

# Isolation of biomolecules from the leaves of *Lecaniodiscus cupanoides* (Sapindaceae), a plant used in traditional medicine in Benin

## ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study was to identify the structure of the bioactive molecules in the active ethylacetate fraction of the hydroethanolic extract of *Lecaniodiscus cupanoides* (Sapindaceae), a Beninese plant used in the treatment of microbial infections. We prepared the hydroethanolic extract from powdered dried leaves. We fractionated the hydroethanolic extract using the liquid-liquid extraction method with solvents of increasing polarity. The active ethylacetate fraction obtained after bio-guided fractionation of the hydroethanolic extract on bacterial strains was purified by a series of atmospheric pressure column chromatographic methods coupled with thin layer chromatography. At the end of this purification process, three compounds, including a flavonoid and two fatty acids, were isolated and identified by interpretation of <sup>1</sup>H NMR, <sup>13</sup>C NMR and mass spectrometry spectra. The added value of this work lies in the fact that these three molecules have never before been identified in this plant, and therefore represent a potential avenue for the development of a therapeutic arsenal to combat microbial infections.

Key words: *Lecaniodiscus cupanoides* (Sapindaceae) isolation, chromatographic methods, spectrometric analysis

## INTRODUCTION

*Lecaniodiscus cupanoides* is a 9-metre-high tree belonging to the Sapindaceae family and the genus *Lecaniodiscus*. The tree is found in tropical Africa from Sierra Leone to Sudan, as well as in Angola, the south of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. This plant has many uses in traditional medicine. In the form of inhalation, the bark is used to treat headaches, sinusitis, otitis and eye and ear problems. The leaves are reputed to be antibacterial and rubefacient. They are applied to boils and bruises, but can cause burns if left on too long. The use of traditional medicine, in particular herbal remedies, has increased over the last few decades and many people now turn to them for the treatment of a variety of illnesses. Herbal remedies therefore represent an alternative in primary care systems and a promising avenue for the development of improved traditional medicines. We wanted to characterise the molecules contained in the active ethylacetate fraction obtained after bio-guided fractionation of the hydroethanolic extract on bacterial strains of the plant used in traditional medicine.

## MATERIAL AND METHOD

### 1- Plant material

The plant material consists of dried leaves of the *Lecaniodiscus cupanoides* plant harvested in December 2021 in Abomey-Calavi and identified in the National Herbarium of the University of Abomey-Calavi. The leaves of the harvested plant were washed and then dried at room temperature in a ventilated room in

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the Pharmacognosy laboratory of the Faculty of Health Sciences/Pharmacy Faculty for a fortnight before being ground into powder using a plant grinder.

## 2- Méthods

### 2.1- Préparation of crude extract

Extraction was carried out using dried leaves reduced to powder. We took 100g of powder and mixed it in 1000 ml of a hydroethanol mixture (40V/60V respectively) for 48 hours. After filtration on Whatman N°1 paper, the filtrate obtained was evaporated using a rotary evaporator at 40°C. The residues of this filtrate were dried in an oven for 48 hours at 40°C to obtain the dry extracts

### 2.2- Liquid – liquid fractionation

Liquid-liquid extraction is used to transfer a solute from one liquid phase to another, immiscible liquid phase. It is based on the difference in affinity of the solute between two immiscible phases. The solution to be fractionated consists of the crude hydroethanol extract dissolved in 50 mL of distilled water. During fractionation, 500 mL of cyclohexane, dichloromethane, ethylacetate and methanol were used successively. The various fractions collected were evaporated under reduced pressure at 40°C using a rotavapor.

### 2.3- Purification and isolation

Fractionation of the ethylacetate extract and its sub-fractions was carried out using the atmospheric pressure column (APC) liquid-solid chromatography technique. The stationary phases used were successively R P 18 silica gel (40-63µm), normal silica gel (60 PF 254) and Sephadex LH 20 gel. These different gels were solubilised in methanol (30g in 150 mL methanol) and then poured into a glass column. The eluent under atmospheric pressure, enters at one end and exits at the other. It can be a single solvent for conditioning or a mixture of solvents for the different gradients. The chromatographic partition conditions for the ethylacetate fraction and its sub-fractions are shown below

