

A CONCISE ROUTE TO (*S*)-PHENYLALANINE FROM (*R*)-EPICHLOROHYDRIN

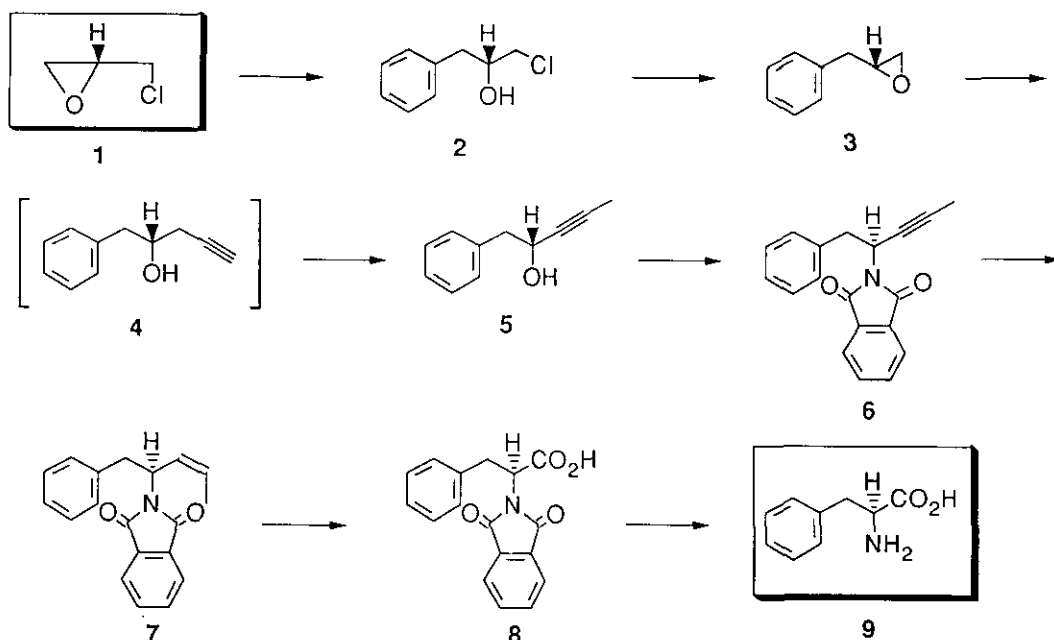
Seiichi Takano,* Masashi Yanase, and Kunio Ogasawara

Pharmaceutical Institute, Tohoku University, Aobayama, Sendai 980,
Japan

Abstract— A concise route to (*S*)-phenylalanine has been established starting from (*R*)-epichlorohydrin.

(*S*)-Phenylalanine¹ (**9**) is an important amino acid not only as an essential component in human nutrition but also as a synthetic intermediate of a variety of biologically active compounds. We report herewith a concise synthesis of (*S*)-phenylalanine (**9**) starting from (*R*)-epichlorohydrin (**1**) which is available in a large quantity by fermentation² as well as by chemical conversion from D-mannitol.³

Reaction of **1** with phenyllithium in the presence of copper (I) cyanide afforded the chlorohydrin **2**, in 93% yield, which on exposure to powdered sodium hydroxide in ether gave (*R*)-3-phenyl-



Scheme 1

1,2-epoxypropane⁴ (**3**) in 89% yield. Upon treatment with lithium acetylide ethylenediamine complex in dimethyl sulfoxide at room temperature followed by potassium *tert*-butoxide in the same reaction flask at the same temperature, **3** furnished the internal acetylene **5** directly in 80% yield via the spontaneous acetylene migration⁵ of the initially formed terminal acetylene **4**.

Employing the Mitsunobu reaction⁶ **5** was transformed into the phthalimide **6** in 91% yield with inversion of the chirality. After partial hydrogenation of **6** on Lindlar catalyst the resulting *cis*-olefin **7** was oxidized with ruthenium oxide⁷ to give (*S*)-*N*-phthaloylphenylalanine (**8**) in 72% overall yield. Since conversion of **8** into (*S*)-phenylalanine **9** as well as reversion of the latter into the former has already been established⁸ in good yield, respectively, the present synthesis implies a formal synthesis of (*S*)-phenylalanine (**9**). The present method may be generally applicable to the synthesis of other α -amino acids possessing (*S*)-configuration.

