

A surprising double carbon–nitrogen coupling reaction catalyzed by $[\text{H}_3\text{Ru}_4(\text{C}_6\text{H}_6)_4(\text{OH})]^{2+}$: synthesis of unusual barbiturate analogues[†]

Frédéric Chérioux* and Georg Süss-Fink

Institut de Chimie, Université de Neuchâtel, Case Postale 2, CH-2007 Neuchâtel, Switzerland

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Abstract—Seven- and eight-membered analogues of barbituric acid are easily accessible by insertion of carbodiimides into cyclic anhydrides catalyzed by the cationic hydroxo cluster $[\text{H}_3\text{Ru}_4(\text{C}_6\text{H}_6)_4(\text{OH})]^{2+}$.

The last decade has witnessed a considerable interest in the synthesis of medium-size heterocycles, due to the large spectrum of biological activity of these systems.¹ For example, many seven- or eight-membered rings containing one or more heteroatoms are very common in submarine species² or in drugs such as taxol,³ and their preparation still is a challenge in organic synthesis. Barbituric acid derivatives which are six-membered heterocycles are well known for their pharmacological applications,⁴ but they are also used in non-linear optics⁵ and for molecular recognition.⁶ However, seven- or eight-membered analogues of barbituric acid (1,3-diazepine-2,4,7-trione and 1,3-diazocine-2,4,8-trione) are unknown so far, despite a large potential of biological activity to be expected. In this paper, we report a surprisingly simple access to new barbiturate analogues containing seven- or eight-membered ring systems.

We observed that *N,N'*-dialkylcarbodiimides react, in the presence of catalytic amounts of $[\text{H}_3\text{Ru}_4(\text{C}_6\text{H}_6)_4(\text{OH})]\text{Cl}_2$,⁷ with succinic anhydride to give, in an unexpected addition process, the seven-membered heterocycles **1a** (R = isopropyl) and **1b** (R = cyclohexyl) (Scheme 1).⁸

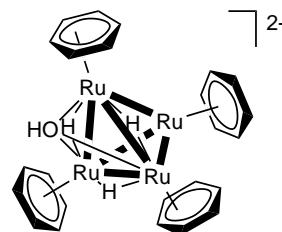
The reaction also works with phenylsuccinic anhydride to give the corresponding phenyl derivatives **1c** (R = isopropyl) and **1d** (R = cyclohexyl). With glutaric anhydride, the eight-membered heterocycles **2a** (R = isopropyl) and **2b** (R = cyclohexyl) are obtained. The new heterocycles are isolated as white, air-stable oily solids which melt at around room temperature. All compounds are unambiguously characterized by conclusive MS, IR, ¹H and ¹³C NMR data; they also give satisfactory microanalytical results (Scheme 2).

The catalytic addition reaction works with acyclic anhydrides, too: propionic anhydride reacts with *N,N'*-dicyclohexylcarbodiimide (DCC), in the presence of $[\text{H}_3\text{Ru}_4(\text{C}_6\text{H}_6)_4(\text{OH})]\text{Cl}_2$, to give (yield: 25%) the known *N,N'*-dicyclohexyl-*N,N'*-dipropionoylurea, also accessible from the classical reaction between propionic acid and DCC.⁹ The new addition reaction, which implies the insertion of the carbodiimide molecule into the anhydride structure by a double carbon–nitrogen coupling sequence, takes place at room temperature in THF solution, giving yields between 15 and 70%. Moreover, no by-products are formed during the condensation, because the resulting mixtures contain only

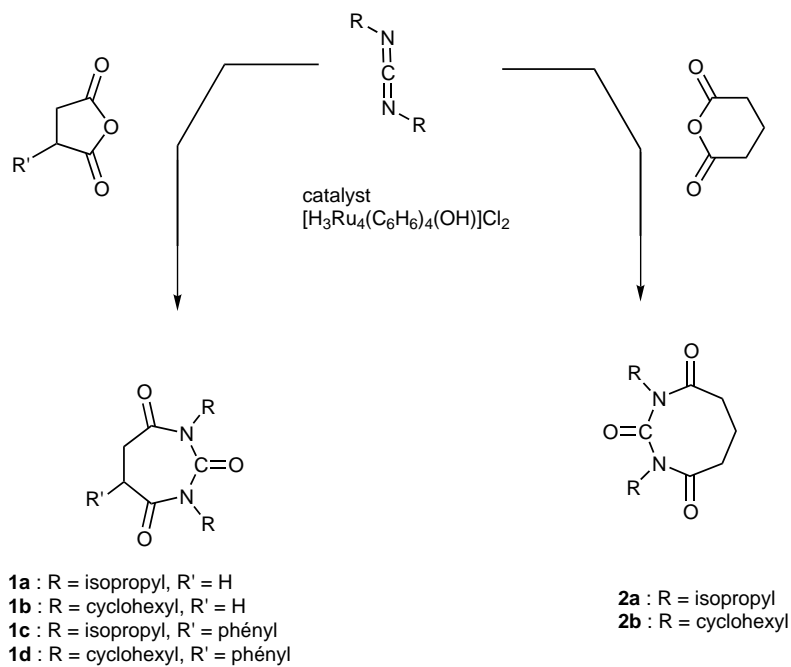
Keywords: catalysis; cluster; barbiturates; carbodiimides; acid anhydrides.

