

Electrochemistry of Phosphorus and Sulfur Compounds: A Unique Tool for Organic Synthesis

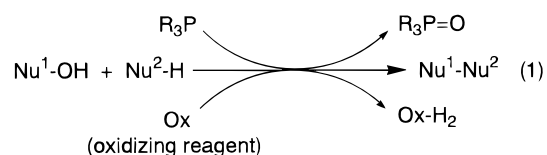
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Received February 3, 1998

Introduction

Organophosphorus compounds play an important role in synthetic organic chemistry. Their reactions may be divided into three categories: deoxygenation and desulfurization,^{1,2} olefination,^{1,3} and molecular transformation via the formation of phosphonium salts.^{1,4} From the viewpoint of electrochemistry, the last reaction is the most intriguing. Molecular transformations, e.g., dehydroxy substitution reactions of alcohols and condensations of carboxylic acids with alcohols or amines, are induced by oxidation of phosphorus compounds from trivalent to pentavalent states via phosphonium salts in the presence of compounds such as halogens, carbon tetrachloride, disulfides, and azodicarboxylates. These additives behave as oxidizing reagents, which are reduced by trivalent phosphorus compounds. Thus, this process is occasionally referred to as “oxidation–reduction condensation” (cf. eq 1).^{4b} On the basis of the reaction scheme, an anode serves



as an alternative to these reagents in the functional group conversions via phosphonium salts. The transformations under chemical conditions are always accompanied by conversion of oxidizing reagents into their reduction

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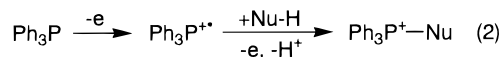
Hidenobu Ohmori was born near Kobe, Japan, in 1938. He spent almost all of his life at Osaka University after he began undergraduate study at the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences: B.Sc., 1961; Ph.D., 1969. He was appointed Research Associate in 1966, spent a postdoctoral year at UCSC (Professor J. F. Bunnett) from 1972 to 1973, became Associate Professor in 1974, and was promoted to Full Professor in 1991. He is now working in cooperation with Dr. Maeda.

products, some of which behave as nucleophilic species to be incorporated into intermediates or final products; the others are regarded merely as byproducts. In contrast, oxidation of trivalent phosphorus compounds at an anode is believed to include only an electron-transfer reaction. Accordingly, oxidation–reduction condensation under electrochemical conditions appears to be simpler not only operationally but also chemically. In addition, the chemical simplicity might allow electrochemically generated phosphonium salts to enter reaction pathways totally different from those under common chemical conditions.

On the basis of these possibilities, since the late 1970s, we have been investigating the use of anodic oxidation of trivalent phosphorus compounds as a novel tool for molecular transformations. To date, only a limited number of studies have been performed by other groups on anodic oxidation of the phosphorus compounds from synthetic standpoints. This Account outlines and discusses our studies of the electrochemistry of phosphorus compounds as a synthetic tool. We also briefly describe some electrochemical reactions of sulfur compounds as synthetic tools developed by other groups, to provide a comparison of the results obtained for phosphorus and sulfur compounds. This will allow the readers to consider not only the synthetic but also mechanistic aspects of the electrochemistry of these compounds.

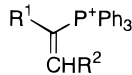

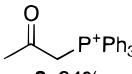
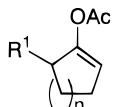
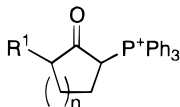
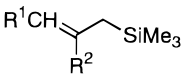
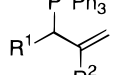
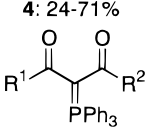
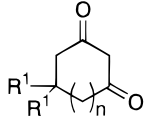
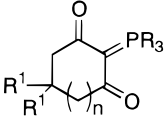
Electrochemistry of Phosphorus Compounds