Acknowledgment

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EXPERIMENTAL

Optical rotations were measured with a JASCO-DIP4 automatic polarimeter. Mass spectra were recorded with a JEOL-O1SG-2 instrument, ir spectra with a JASCO A102 spectrophotometer, and ¹H nmr spectra on JEOL-JNM-FX90A (90 MHz) and/or JEOL-JNM-GX500 (500 MHz) spectrometers. Reactions were carried out under argon except hydrogenation.

(R)-1-Chloro-2-hydroxy-3-phenylpropane (2) — To a stirred solution of CuCN (5.32 g, 59.4 mmol) in THF (50 ml) was added phenyllithium (2.6 M in cyclohexane-ether) (45.73 ml, 119 mmol) dropwise at -90°C . After 30 min, (*R*)-epichlorohydrin (>98% ee) (**1**) (5.0 g, 54.1 mmol) in THF (10 ml) was added dropwise to the mixture at -45°C and the stirring was continued for 90 min at the same temperature. The mixture was treated with sat. aq. NH_4Cl and extracted with ether. The extract was washed with sat. aq. NaHCO_3 and brine, and dried over MgSO_4 . After evaporation of the solvent, the residue was chromatographed on a silica gel column (250 g) using Et_2O -hexane (1:9 v/v) as eluent to give **2** (8.39 g, 93%): bp $94^{\circ}\text{C}/18$ mmHg (Kugelrohr); $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{25} -3.72^{\circ}$ (*c* 1.02, CHCl_3). Ir (film) ν_{max} : 3400 cm^{-1} ; ¹H nmr (CDCl_3) δ : 2.20 (1H, d, $J=5.2$ Hz, exchangeable with D_2O), 2.90 (2H, d, $J=6.6$ Hz), 3.47 – 3.62 (2H, m), 3.90 – 4.20 (1H, m), 7.29 (5H, m); Mass (*m/z*): 170 (M^+), 91 (100%). Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_9\text{H}_{11}\text{ClO}$: C 63.35, H 6.50, Cl 20.78. Found: C 63.04, H 6.54, Cl 20.28.

(R)-3-Phenyl-1,2-epoxypropane (3) — A suspension of powdered NaOH (120 mg, 3.0 mmol) and **2** (171 mg, 1.0 mmol) in ether (3.0 ml) was stirred at room temperature for 2 h. The mixture was diluted with ether and washed with brine. After dried over MgSO_4 , the organic layer was evaporated and the residue was chromatographed on a silica gel column (5 g) using Et_2O -hexane (1:4 v/v) as eluent to give **3** (119 mg, 89%): bp $94-96^{\circ}\text{C}/18$ mmHg (Kugelrohr); $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{26} +1.34^{\circ}$ (*c* 1.19, CHCl_3). Ir (film) ν_{max} : $1605, 1500\text{ cm}^{-1}$; ¹H nmr (CDCl_3) δ : 2.54 (1H, dd, $J=2.4, 7.7$ Hz), 2.70 – 2.90 (3H, m), 3.07 – 3.25 (1H, m), 7.25 (5H, m); Mass (*m/z*): 134 (M^+), 91 (100%). Calcd for $\text{C}_9\text{H}_{10}\text{O}$: 134.0731 (*M*). Found: 134.0726 (M^+).

(R)-4-Hydroxy-5-phenyl-2-pentyne (5) — A mixture of **3** (3.71 g, 27.7 mmol) and lithium acetylide ethylenediamine complex (4.25 g, 41.5 mmol) in DMSO (40 ml) was stirred at room temperature for 30 min, then *t*-BuOK (6.83 g, 60.9 mmol) was added to the mixture and the stirring was further continued for 16 h at the same temperature. After treating the reaction mixture with 5% HCl, the acidic mixture was extracted with benzene. The extract was washed with sat. aq. NaHCO₃, dried over MgSO₄, and evaporated under reduced pressure. The residue was chromatographed on a silica gel column (80 g) using Et₂O-hexane (1:1 v/v) as eluent to give **5** (3.56 g, 80%): $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{28} +4.05^\circ$ (*c* 1.58, CHCl₃). Ir (film) ν_{max} : 3350, 2240, 1600 cm⁻¹; ¹H nmr (CDCl₃) δ : 1.83 (3H, d, *J*=2.0 Hz), 2.95 (2H, d, *J*=3.0 Hz), 4.50 (1H, m), 7.30 (5H, m); Mass (*m/z*): 160 (M⁺), 91 (100%). Calcd for C₁₁H₁₂O: 160.0888 (M). Found: 160.0909 (M⁺).

