Triterpenoids and Sterols from the Leaves and Twigs of *Melia azedarach*

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Abstract  Two new triterpenoids (1 and 2) and a new sterol (3), together with six known constituents (4–9), were isolated from the leaves and twigs of *Melia azedarach*. Their chemical structures were elucidated on the basis of spectroscopic analysis.

Keywords  Meliaceae · *Melia azedarach* · Triterpenoids · Sterols

1 Introduction

*Melia azedarach* Linn. (Meliaceae) are widely distributed in southern districts of the Yellow River in China. The fruits and bark are commonly used as famous Traditional Chinese Medicine for acesodyne and disinsection [1]. This species has been reported to contain triterpenoids, steroids, limonoids, flavonoid glycosides, and simple phenolics [2], which have been found to possess some medicinal pharmacological effects, including analgesic, anticancer, antiviral, antimalarial, antibacterial, and antifeedant activities [3, 4].

As a well known natural pesticide, azadirachtin has attracted much attention [5]. Previous investigations of the bark and roots of *M. azedarach* have shown that it is a rich source of meliacarpinin type limonoids [6–10]. Until now, few chemical studies have analyzed its leaves and twigs, which prompted us to conduct this project. We identified three new compounds: a meliacarpinin type limonoid (1), an apotirucallane derivative (2), and a sterol (3), together with six known compounds (4–9) (Fig. 1). Herein, we report the details of the isolation, structural elucidation of compounds 1–3.

2 Results and Discussion

The air-dried powder of *M. azedarach* leaves and twigs was extracted with MeOH (30 L × 3) at room temperature three times to give the residue, which was then partitioned between CHCl₃ and water to get the CHCl₃ soluble fraction. Then, three new constituents together with six known compounds were acquired by a series of chromatographic methods. Herein, we described the isolation and structural elucidation of these new compounds.

Compound 1 was isolated as an amorphous powder. The molecular formula was determined as C₃₇H₅₉O₁₅ from the HREIMS ion peak at m/z 734.3159 [M]+ (calcd for 734.3150). Its IR spectrum showed the presence of hydroxyl (3456 cm⁻¹) and carbonyl (1739 cm⁻¹) groups. The 1D NMR data (Table 1) of 1 displayed characteristic signals of meliacarpinin skeleton with three methyls (δH...
1.75, s, 3H; δH 0.95, s, 3H; δH 1.66, s, 3H), two methoxyls (δH 3.29, s, 3H; δH 3.79, s, 3H), two acetyl (δH 1.90, s, 3H; δH 2.30, s, 3H), one 2-methylbutyryl (δH 2.59, m; δH 1.27, m; δH 2.02, m; δH 0.99, t, J = 7.4 Hz) and one hydroxyl (δH 4.34, s, 1H) groups, which had a close resemblance to 3-tigloyl-1,20-acetyl-11-methoxymeliacarpinin [8], except for the presence of one 2-methylbutyryl moiety in 1 instead of the tigloyl group at C-3 in 3-tigloyl-1,20-acetyl-11-methoxymeliacarpinin. Observed the HMBC correlations (Fig. 2) of of H-2 (δH 2.59, m), H-3 (δH 1.53, m), H-4 (δC 176.1), and 1H-1H COSY correlations of H-3/H-2/H-4/H-5 (δH, 0.99, t, J = 7.4 Hz) confirmed above deduction. The linkage of 2-methylbutyryl moiety to C-3 was determined by the HMBC correlations from H-3 (δH 4.96, br. t, J = 2.7 Hz) to C-1 (δC 71.2), C-5 (δC 35.2), and C-1′.

The absolute configuration of C-2′ was determined as S, supported by the [α]D value at +16.3 of (S)-2-methylbutyric acid derived from 1 by alkaline hydrolysis ([α]D = −14.3 for (R)-2-methylbutyric acid and [α]D = +19.3 for (S)-2-methylbutyric acid) [11, 12]. The ROESY correlation (Fig. 3) between H-3 and H-6β (δH 4.12, br. d, J = 9.2 Hz) indicated that the 2-methylbutyryloxy was α-oriented. Other relative configuration of 1 were identical with those of 3-tigloyl-1,20-acetyl-11-methoxymeliacarpinin on the basis of ROESY spectrum. Therefore, chemical structure of 1 was deduced as 3α-(2-methylbutyryl)-1,20-diacyl-11-methoxymeliacarpinin.