Ph₃P exhibits an anodic peak at approximately 1 V against a saturated calomel electrode (SCE) in CH₃CN.^{5,6} Cyclic voltammetry in CH₃CN reveals an anodic wave due to oxidation of Bu₃P at a similar potential.⁷ Anodic oxidation of (RO)₃P requires a more positive potential than that of Ph₃P and Bu₃P,^{8a,9} whereas (R₂N)₃P undergoes an electrochemical reaction at an anodic potential similar to that of phosphines.¹⁰ To the best of our knowledge, there has been only one reported example of electrochemical oxidation of pentavalent phosphorus compounds.¹¹ Anodic oxidation of Ph₃P in the presence of primary amines¹² and aromatic compounds^{5,8} yields alkylamino and aryl phosphonium salts, respectively. The formation of these salts is initiated by the attack of the nucleophiles (Nu-H) on Ph₃P⁺ generated by one-electron oxidation of Ph₃P (eq 2). These results suggest that the high activity of Ph₃P⁺



enables a reaction with even a weak nucleophile such as benzene. Although good nucleophiles such as primary amines are usually susceptible to anodic oxidation, the less positive oxidation potential of Ph₃P appears to allow the formation of phosphonium salts from amines via eq 2. Therefore, we reasoned that a wide range of compounds can be utilized as nucleophiles in electrochemical reactions initiated by selective anodic oxidation of R₃P. Thus, we investigated the electrochemical preparation and

Table 1. Preparation of Phosphonium Salts and Phosphoranes by Anodic Oxidation of Ph₃P or Bu₃P in the Presence of Nucleophiles (Nu-X) (cf. Eq 3)

Nu-X	products ^a	chemical method
R ¹ CH=CHR ²	 1 : 30-100%	ref. 13
	 2 : 94%	ref. 14
	 3 : 53-94%	ref. 15
	 4 : 24-71%	ref. 16
R ¹ COCH ₂ COR ²	 5 : 30-100%	ref. 17
	 6 : R=Ph 35-94% 7 : R=Bu 58-70%	-
R ¹ OH	Ph ₃ P ⁺ -OR ¹ 8 : 49-100%	ref. 18
R ¹ SSR ¹	R ₃ P ⁺ -SR ¹ 9 : R=Ph 48-94% 10 : R=Bu 25-57%	ref. 19

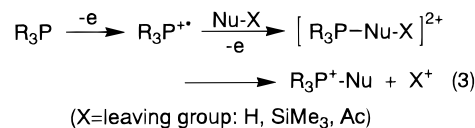
^a Counteranion of phosphonium salts is ClO₄⁻ or BF₄⁻.

synthetic reactions of phosphonium salts derived not only from Ph₃P but also from Bu₃P.

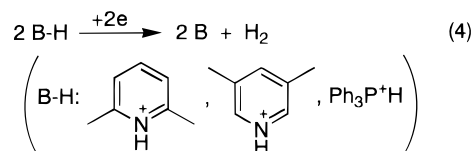
Preparation of Phosphonium Ions. Table 1 shows the results of reactions of R₃P⁺ (R = Ph or Bu) with various nucleophiles (Nu-X), leading to the formation of phosphonium salts or phosphoranes. Nonelectrochemical preparation of most salts in Table 1 generally includes multistep sequences or methods using rather ill-behaving, expensive reagents. Thus, only the electrochemical technique, involving *umpolung*²⁰ of R₃P into R₃P⁺, provides an effective and simple route to phosphonium salt formation. In general, electrochemical preparation of the salts is a two-electron oxidation process (eq 3). The electrochemical reactions are theoretically completed by passing 2 faradays/mol of electricity through R₃P. Except for a few cases, CH₂Cl₂ is used as a solvent for the electrochemical formation of phosphonium salts. Electrolysis is performed at a constant current in an undivided cell, which is important from a practical point of view. The key to success in performing electrolysis in an undivided cell is employing 2,6- and 3,5-lutidinium salt (Lut⁺H·Y⁻: Y =

ClO₄ or BF₄) as supporting electrolytes. The electrolytes are predominantly reduced at the cathode during electrolysis (eq 4), which prevents phosphonium salts from entering an in situ cathodic process. The cathodic reduction of Lut⁺H·Y⁻ generates lutidine. The base scavenges X⁺ liberated from Nu-X in the formation of phosphonium salts (eq 3), hence accelerating the anodic process. In electrolysis with an undivided cell, 2 equiv of the base against X⁺ is always produced (eq 5). Excess base should