* Corresponding author. Fax: +(41) 32 718 25 11; e-mail: frederic.cherieux@unine.ch

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Scheme 1. Cation $[\text{H}_3\text{Ru}_4(\text{C}_6\text{H}_6)_4(\text{OH})]^{2+}$.



Scheme 2. Synthesis of *N,N'*-dialkyl-1,3-diazepine-2,4,7-triones **1** and *N,N'*-dialkyl-1,3-diazocine-2,4,8-triones **2**.

the products and unreacted starting materials. Given a catalyst/substrate ratio of 1:1000, the catalytic turnovers vary between 150 and 700. After the catalytic reaction, the catalyst [H₃Ru₄(C₆H₆)₄(OH)]Cl₂ can be recovered unchanged and reused for further runs.

The mechanism of the catalytic reaction is not completely clear, but it seems to involve the triply-bridging hydroxo ligand in [H₃Ru₄(C₆H₆)₄(OH)]²⁺, since the reaction is also catalyzed by the tetranuclear rhenium complex [Re(CO)₃(OH)]₄¹⁰ containing μ₃-OH ligands as well. However, with [H₃Ru₄(C₆H₆)₄(OH)]²⁺ being almost insoluble in THF, the separation of the (solid) catalyst and the (dissolved) product is very easy. Without catalyst, the carbodiimides do not react at all with succinic or glutaric anhydrides, even under forcing conditions (reflux in THF during one week). Addition of Lewis acids such as AlCl₃, ZnCl₂, BF₃·OEt₂ and HBF₄ does not give the heterocyclic products either. Even other ruthenium compounds such as Ru₂(C₆H₆)₂Cl₄ and [H₄Ru₄(C₆H₆)₄]Cl₂ do not catalyze the addition of DCC to anhydrides.

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8. **General procedures for preparation of heterocycles:** The carbodiimides (1 mmol) and the acid anhydride (1 mmol; succinic anhydride: 1.0 g, glutaric anhydride: 1.14 g or phenylsuccinic anhydride: 1.76 g) are dissolved in 20 ml of THF at room temperature. After addition of [H₃Ru₄(C₆H₆)₄(OH)]Cl₂ (1 μmol, 0.8 mg), the mixture is vigorously stirred under N₂ for 12 h at room temperature. The resulting mixture is filtered to remove the solid catalyst (recovery >95%). Then the solution is evaporated to dryness. The product is extracted from the resulting solid by anhydrous ether (two times, 20 ml), the combined extracts are concentrated under reduced pressure to give the pure heterocycle.
 Compound **1a**: *N,N'*-diisopropyl-1,3-diazepine-2,4,7-trione (yield 70%). ¹H NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 0.87 (d, 12H, ³J(H,H)=6.6), 2.75 (s, 4H, CH₂), 3.19 (h, 2H, ³J(H,H)=6.6); ¹³C NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 16.5, 25.0, 26.6, 35.1, 56.0, 166.1, 169.9; IR (KBr): ν 1690 cm⁻¹ (C=O), 1775 cm⁻¹ (C=O); MS (M): 226. Anal. calcd for **1a** (C₁₁H₁₈N₂O₃): C, 58.39; H, 8.02; N, 12.38. Found: C, 58.29; H, 8.35; N, 12.17%.
 Compound **1b**: *N,N'*-dicyclohexyl-1,3-diazepine-2,4,7-trione (yield 30%). ¹H NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 1.2–1.9 (m, 20H), 2.90 (s, 4H, CH₂), 3.19 (h, 2H, ³J(H,H)=4.2); ¹³C NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 16.5, 25.0, 26.6, 35.1, 56.0, 166.1, 169.9; IR (KBr): ν 1690 cm⁻¹ (C=O), 1775 cm⁻¹ (C=O); MS (M): 306. Anal. calcd for **1b** (C₁₇H₂₆N₂O₃): C, 66.67; H, 8.55; N, 9.14. Found: C, 66.49; H, 8.61; N, 9.14%.
 Compound **2a**: *N,N'*-diisopropyl-1,3-diazocine-2,4,8-trione (yield 70%). ¹H NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 0.87 (d, 12H, ³J(H,H)=6.6), 2.75 (s, 4H, CH₂), 3.19 (h, 2H, ³J(H,H)=6.6); ¹³C NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 16.5, 25.0, 26.6, 35.1, 56.0, 166.1, 169.9; IR (KBr): ν 1690 cm⁻¹ (C=O), 1775 cm⁻¹ (C=O); MS (M): 226. Anal. calcd for **2a** (C₁₁H₁₈N₂O₃): C, 58.39; H, 8.02; N, 12.38. Found: C, 58.29; H, 8.35; N, 12.17%.
 Compound **2b**: *N,N'*-dicyclohexyl-1,3-diazocine-2,4,8-trione (yield 30%). ¹H NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 1.2–1.9 (m, 20H), 2.90 (s, 4H, CH₂), 3.19 (h, 2H, ³J(H,H)=4.2); ¹³C NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 16.5, 25.0, 26.6, 35.1, 56.0, 166.1, 169.9; IR (KBr): ν 1690 cm⁻¹ (C=O), 1775 cm⁻¹ (C=O); MS (M): 306. Anal. calcd for **2b** (C₁₇H₂₆N₂O₃): C, 66.67; H, 8.55; N, 9.14. Found: C, 66.49; H, 8.61; N, 9.14%.