Compound 2 was obtained as an amorphous powder. Based on the positive HREIMS (m/z 572.4083, calcd for 572.4077), the molecular formula was defined as C35H56O6. The 1HNMR, 13C-DEPT (Table 1) spectra showed the presence of nine methyls (two of which belonged to a tigloyl), eight methylenes (one oxygenated), eight methines (four oxygenated), one trisubstituted double bond, and four quaternary carbon. These data suggested that 2 was the apo-tirucallol (euphol) skeleton [13]. Comparison of NMR data of 2 with those of compound 5 (CAS NO: 100234-51-6) revealed that they were similar [14], except that a senecioyl ester side chain at C-3 in compound 5 was replaced by a tigloyl group (δC 169.3 C-1′, 130.3 C-2′, 138.6 C-3′, 14.6 C-4′, and 12.4 C-5′ in 2 [8], which was confirmed by the HMBC correlations (Fig. 2) of H-3.
Table 1. ¹H NMR and ¹³C NMR spectroscopic data of 1 and 2

| Pos | ¹H NMR Data | ¹³C NMR Data | Pos | ¹H NMR Data | ¹³C NMR Data |
|-----|-------------|-------------|-----|-------------|-------------|
|     | ¹H (J, Hz)  | ¹³C        |     | ¹H (J, Hz)  | ¹³C        |
| 1   | 4.26 (d, 9.3) | 71.2 d     | 1a  | 1.27 (m)    | 35.0 t     |
| 2a  | 2.27 (m)     | 28.4 t     | 1b  | 1.43 (m)    | 43.5 d     |
| 2b  | 2.34 (m)     |            | 2a  | 1.60 (m)    | 37.7 s     |
| 3   | 4.96 (br. t, 2.7) | 71.6 d     | 2b  | 1.99 (m)    | 80.1 d     |
| 4   | 4.33 (d, 12.7) | 35.2 d     | 3   | 4.65 (t, 2.7) | 25.6 t    |
| 5   | 4.12 (br. d, 9.2) | 72.1 d     | 4   | 2.09 (m)    | 52.8 s     |
| 6   | 4.53 (br. d, 5.7) | 84.0 d     | 5   | 1.71 (m)    | 41.9 d     |
| 8   | 52.3 s       | 6b         | 7   | 3.95 (s-like) | 74.1 d    |
| 9   | 3.84 (s)     | 48.5 d     | 7a  | 1.55 (m)    | 36.3 t     |
| 10  | 50.1 s       | 8          | 8   | 1.93 (m)    | 47.9 s     |
| 11  | 107.7 s      | 9          | 13  | 1.53 (m)    | 17.9 t     |
| 12  | 170.5 s      | 10         | 14  | 1.71 (m)    | 37.4 d     |
| 15  | 4.34 (overlap) | 82.3 d     | 16a | 2.31 (ddd, 15.1, 7.3, 3.6) | 162.7 s |
| 16b | 2.26 (m)     | 13         | 17  | 3.18 (d, 5.9) | 48.7 d    |
| 18  | 1.75 (s)     | 26.2 q     | 18  | 5.49 (d, 2.4) | 121.1 d   |
| 19a | 4.12 (br. d, 9.2) | 70.7 t     | 19b | 2.12 (m)    | 35.9 t     |
| 19b | 5.01 (overlap) | 29.4 t     | 19b | 2.31 (dd, 15.1, 7.3, 3.6) | 53.8 d    |
| 20  | 92.2 s       | 17         | 21  | 5.98 (s)    | 106.7 d    |
| 21  | 106.7 d      | 18         | 22  | 5.59 (d, 3.0) | 106.2 d   |
| 22  | 5.59 (d, 3.0) | 19         | 23  | 6.65 (d, 3.0) | 147.6 d   |
| 23  | 6.65 (d, 3.0) | 20         | 28a | 3.68 (d, 3.0) | 76.7 t    |
| 28b | 3.70 (br. s) | 21b        | 29  | 0.95 (s)    | 18.2 q     |
| 30  | 1.66 (s)     | 18.5 q     | 30  | 1.56 (m)    | 53.8 d     |
| 14-OH | 4.34 (s)   | 23         | 11-OH | 3.29 (s) | 52.4 q     |
| 12-OH | 3.79 (s)   | 24         | 12-OH | 3.79 (s) | 53.0 q     |
| 1-CH₂CO | 170.5 s  | 26         | 1-CH₂CO | 171.2 s | 27        |
| 20-CH₂CO | 1.90 (s) | 21.5 q    | 20-CH₂CO | 2.30 (s) | 29        |
| 1'   | 176.1 s     | 30         | 2'   | 2.59 (m)    | 41.0 d     |
| 3'   | 1.27 (d, 7.1) | 16.7 q    | 3'   | 1.27 (d, 7.1) | 16.7 q    |
| 4'a  | 1.53 (m)     | 26.3 t     | 3'   | 6.92 (qq, 7.1, 1.4) | 138.6 d   |
| 4'b  | 2.02 (m)     |            | 4'   | 1.81 (dd, 7.1, 1.1) | 14.6 q    |
| 5'   | 0.99 (t, 7.4) | 11.8 q    | 5'   | 1.85 (s-like) | 12.4 q    |