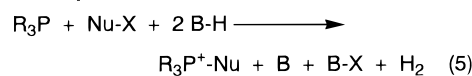
Anodic process:



Cathodic process:



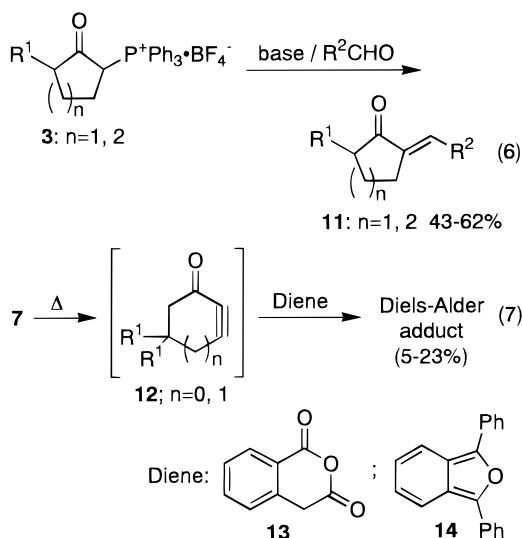
Overall process:



be avoided when phosphonium salts are susceptible to base-catalyzed decomposition. For preparation of phosphonium salts unstable under basic conditions, electrolysis with Ph₃P and Ph₃P⁺H·Y⁻ (Y = ClO₄ or BF₄) is greatly advantageous. Ph₃P⁺H·Y⁻ is reduced preferentially at the cathode, to prevent phosphonium salts from undergoing undesirable reactions, and this cathodic reduction generates Ph₃P. Hence, the electrolysis solution with a Ph₃P-Ph₃P⁺H·Y⁻ system is maintained weakly acidic during electrolysis. We have established a methodology for electrochemical preparation of phosphonium salts as synthetic building blocks by examining and taking full advantage of the electrochemical behavior of supporting electrolytes as well as R₃P.

Olefins such as ethylene, cycloalkenes, and styrene react smoothly with Ph₃P⁺, yielding **1** (Table 1).²¹ The salts are useful building blocks for the synthesis of carbocyclic and heterocyclic compounds.^{1,22,23} A recent study reported that (RO)₃P⁺ anodically generated from (RO)₃P undergoes similar nucleophilic reactions with simple alkenes, affording alkenyl phosphonates.²⁴ Acyclic and cyclic enol acetates were also found to react with Ph₃P⁺, affording **2** and **3**, respectively.²⁵ For the electrochemical preparation of **1-3**, 2,6-Lut⁺H·Y⁻ (Y = ClO₄ or BF₄) is the supporting electrolyte of choice. When **3** with BF₄⁻ as a counteranion was subjected to the Wittig reaction with aldehydes, **11** was obtained (eq 6),²⁵ indicating that BF₄⁻ and ClO₄⁻ as a counteranion for **1-3** do not cause problems in these synthetic applications.

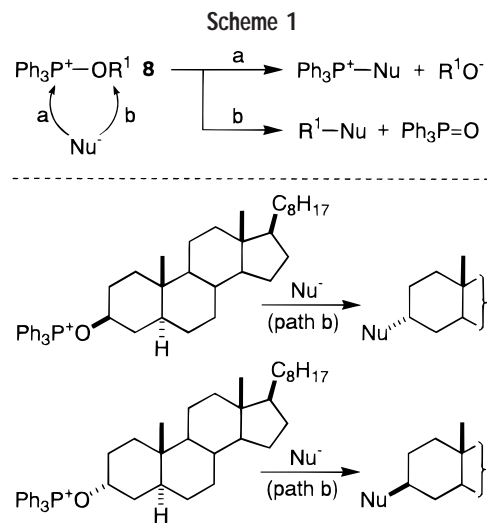
Allyl silanes are relatively susceptible to electrochemical oxidation.²⁶ However, anodic oxidation of Ph₃P has been shown to prevail over that of the silyl compounds in electrolysis, yielding **4** through the exclusive formation of