(S)-5-Phenyl-4-phthalimino-2-pentyne (6) — To a stirred solution of **5** (2.87 g, 17.9 mmol) in THF (100 ml) was added triphenylphosphine (5.17 g, 19.7 mmol), phthalimide (2.90 g, 19.7 mmol), and diethyl azodicarboxylate (3.1 ml, 21.5 mmol) and the stirring was continued for 20 min. After evaporation of the solvent under reduced pressure, the residue was chromatographed on a silica gel column (300 g) using Et₂O-hexane (1:7 v/v) as eluent to give **6** (4.72 g, 91%): mp 93 – 94 °C; $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{28} -139.86^\circ$ (*c* 1.33, CHCl₃). Ir (Nujol) ν_{max} : 2250, 1775, 1715 cm⁻¹; ¹H nmr (CDCl₃) δ : 1.82 (3H, d, *J*=2.2 Hz), 3.39 (2H, d, *J*=7.6 Hz), 5.25 (1H, m), 7.20 (5H, m), 7.60 – 7.82 (4H, m); Mass (*m/z*): 289 (M⁺). Anal. Calcd for C₁₉H₁₅NO₂: C 78.87, H 5.23, N 4.84. Found; C 78.57, H 5.46, N 5.12.

(Z)-(S)-5-Phenyl-4-phthalimino-2-pentene (7) — **6** (480 mg, 1.64 mmol) in benzene (10 ml) was hydrogenated over Lindlar catalyst (24 mg) for 45 min at atmospheric pressure. After removal of the catalyst by filtration, the solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The residue was chromatographed on a silica gel column (10 g) using Et₂O-hexane (1:3 v/v) as eluent to give **7** (473 mg, 99%): mp 83 – 84 °C; $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{28} -57.34^\circ$ (*c* 1.08, CHCl₃). Ir (Nujol) ν_{max} : 1775, 1710, 1610 cm⁻¹; ¹H nmr (CDCl₃) δ : 1.61 (3H, dd, *J*=2.0, 7.6 Hz), 3.25 (2H, m), 5.10 – 5.80 (2H, m), 5.90 – 6.25 (1H, m), 7.20 (5H, m), 7.50 – 7.80 (4H, m); Mass (*m/z*): 291 (M⁺). Anal. Calcd for C₁₉H₁₇NO₂: C 78.33, H 5.88, N 4.81. Found: C 78.23, H 5.98, N 4.62.

(S)-N-Phthaloylphenylalanine (8) — A suspension of **7** (466 mg, 1.6 mmol), NaIO₄ (3.42 g, 16.0 mmol), and RuCl₃·3H₂O (9.2 mg, 2.2 mol%) in a mixture of CH₃CN-CCl₄-H₂O (2:2:3) (7.0 ml) was stirred at room temperature for overnight. After dilution with CH₂Cl₂ the mixture was extracted with sat. aq. NaHCO₃ and the aqueous extract was made acidic with conc. HCl. Extraction of the mixture with Et₂O and the extract was dried over MgSO₄. Evaporation of the solvent under reduced pressure gave crystalline residue which was chromatographed on a silica gel column using AcOH-AcOEt (5:95 v/v) as eluent to give **8** (338 mg, 72%): mp 182 – 184 °C (lit.^{8b} mp 183 – 185 °C); $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{25} -197.52^\circ$ (*c* 1.05, EtOH) [lit.^{8b} $[\alpha]_{\text{D}} -212^\circ$ (*c* 1.92, EtOH)]. Ir (Nujol) ν_{max} : 3470, 1775, 1710 cm⁻¹; ¹H nmr (CDCl₃) δ : 3.59 (2H, d, *J*=8.1 Hz), 5.23 (1H, t, *J*=8.1 Hz), 7.20 (5H, br.s), 7.55 – 7.85 (4H, m), 10.0 (1H, br); Mass (*m/z*): 295 (M⁺). Calcd for C₁₇H₁₃NO₄: 295.0844 (M). Found: 295.0817 (M⁺).

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