* Recorded in C₅D₅N; ¹H and ¹³C NMR recorded at 500, 125 MHz

* Recorded in CD₃OD; ¹H and ¹³C NMR recorded at 600, 150 MHz
The ROESY correlation (Fig. 3) between H-3 and Me-19β suggested that the tigloyl group at C-3 was α-oriented. The coupling constant between H-23 and H-24 (J = 9.0 Hz) suggested their anti-periplanar relation [14], and combination with the ROESY correlations of H-17/H-23, H-17/H-19β, H-20/Me-18α and H-24/Me-18α revealed that the configuration of C-23 and C-24 were both R*. Thus, the structure of 2 was established as 3α-tigloyl-17α-20S-21,24-epoxy-apotirucall-14-en-7α,23α,25-triol.

Compound 3 was isolated as an amorphous powder. The HREIMS of 3 gave a [M]+ ion peak at m/z 320.1985 (calcld for 320.1988), consistent with the molecular formula of C_{19}H_{28}O_{4}. Detailed analysis of its 1H and 13C-DEPT (Table 2) and 2D NMR data indicated that 3 and 2α,3α-dihydroxyandrostan-16-one 2β,19-hemiketal [15] had the same planar structure. The only difference between them was the configuration of substituent group at C-3. Comparison its 1H NMR data with that of epi-isomer showed that the coupling constants of H-3 (δH 4.11, dd, J = 10.3, 6.0 Hz) and the chemical shifts for H-1α (δH 1.38, d, J = 11.3 Hz) and H-1β (δH 2.54, d, J = 11.3 Hz) were obviously different from those of 2α,3α-dihydroxyandrostan-16-one 2β,19-hemiketa. But the aforementioned data was familiar with 2α,3β-dihydroxypregnan-16-one 2β,19-hemiketals [10], which implied that the H-3 of 3 was α-