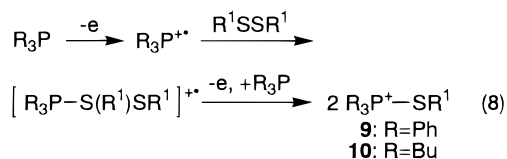
C–P bonds at the γ -position of the nucleophiles.²⁷ In the electrolysis, 3,5-Lut⁺·BF₄[−] is the supporting electrolyte of choice over 2,6-Lut⁺·BF₄[−]. Addition of allyl silanes to Ph₃P⁺ appears to proceed more effectively in the presence of cathodically generated 3,5-lutidine rather than 2,6-lutidine. This is probably because 3,5-lutidine can scavenge the trimethylsilyl group more effectively than 2,6-lutidine (cf. eqs 3 and 4). 1,3-Dicarbonyl compounds were expected to work as not only carbon nucleophiles but also oxygen nucleophiles against R₃P⁺. However, formation of 5–7 was observed exclusively, implying that R₃P⁺ behaves as a soft electrophile which reacts with a double bond rather than a hydroxy group in the enol form of a 1,3-dicarbonyl compound.^{28,29} The phosphoranones were afforded through deprotonation of the initially formed phosphonium salts by cathodically generated 2,6-lutidine. Contrary to the observation that thermal decomposition of Ph₃P=C(R)COR' affords acyclic alkynes,^{28,30} the thermolysis of **6** failed to generate cyclic alkynes. However, **7** with five- and six-membered rings could thermally decompose into **12**. The fleeting species was trapped by dienes such as **13** and **14** in the presence of trimethylsilyl chloride, giving Diels–Alder adduct albeit in low yield (eq 7).²⁹

The electrochemical reaction of R₃P in the presence of oxygen and sulfur nucleophiles such as alcohols and disulfides was found to afford the corresponding alkoxy and thioalkoxy phosphonium salts **8**–**10**. The formation of **8** is effectively achieved by electrolysis with Ph₃P and Ph₃P⁺H·Y[−] (Y = ClO₄ or BF₄).³¹ Electrolysis in CH₃CN containing Ph₃P, a disulfide, and HClO₄ (70%) was useful for the synthesis of **9**.⁷ The preparation of **10** was achieved by electrolysis of a CH₃CN solution of Bu₃P, a disulfide, and anhydrous HY (Y = ClO₄ or BF₄).⁷ The formation of **9** and **10** is an apparent one-electron oxidation process as depicted in eq 8. Thus, only 1 faraday/mol of electricity was passed in the electrochemical formation of **9** and **10**.

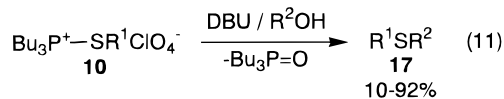
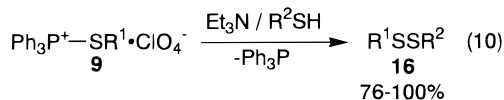
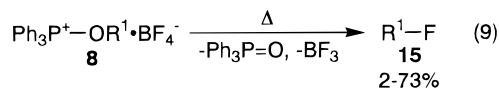
The reaction of **8** prepared from β - and α -cholestanol with various nucleophiles was examined. The results indicated that the reaction site of the phosphonium ions is dictated by the identity of the nucleophiles (Scheme



1). Soft nucleophiles such as Br[−], Cl[−], SCN[−], and PhSH were apt to attack at the α -carbon, giving the correspond-