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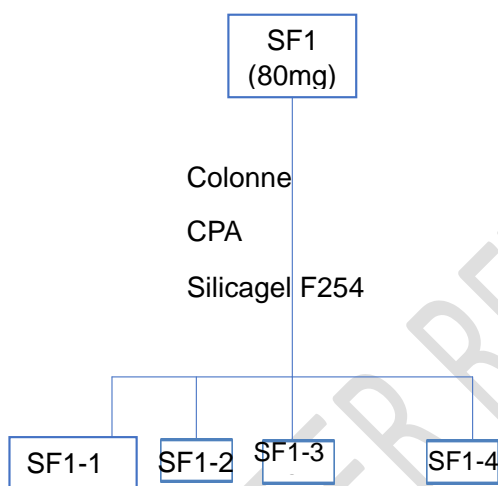
Dichlorométhane :	100%
Dichlorométhane – Acétate d'éthyle :	90 – 10
Dichlorométhane – Acétate d'éthyle :	70- 30
Acétate d'éthyle - MeOH :	50 – 50
Acétate d'éthyle - MeOH :	20 – 80
MeOH	100 %
Elution : 200 mL of solvent gradient	

Collection rate : 5mL/tube of 1 goutte / seconde

Deposition : 200 mg of solubilised fraction in 10 mL MeOH

The sub-fractions obtained were analysed by thin layer chromatography using the solvent ethylacetate/MeOH/H<sub>2</sub>O (v/v/v) 81-11-8 as the mobile phase and 10%

alcoholic potash as the developer, which revealed the presence of phenolic acids, flavonoids and quinones (Bruneton 1999). The sub-fractions grouped together after analytical TLC were subjected to further fractionation on CPA. Fractions at the end of purification were passed over an SPE column with Sephadex gel for exclusion chromatography, which separates compounds based on size and molecular weight (Houngbeme et al, 2015). Figures 1 and 2 below describe the stages of two major sub-fractions collected and from which we were able to isolate the molecules



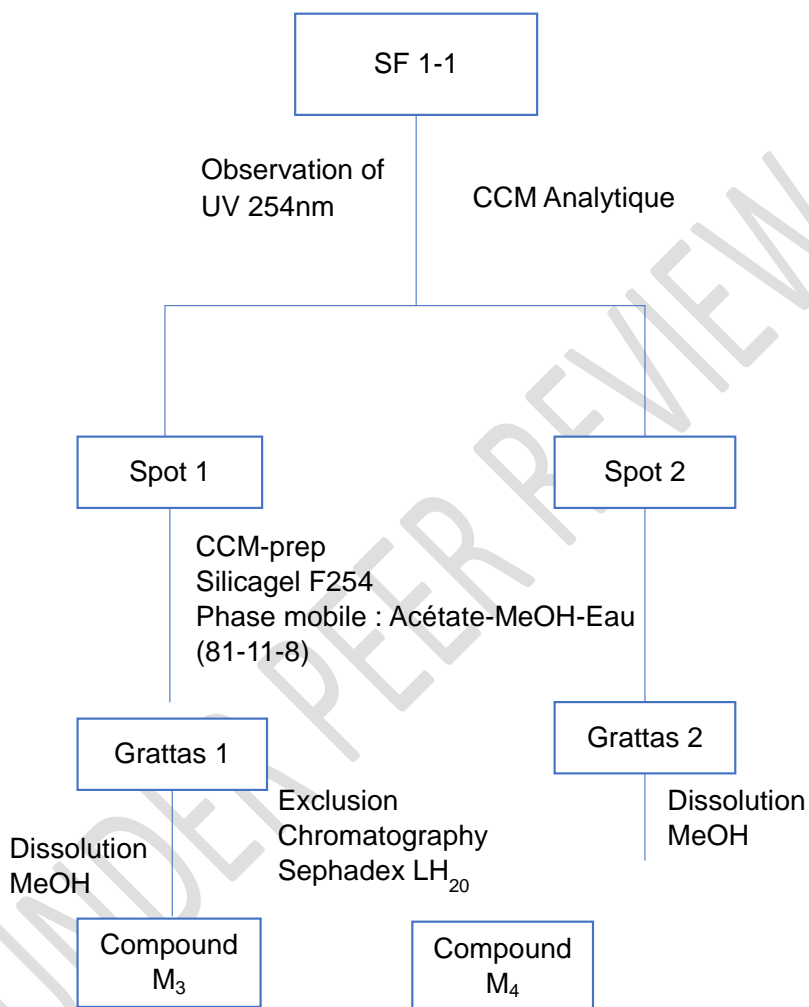
**Figure 1 : Diagram showing the purification stages of the sub-fraction SF1**

The selected S/F1 fraction was further purified on F 254 silica gel to give 4 sub-fractions SF1-1; SF 1-2; SF 1-3; SF 1-4.

