts slowly and is glucosylated to an extent of only 47% in 15 h. However, glucosylation of compound 2f carried out on a 50 mmol scale with a reaction time of 72 h, gave pure compound 3f in 74% yield after recrystallization.

The same substrates were used to study the effect of the amount of promoter on the extent of conversion. Reactions were carried out in the presence of increasing amounts of BF₃·Et₂O (0.2-2.0 mol equiv.) and were quenched after 15 or 48 h. The crude reaction products were analysed by means of ¹H NMR spectroscopy. The best results were obtained when approximately equivalent amounts of promoter and reactants were used.

Another Lewis acid, tin(iv) tetrachloride SnCl₄, is also frequently used in glucosylation reactions.¹⁹,²⁰ Although this is a stronger acid, it did not give better results than BF₃·Et₂O. Glucosylation of α- and β-naphthol using SnCl₄ gave the β-oglycopyranosides in 20 and 32% yield, respectively, whereas the yields of the BF₃·Et₂O-catalysed reactions were significantly higher (61 and 70%).

Jeffrey et al.²¹ and others²² reported that the temperature at which the glucosylation is carried out determines the configuration at the anomeric centre. Using SnCl₄ as the promoter, they obtained the aryl β-oglycopyranosides under conditions of kinetic control at 20 °C and the thermodynamically more stable α-anomer when the reaction temperature was 40 °C. Using BF₃·Et₂O, we found the formation of only β-glycopyranosides. When 4-hydroxybiphenyl 2j was glucosylated in refluxing chloroform under nitrogen, the α-anomer 3j·α was isolated in 18% yield. Anomerization of compound 3h in dichloromethane at 20 °C or at 40 °C did not occur. The β-anomer was recovered almost quantitatively. When glucosylation of compound 2d was carried out at 40 °C for 19 or 76 h under nitrogen, mixtures of α and β isomers were obtained (α : β = 1 : 5 and 1 : 1.2, respectively).

The 4-cyanobiphenyl moiety is a well known mesogenic group which we wanted to incorporate in carbohydrate-derived liquid crystals. 4-Cyanobiphenyl β-oglycopyranoside has been prepared by Baker et al.²³ using a SnCl₄-catalysed reaction, and by Tschierske et al.²⁴ using the Koenigs-Knorr method as described by Conchie and Levy.²⁵ In our hands, this method gave product 3j in only 14% yield. Using a modified procedure, the reaction of compound 2j with 2,3,4,6-tetra-O-acetyl-β-oglycopyranosyl bromide 1 in dichloromethane with silver triflate as promoter, compound 3j was prepared in 43% yield. When this method was used for the glucosylation of 4-cyano-4'-hydroxybiphenyl 2k, the corresponding glycopyranoside 3k was obtained in 40% yield. The BF₃·Et₂O-promoted reaction was found to proceed more efficiently, resulting in products 3j and 3k in 54 and 61% yield, respectively.

There are some limitations with respect to the choice of substituted phenols that can be used in the BF₃·Et₂O-catalysed reaction. Methyl 4-hydroxybenzoate 2h is readily glucosylated, but in the reaction with the free acid, 4-hydroxybenzoic acid,
Table 2 Glucosylation of penta-O-acetyl-β-D-glucose 1 with dihydroxy aromatic compounds 4 under the influence of BF₃·Et₂O. Isolated yields and physical properties of bis-(2,3,4,6-tetra-O-acetyl-β-D-glucopyranosyl)aryls 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glucosyl acceptor 4</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>Yield (%)</th>
<th>Mp (°C)</th>
<th>Optical rotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5a</td>
<td>p-C₆H₄</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>178-183</td>
<td>195-196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5b</td>
<td>m-C₆H₄</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>202-205</td>
<td>193-195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5c</td>
<td>(p-C₆H₄)₂</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>199-210</td>
<td>18-19.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optical rotation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>[α]D° measured at 23 °C in ref. 18 and at 26 °C in ref. 28.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5a</td>
<td>-19.9 -16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5b</td>
<td>-25.7 -29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5c</td>
<td>-11.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the expected glucopyranoside was not formed. Also, glucosylation of 4-hydroxybenzaldehyde failed. A valuable extension to the range of glucosyl acceptors is that benzyl alcohol and 4-nitrobenzyl alcohol can also be glucosylated using the method described above, giving the products 7a and 7b in 24 and 70% yield. 4-Hydroxybenzyl alcohol and 4-alkoxybenzyl alcohol failed to react with pentaacetate 1 under the influence of a Lewis acid. Both BF₃·Et₂O and SnCl₄ were used, but in each case only degradation of the starting alcohol was found. 4-Hexyloxybenzyl 2,3,4,6-tetra-O-acetyl-β-D-glucopyranoside has been prepared by Tschierske et al. using a silver oxide-promoted glucosylation of bromide 1' with 4-hexyloxybenzyl alcohol. Unfortunately, no experimental details were given. All the aryl 2,3,4,6-tetra-O-acetylglucopyranosides prepared with the BF₃·Et₂O-catalysed reaction can be deprotected by the action of trimethylamine in aq. methanol to yield the corresponding aryl glucopyranosides quantitatively.