### Table 2 1H NMR and 13C NMR spectroscopic data of 3

| Pos | δH (J, Hz) | δC | Pos | δH (J, Hz) | δC |
|-----|------------|----|-----|------------|----|
| 1a  | 1.38 (d, 11.3) | 44.3 t | 11a | 1.34 (m) | 21.5 t |
| 1b  | 2.54 (d, 11.3) | 11b | 1.58 (m) | 12a | 1.20 (m) | 38.2 t |
| 2   | 4.11 (dd, 10.3, 6.0) | 74.7 d | 12b | 1.59 (m) | 1.16 (m) | 29.8 t | 15b | 2.14 (dd, 17.9, 7.5) | 16 |
| 4a  | 1.73 (m) | 39.1 t | 13 | 39.2 s | 14 |
| 4b  | 2.19 (m) | 1.24 (m) | 51.7 d | 1.38 (overlap) | 43.8 d |
| 5   | 1.38 (overlap) | 15a | 1.84 (m) | 39.7 t |
| 6a  | 1.16 (m) | 29.8 t | 15b | 2.14 (dd, 17.9, 7.5) | 16 |
| 6b  | 1.46 (m) | 16 | 217.5 s | 7a | 0.79 (overlap) | 32.3 t | 17a | 1.93 (d, 16.6) | 56.2 t |
| 7b  | 1.37 (overlap) | 17b | 2.06 (d, 16.6) | 8 | 0.80 (overlap) | 36.8 d |
| 8   | 1.05 (m) | 46.4 d | 19a | 3.86 (d, 8.1) | 67.6 t |
| 10  | 48.2 s | 19b | 4.08 (d, 8.1) |

Recorded in CD_{3}D; 1H and 13C NMR recorded at 600, 150 MHz

(δH 4.65, t, J = 2.7 Hz), H-3′ (δH 6.92, qq, J = 7.1, 1.4 Hz), and H-5′ (δH 1.85, s-like) with C-1′, and of H-4′ (δH 1.81, dd, J = 7.1, 1.1 Hz) with C-2′, together with the 1H-1H COSY correlations of H-3′/H-4′.

Fig. 2 Selected 1H-1H COSY ( ) and HMBC ( ) correlations of 1–3

Fig. 3 Selected ROESY ( ) correlations of 1–3

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oriented. This conclusion further confirmed by the cross peak between H-3 and H-5 (δ H 1.38, overlap) in the ROESY spectrum (Fig. 3). So the hydroxyl group at C-3 was β-configuration. Consequently, the chemical structure of 3 was elucidated as 2x,3β-dihydroxyandrostan-16-one 2β,19-hemiketal.

Six known constituents: 1-cinnamoyl-3-acetyl-11-methoxymeliacarpinin (4) [8], 3-tigloyl-1,20-diacyetyl-11-methoxymeliacarpinin (5) [8], 3x,23R,25-trihydroxytriter-7-en-24-one (6) [16], and 2x,3x,16β-trihydroxy-5x-pregnane 20R-methacrylate (7) [17], 6-de(acyetoxy)-7-deacetylchisocheton compound E (8) [18]. Toonapubesin C (9) [19], were identified by comparison of their spectroscopic data with those reported in the literature.

3 Experimental

3.1 General Experimental Procedures

Optical rotations were measured with a Horiba SEPA-300 polarimeter. UV spectra were detected on a Shimadzu UV-2401A spectrophotometer. IR spectra were measured on a Bruker Tensor-27 infrared spectrophotometer with KBr pellets. ESIMS analysis were recorded on an API QSTAR Pulsar I spectrometer. EIMS and HREIMS were performed on a Waters Autospec Premier P776 mass spectrometer. 1D and 2D NMR spectra were recorded on Bruker DRX-500 and Bruker Avance III-600 spectrometers with TMS as internal standard. Semi-preparative HPLC studies were carried out on an Agilent 1100 liquid chromatograph with a Zorbax SB-C18 (9.4 mm × 25 cm) column. Column chromatography was performed with silica gel (200–300 mesh, Qingdao Marine Chemical, Inc.), Sephadex LH-20 (20–150 μm, Pharmacia), and Lichroprep RP-18 (40–63 μm, Merck). Fractions were monitored by TLC, and spots were visualized by heating the silica gel plates sprayed with 10 % H2SO4 in EtOH.

3.2 Plant Material

The leaves and twigs of *M. azedarach* were collected from Kunming, Yunnan Province, China. A voucher sample (NO: 2011-05-07) has been deposited in the State Key Laboratory of Phytochemistry and Plant Resources in West China, Kunming Institute of Botany, Chinese Academy of Sciences.