The SF 1-1 sub-fraction revealed two well-separated spots at UV 254 nm.

We therefore applied preparative TLC to scrape off the majority spots. The scraped majority spots were then separated by Exclusion Chromatography (Figure 2). Spot 1 gave compound M3 and spot 2 gave 2 compounds M4 and M5.

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**Figure 2 : Diagram showing the steps in the purification of the sub-fraction SF1-1**

## RESULTS

### 1-Yield of fractions

**Table 1 :Summary of the yield of the fractions**

Plant matériel	Extract	Mass	Yield
Crudeextract(20g)	Extract C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>12</sub>	0,25 g	1,25%
	Extract CH <sub>2</sub> CL <sub>2</sub>	0,29 g	1,45%
	ExtractAcOEt	3,58 g	17,9%
	ExtractMeoH	3,4 g	17%
	ExtractAqueous	9,25 g	46,2%

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## 2-Collection of sub-fractions

The differentsub-fractions are summarised in the following table:

**Table 2 : Distribution of tubes collectedafter TLC and revelation**

Sub - fractions	Tubes collected	Mass obtained(mg)
S/F1	T 1-13	80
S/F2	T 14- 20	50
S/F3	T 21-40	20
S/F4	T 41 -60	14
Total / yield		119/59,5%

## 3- Structure of the isolatedmolecules

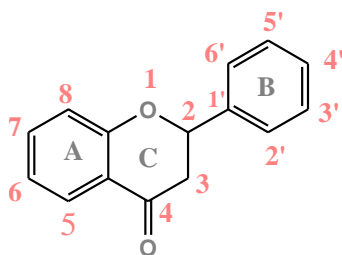
By processing the information from the variousspectra, wewere able to elucidate the structure of the isolated compounds.

### Spectrométrie data of compound M<sub>3</sub>

- ❖ **MS (m/z):** 287,003 g/mol ([M+H]<sup>+</sup>) ; 286,003 ([M+H]<sup>+</sup>-H) ; 270,003 ([M+H]<sup>+</sup> - OH) ; 190,003 ([M+H]<sup>+</sup> - C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>5</sub>O<sub>2</sub>).
- ❖ **<sup>1</sup>H NMR (CD<sub>3</sub>OD, 400MHz, δ en ppm):** δ 15,08 (s, H-énol) ; δ 6,88 (t, H-éthylène); δ 6,70-6,21 (H-benzénique); δ 5,03 (d, OH-aromatique).
- ❖ **<sup>13</sup>C NMR (CD<sub>3</sub>OD, 100MHz, δ en ppm):** δ 161,5 (C=O-cyclique); δ 159,08-147,28 (-C-OH aromatique); δ 122,8-115,9 (-CH benzène dihydroxylé); δ 105,6 (C-énolique); δ 103,6 (C-benzène hydroxylé).

Compound M<sub>3</sub>absorbs UV light at a wavelength of 365 nm. It reactswith the NEU reagentwith a yellowish fluorescence, suggestingthatits structure isbased on the flavonoidtyp

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**Figure 3 : Basic structure of flavonoids**

The protons of the A ring of a flavonoid appear on a  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum between 6 and 6.5 ppm (Houngbèchè et al., 2015, Tokoudagba et al., 2022).

The presence of a peak at  $\delta$  172-186 ppm on the  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectrum (peak of the  $\text{C}_4$  carbonyl group) of the C ring, allows us to say that the C ring has a  $\text{C}=\text{O}$  double bond. Thus the structure of compound M3 would be based on the structure in Figure 4 below

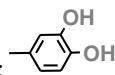
**Figure 4 : Basic structure of compound M<sub>3</sub>**

Taking into account the information provided by the interpretation of the  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum, the ethylene hydrogen, the aromatic protons at  $\delta$  6.70-6.21 ppm and the -OH protons of the phenolic groups at  $\delta$  5.03 ppm, we can assign the compound M3 the probable structure shown in Figure 5 below:

**Figure 5 : Probable structure of compound M<sub>3</sub>**

The molecular weight obtained by the positive impact mode  $[M+H]^+$  gave 287.003 g/mol, corresponding to a molecular weight of  $M=286.003$ g/mol, which is close to that of the molecule proposed in Figure 3. The appearance of certain major peaks including the fragments  $([M+H]^+-H)$ ;  $([M+H]^+-OH)$  on the one hand, and  $([M+H]^+-C_6H_5O_2)$  indicating the loss of the

cycle B ortho disubstitué par -OH :



secondly, justifies the structure proposed for compound  $M_3$  in Figure 3.