Experimental

General
All reagents and solvents were purchased and were used without further purification. 4-Nitrophenol and 4-cyanophenol were recrystallized from toluene and 4-pentoxystilbene was recrystallized from light petroleum (distillation range 40-60 °C). Penta-O-acetyl-β-D-glucose 1 was prepared by the method described by Vogel. The structures of all products were confirmed by NMR spectroscopy; no impurities were detected in the final products. Where determined, elemental analysis revealed at least 99% purity. ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra were recorded on a 300 MHz Varian VTR-300 spectrometer. Chemical shifts are relative to CHCl₃ (δT 7.24). Mps were measured using a Perkin-Elmer PC Series DSC 7. Optical rotations were measured for solutions in CHCl₃ on a Perkin-Elmer 241 polarimeter, and [α]D° values are given in units of 10⁻¹ deg cm² g⁻¹.

General procedure for the glucosylation of phenols with BF₃·Et₂O
Penta-O-acetyl glucose 1 (3.9 g, 10 mmol) and 10 mmol of a 4-substituted phenol 2 were dissolved in 20 ml of anhydrous CH₂Cl₂. Then BF₃·Et₂O (1.25 ml, 10 mmol) was added. The reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 24 h and then poured into 40 ml of 5% aq. NaHCO₃. The organic layer was separated, washed successively with aq. NaHCO₃ and (once) with water, dried over Na₂SO₄, and concentrated. The crude product was recrystallized from ethanol. The physical data reported below were determined on the first crop of recrystallized product.

Remarks. The glucosylation reactions were also carried out on a scale up to 50 mmol; the products were obtained in similar yields and selectivity. For the glucosylation of dihydroxy aromatic compounds 4 two mol equiv. of pentaacetate 1 were used. The naphthyl and benzyl β-D-glucopyranosides 6 and 7 were synthesized using the same general procedure.
NMR data and elemental analysis of selected compounds

**Phenyl 2,3,4,6-tetra-O-acetyl-β-D-glucopyranoside**

\[ \delta_0 = 0.87 (t, 3 H, H-1/2), 1.50 - 1.50 (m, 10 H, H-3/3'' and 4), 1.52 (m, 1 H, H-2), 2.01, 2.02, 2.05 and 2.06 (4 s, 12 H, 4 acetyl), 2.54 (t, 2 H, H-3), 3.20 (m, 1 H, H-5), 3.54 (dd, 3 J, 3 H, H-2 and -3, -4) and 7.09 (d, 2 H) \]

\[ \text{Found: } C = 56.0; H = 5.15; N = 3.1; C_12H_22NO_{10} \text{ requires } C = 56.12; H = 5.16; N = 3.125. \]

**4-Methoxycarbonylphenyl 2,3,4,6-tetra-O-acetyl-β-D-glucopyranoside**

\[ \delta_0 = 0.87 (t, 3 H, H-1/2), 1.50 - 1.50 (m, 10 H, H-3/3'' and 4), 1.52 (m, 1 H, H-2), 2.01, 2.02, 2.05 and 2.06 (4 s, 12 H, 4 acetyl), 2.54 (t, 2 H, H-3), 3.20 (m, 1 H, H-5), 3.54 (dd, 3 J, 3 H, H-2 and -3, -4) and 7.09 (d, 2 H) \]

\[ \text{Found: } C = 56.0; H = 5.15; N = 3.1; C_12H_22NO_{10} \text{ requires } C = 56.12; H = 5.16; N = 3.125. \]

**4-Methoxybenzyl 2,3,4,6-tetra-O-acetyl-β-D-glucopyranoside**

\[ \delta_0 = 0.87 (t, 3 H, H-1/2), 1.50 - 1.50 (m, 10 H, H-3/3'' and 4), 1.52 (m, 1 H, H-2), 2.01, 2.02, 2.05 and 2.06 (4 s, 12 H, 4 acetyl), 2.54 (t, 2 H, H-3), 3.20 (m, 1 H, H-5), 3.54 (dd, 3 J, 3 H, H-2 and -3, -4) and 7.09 (d, 2 H) \]

\[ \text{Found: } C = 56.0; H = 5.15; N = 3.1; C_12H_22NO_{10} \text{ requires } C = 56.12; H = 5.16; N = 3.125. \]

**4-(Methoxycarbonyl)phenyl 2,3,4,6-tetra-O-acetyl-β-D-glucopyranoside**

\[ \delta_0 = 0.87 (t, 3 H, H-1/2), 1.50 - 1.50 (m, 10 H, H-3/3'' and 4), 1.52 (m, 1 H, H-2), 2.01, 2.02, 2.05 and 2.06 (4 s, 12 H, 4 acetyl), 2.54 (t, 2 H, H-3), 3.20 (m, 1 H, H-5), 3.54 (dd, 3 J, 3 H, H-2 and -3, -4) and 7.09 (d, 2 H) \]

\[ \text{Found: } C = 56.0; H = 5.15; N = 3.1; C_12H_22NO_{10} \text{ requires } C = 56.12; H = 5.16; N = 3.125. \]
H, H -5 and -5'), 4.12 and 4.25 (2 d, 4 H, H -6 and -6'), 4.96 (d, J₁₂,₇.₈ = 6.8, 2 H, H -1 and -1'), 5.1 - 5.3 (m, 6 H, H -2, -2'), and 6.90 (s, 4 H); δ₂₅ = 20.4 and 20.5 (each q, 8 x acetyl), 61.7 (t, C -6 and -6'), 68.2, 71.0, 71.9 and 72.5 (4 d, C -2/2´, 2/2´'), 99.6 (d, C -1 and -1'), 118.3 (d, arom CH), 152.7 (s, arom C -O) and 169.1, 169.2, 170.0 and 170.3 (4 s, 8 x CO acetyl).

References
32. The results of the BIF-EtO-acetate catalyst reaction of compound I and a nitrite will be published separately.

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