3.3 Extraction and Isolation

The air-dried and powdered leaves and twigs of *M. azedarach* (10 kg) were extracted with MeOH (30 L × 3) at room temperature. Evaporation of the solvent under reduced pressure provide a dark residue (700 g), which was suspended in water and then partitioned with CHCl3 and n-BuOH, successively, to yield CHCl3 fraction (120 g), n-BuOH fraction (156 g). The CHCl3 extract was chromatographed by silica gel column eluted with CHCl3-MeOH as a gradient (100:1, 50:1, 20:1, 5:1) to afford four fractions. The CHCl3-MeOH (100:1) portion was evaporated to obtain a residue (20 g), which was subjected to silica gel chromatograph column with petroleum ether-EtOAc (10:1, 6:1, 3:1, 1:1) as elution, to give four fractions (A, B, C, and D). Fraction B (5 g) was further subjected to RP-18 chromatograph column, eluting with MeOH-H2O (40:60, 60:40, 80:20, and 100:0) to afford five fractions: B1–B5. Fraction B4 was then purified by HPLC (70 % CH3CN aq.; 2.0 mL/min; 210 nm; Zorbax SB-C18, 9.4 mm × 25 cm) to give compounds 1 (4 mg), 4 (2 mg) and 5 (3 mg). In the same way, 2 (4 mg), 6 (5 mg) and 7 (mg) were isolated from fraction B3. Fraction B2 was subjected to silica gel chromatograph column with petroleum ether-EtOAc (8:1, 5:1, 3:1, 1:1; and 0:1) as elution, to give five subfractions (E, F, G, and H). Subfraction F was further separated and purified by silica gel chromatograph column with CHCl3-MeOH (50:1, 20:1, 5:1, and 1:1) as elution, to give four fractions. E1–E4, fraction E2 was successively subjected to Sephadex LH-20 (MeOH) and HPLC (80 % CH3CN aq.; 2.0 mL/min; 210 nm; Zorbax SB-C18, 9.4 mm × 25 cm), and compounds 3 (1.5 mg), 7 (3 mg) and 8 (6 mg) were obtained.

3.4 3x-(2-Methylbutyryl)-1,20-diacyetyl-11-methoxymeliacarpinin (1)

Amorphous powder; [α]D20 = −17.8 (c 0.08, MeOH); UV (MeOH) λmax (log ε) 204 (4.09) nm; IR (KBr) νmax 3456, 2953, 1739, 1706, 1618, 1438, 1376, 1252, 1160, 1131, 1061, and 949 cm−1; 1H NMR (500 MHz, C6D6) and 13C DEPT (125 MHz, C6D6) data, see Tables 1 and 2; positive ESIMS m/z 757 [M+Na]+; positive HREIMS m/z 734.3159 (calcd for C37H50O15 [M]+, 734.3150).

3.5 3x-Tigloyl-17x-20S-21,24-epoxy-apotirucall-14-en-7x,23x,25-triol (2)

Amorphous powder; [α]D20 = −28.9 (c 0.20, MeOH); UV (MeOH) λmax (log ε) 204 (3.80) nm; IR (KBr) νmax 3441, 2927, 2855, 1631, 1452, 1384, 1268, 1075 and 578 cm−1; 1H NMR (600 MHz, CD3OD) and 13C DEPT (150 MHz, CD3OD) data, see Tables 1 and 2; positive ESIMS m/z 595 [M+Na]+; positive HREIMS m/z 572.4083 (calcd for C35H52O15 [M]+, 572.4077).

3.6 2x,3β-Dihydroxyandrostan-16-one 2β,19-hemiketal (3)

Amorphous powder; [α]D20 = −48.0 (c 0.30, MeOH); UV (MeOH) λmax (log ε) 202 (3.56), 219 (3.51) nm; IR (KBr)
\( \nu_{\text{max}} \) 3464, 2924, 2874, 1720, 1187, 1130, 1044, and 993 cm\(^{-1}\); \(^1\)H NMR (600 MHz, C\(_5\)D\(_5\)N) and \(^13\)C DEPT (150 MHz, C\(_5\)D\(_5\)N) data, see Tables 1 and 2; positive ESIMS \( m/z \) 343 [M+Na]\(^+\); positive HREIMS \( m/z \) 320.1985 (calcd for C\(_{20}\)H\(_{28}\)O\(_5\) [M]\(^+\), 320.1988).

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Conflict of interest  The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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