In order to confirm the structure of compound  $M_3$ , we carried out a Chemdraw simulation. The values of the chemical shifts of the protons and carbons in the experimental spectra of the compound are close to or equal in places to the values shown in the spectra of the same type obtained by chemdraw simulation. Compound  $M_3$  is therefore consistent with the claimed structure. The final structure of the isolated compound  $M_3$  is shown in Figure 6 below:

**Figure 6** : molecular structure of compound  $M_3$

#### Spectrometric data for compound $M_4$

❖ **MS (m/z)**: 283,012 ( $[M+H]^+$ ); 268,012 ( $[M+H]^+ - CH_3$ ); 254,012 ( $[M+H]^+ - CH_2CH_3$ ); 240,012 ( $[M+H]^+ - CH_2-CH_2-CH_3$ ); 238,012 ( $[M+H]^+ - COOH$ ).

**$^1H$  NMR (CD<sub>3</sub>OD, 400MHz,  $\delta$  en ppm)**:  $\delta$  10,96 (s, H-carboxylique);  $\delta$  2,19 (t, H-méthylène);  $\delta$  1,60 (q, H-méthylène);  $\delta$  1,38-1,27 (q, H-méthylène);  $\delta$  1,35 (q, H-

méthylène);  $\delta$  5,34 (t, H-éthylénique) ;  $\delta$  2,03 (t, H-méthylène) ;  $\delta$  1,38-1,27 (q, H-méthylène) ;  $\delta$  0,90 (t, H-méthyle).

❖  **$^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (CD<sub>3</sub>OD, 100MHz,  $\delta$  en ppm)**:  $\delta$  179,5 (C-carboxyle);  $\delta$  36,7 (-CH<sub>2</sub> aliphatique);  $\delta$  27,1 (-CH<sub>2</sub> aliphatique);  $\delta$  31,0-30,4 (C-méthylène aliphatique);  $\delta$  131,0 (C-éthylène aliphatique);  $\delta$  23,9 (C-méthylène aliphatique) ;  $\delta$  14,6 (C-méthyle)

The molecular weight obtained by the positive impact mode [M+H]<sup>+</sup> gave 283.012 g/mol, corresponding to a molecular weight M=282.012g/mol, approximately equal to that of a monounsaturated C18 fatty acid. The appearance of the fragments ([M+H]<sup>+</sup> -COOH) and ([M+H]<sup>+</sup> -CH<sub>3</sub>) confirms the "fatty acid" function of the compound.

The absence of a chemical shift in the proton NMR spectrum between 6 and 7 ppm shows that it has no aromatic protons (Houngbèné et al., 2015; Harbone, 1993, Fatondji et al., 2010) and therefore no aromatic ring. The M<sub>4</sub> molecule would be an aliphatic molecule. The presence of the carboxylic proton that appeared as a singlet at  $\delta$  10.96 ppm and the strongly shielded methyl proton  $\delta$  0.90 ppm, again justify that the compound is a fatty acid. The unsaturated nature of this fatty acid is corroborated by the appearance on the proton spectrum of two ethylenic protons at  $\delta$  5.34, each appearing as a triplet by coupling.

The NMR spectrum of carbon 13, shows the presence of a strongly unshielded carbon appearing at  $\delta$  179.5 ppm which is the carbon of a carboxyl group. The chemical shifts observed correspond well to the differential aliphatic carbons in the skeleton of a fatty acid, oleic acid.

In view of all these spectral interpretations, we assigned the skeleton below to the probable structure of compound M<sub>4</sub>

To confirm the molecular structure, we simulated the spectra using Chemdraw. The values of the chemical shifts of the protons and carbons in the experimental spectrum of the compound are very close and do not differ significantly from the values shown in the analogous spectra obtained by Chemdraw simulation. Compound M<sub>4</sub> therefore corresponds well to the oleic acid structure

**Figure 7 : structure of the isolated compound (M<sub>4</sub>)**

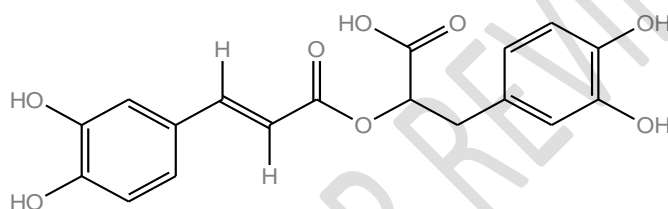
**Spectrometric data for compound M<sub>5</sub>**