1c: *N,N'*-diisopropyl-5-phenyl-1,3-diazepine-2,4,7-trione (yield 60%). ¹H NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 0.89 (d, 12H, ³J(H,H)=6.6), 3.05 (dd, 1H, ³J(H,H)=6.6 Hz, ²J(H,H)=19.04), 3.21 (h, 2H, ³J(H,H)=6.6), 3.45 (dd, 1H, ³J(H,H)=10.25, ²J(H,H)=19.04), 3.05 (dd, 1H, ³J(H,H)=6.6, ³J(H,H)=10.25); ¹³C NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 16.5, 28.0, 36.9, 46.8, 61.3, 127.6, 128.9, 129.8, 170.6, 172.3; IR (KBr): ν 1697 cm⁻¹ (C=O), 1782 cm⁻¹ (C=O); MS (M): 302. Anal. calcd for **1c** (C₁₇H₂₂N₂O₃): C, 67.53; H, 7.33; N, 9.26. Found: C, 66.85; H, 7.51; N, 9.66%. Compound **1d:** *N,N'*-dicyclohexyl-5-phenyl-1,3-diazepine-2,4,7-trione (yield 25%). ¹H NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 1.2–1.9 (m, 20H, CH₂), 3.05 (dd, 1H, ³J(H,H)=6.6, ²J(H,H)=19.04), 3.21 (h, 2H, ³J(H,H)=4.2), 3.45 (dd, 1H, ³J(H,H)=10.25, ²J(H,H)=19.04), 3.05 (dd, 1H, ³J(H,H)=6.6, ³J(H,H)=10.25); ¹³C NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 16.5, 28.0, 36.9, 46.8, 61.3, 127.6, 128.9, 129.8, 170.6, 172.3; IR (KBr): ν 1697 cm⁻¹ (C=O), 1782 cm⁻¹ (C=O); MS (M): 382. Anal. calcd for **1d** (C₂₃H₃₀N₂O₃): C, 72.22; H, 7.91; N, 7.32. Found: C, 72.26; H, 7.97; N, 7.23%. Compound **2a:** *N,N'*-diisopropyl-1,3-diazocine-2,4,8-trione (yield 28%). ¹H NMR

(200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 0.89 (d, 12H, ³J(H,H)=6.6), 2.02 (q, 2H, ³J(H,H)=6.6), 2.76 (t, 4H, ³J(H,H)=6.6), 3.19 (h, 2H, ³J(H,H)=6.6); ¹³C NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 16.5, 25.0, 26.6, 30.2, 35.1, 56.0, 165.1, 166.9; IR (KBr): ν 1695 cm⁻¹ (C=O), 1780 cm⁻¹ (C=O); MS (M): 240. Anal. calcd for **2a** (C₁₂H₂₀N₂O₃): C, 59.98; H, 8.39; N, 11.66. Found: C, 60.12; H, 8.53; N, 11.54%. Compound **2b:** *N,N'*-dicyclohexyl-1,3-diazocine-2,4,8-trione (yield 15%). ¹H NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 1.2–1.9 (m, 20H), 2.02 (q, 2H, ³J(H,H)=6.6), 2.76 (t, 4H, ³J(H,H)=6.6), 3.19 (h, 2H, ³J(H,H)=4.2); ¹³C NMR (200 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 16.5, 25.0, 26.6, 30.2, 35.1, 56.0, 165.1, 166.9; IR (KBr): ν 1695 cm⁻¹ (C=O), 1780 cm⁻¹ (C=O); MS (M): 320. Anal. calcd for **2b** (C₁₈H₂₈N₂O₃): C, 67.47; H, 8.81; N, 8.74. Found: C, 67.42; H, 8.64; N, 9.08%.

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