- ❖ **MS (m/z):** 361,34 g/mol ([M+H]<sup>+</sup>); 360,34 ([M+H]<sup>+</sup>-H); 344,34 ([M+H]<sup>+</sup>-OH); 316,34 ([M+H]<sup>+</sup>-COOH); 201,34 ([M+H]<sup>+</sup> - 159); 202,34 ([M+H]<sup>+</sup> - 158); 131,34 ([M+H]<sup>+</sup> - 229)
- ❖ **<sup>1</sup>H NMR (CD<sub>3</sub>OD, 400MHz, δ en ppm):** δ 11,01 (s, H-carboxylique); δ 7,62 (s, H-C=C); δ 6,89-6,42 (H-aromatique); δ 5,02 (s, HO-aromatique); δ 3,18 et δ 2,90 (s, H-méthylénique).
- ❖ **<sup>13</sup>C NMR (CD<sub>3</sub>OD, 100MHz, δ en ppm):** δ 173,2 (-COOH); δ 165,98 (ester -COO); δ 147,18-144,48 (-C-OH aromatique); δ 129,2 (-CH aromatique substitué); δ 117,2-113,5 (-CH aromatique non substitué); δ 38,01 (-CH<sub>2</sub>).

Compound M<sub>5</sub> absorbs UV light at a wavelength of 365nm and shows a yellow coloration with the NEU reagent. The compound is thought to belong to the flavonoid or phenolic acid class.

The  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectrum shows two strongly unshielded peaks at  $\delta$  173.2 ppm and 165.98 ppm. These two signals correspond respectively to the carbons  $-\text{COOH}$  (carboxylic acid) and  $-\text{COO}$  (ester). In addition, on the same spectrum we observe carbons at  $\delta$  147.18-144.48 ppm which correspond to phenolic carbons (aromatic  $-\text{C}-\text{OH}$ ). Taking these observations into account, we can say that compound M5 is a phenolic acid also containing an ester function in its structure.

The  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum, shows a proton at  $\delta$  11.01 ppm which is a proton of the most deshielded carboxyl group; aromatic protons at  $\delta$  6.89-6.42 ppm (Houngbè mè et al., 2015, Tokoudagba et al., 2022); protons that appear singlet at  $\delta$  5.02 (HO-aromatic). The presence of protons at  $\delta$  7.62 indicates the presence of an alkene bond ( $\text{H}-\text{C}=\text{C}-\text{H}$ ). On the basis of the proton and carbon NMR spectrometric data, added to the family of the molecule, we have assigned compound M5 the probable structure shown in Figure 8 below:



**Figure 8 : Structure probable of compound M<sub>5</sub>**

The molecular mass obtained in positive electrospray mode  $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$  gave 361.34 g/mol, corresponding to a molecular mass  $M=360.34\text{g/mol}$ . This value corresponds to the calculated mass ( $M=360\text{g/mol}$ ) for the structure proposed in Figure 1. The appearance of some major peaks, including the fragments  $([\text{M}+\text{H}]^+-\text{H})$ ;  $([\text{M}+\text{H}]^+-\text{OH})$  on the one hand, and  $([\text{M}+\text{H}]^+-\text{COOH})$  on the other, reinforces the NMR data for the proposed molecule.

The melting temperature of the compound was also determined to complement the spectrometric analyses. Measurement of a small quantity of the compound's crystals on a Kofler bench gave, on average ( $n=8$ ),  $T_f=174.12 \pm 0.06$  °C. This value lies within the 171-175 °C range corresponding to the melting point of rosmarinic acid, the structure of which corresponds to that shown in Figure 9.

As with the other compounds, we simulated the spectra using Chemdraw. The values of the chemical shifts of the protons and carbon in the simulation spectra and the experimental spectra were compared. These values are close to, and in some places equal to, the values shown in spectra of the same type obtained by chemdraw simulation.

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Based on interpretations of spectrometric analyses, knowledge of the melting point, and comparisons with spectra recorded by simulations, the structure of compound M5 is that of rosmarinic acid, a phenolic acid presented in figure 9 below:

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**Figure 9** : Molecular structure of compound M<sub>5</sub> (Acide rosmarinique)

## CONCLUSION

We isolated three molecules from the active ethyl acetate fraction of the hydroethanolic extract of the dried leaves of *Lecaniodiscus cupanioides* (Sapindaceae): one flavonoid and two fatty acids. This fraction, rich in flavonoids and oleic acid, could be an alternative in the development of a therapeutic arsenal to combat microbial diseases.

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