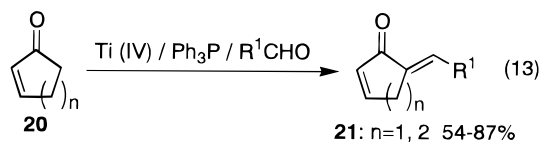
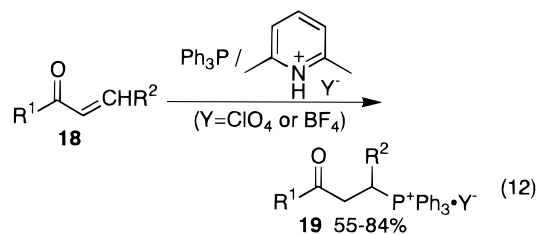


ing S_N2 reaction product (path b), while hard nucleophiles such as F[−], N₃[−], and PhOH tended to react at the phosphorus of **8**, leading to the regeneration of the cholestanol (path a).³¹ In addition, the thermal decomposition of **8** with BF₄[−] as a counteranion by refluxing in THF or dioxane, affording alkyl fluoride **15**, was an interesting finding (eq 9).³² In the thermal reactions, a fluorine atom arising from BF₄[−] attacks the carbon α to the oxygen atom in the salt from the side opposite to the oxy phosphonium moiety via an S_N2 mechanism. The transformation could be performed without the isolation of **8**. Thus, the dehydroxyfluorination of secondary and primary alcohols could be achieved by the electrochemical formation of **8** followed by thermal reaction of the residue obtained simply by evaporation of the solvent from the electrolyte. Fluorination with BF₄[−] as a fluoride source is interesting from the standpoint of synthetic organic chemistry, since such reactions do not involve the generation of dangerous HF, and hence the fluorination can be performed under mild conditions in normal laboratory glassware with few or no precautions.^{33,34}



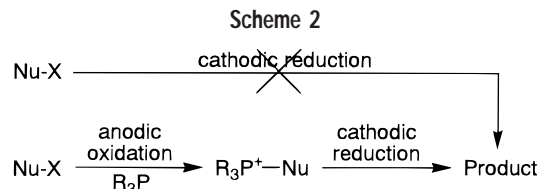
A unique characteristic of **9** was demonstrated by the formation of the unsymmetrical disulfides **16** in the reaction with a thiol in the presence of Et₃N at room temperature (eq 10).³⁵ In general, the driving force in molecular transformations via phosphonium salts is the formation of a P=O or P=S bond due to the strong affinity of phosphorus atom for oxygen and sulfur atoms.^{1,4} However, Ph₃P was recovered in the synthesis of **16**, demonstrating the unusual reactivity of **9**. According to the observed chemistry of chemically prepared Bu₃P⁺-SMe,^{19b} various unsymmetrical sulfides **17** can be prepared by the reaction of **10** with alcohols in the presence of DBU (eq 11).⁷ Accordingly, using the electrochemical technique has established novel routes for the formation of **16** and **17** from symmetrical disulfides with thiols and alcohols, respectively.

The addition of Ph₃P⁺ to electron-poor olefins such as enones was unsuccessful. However, 2,6-Lut⁺·H⁻ (Y = ClO₄ or BF₄) as a proton source induces nonelectrochemical 1,4-addition of Ph₃P to enone **18**, affording adduct **19** (eq 12).³⁶ Lewis acids exhibit a similar effect. When cycloalkenone **20** was treated with an aldehyde in the presence of Ph₃P and TiCl₄/Ti(OPr-*i*)₄, α-alkylidene-cycloalkenone **21** was obtained (eq 13).³⁷ The highly



regioselective condensation can be explained as follows: α-enolate initially formed by 1,4-addition of Ph₃P is in equilibrium with α'-enolate. Aldol condensation with an aldehyde takes place preferentially with the α'-enolate probably because the reaction of the α-enolate is sterically hindered by the phosphonium moiety at the β-carbon.

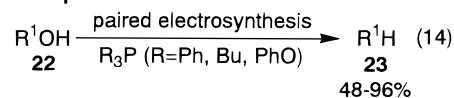
Paired Electrosynthesis. In most common electrolyses, the reaction at the counterelectrode is sacrificed. "Paired electrosynthesis" was coined by M. M. Baizer to refer to electrochemical reactions in which both cathodic and anodic reactions contribute usefully to the formation of the final products.³⁸ Paired electrosynthesis has drawn great attention because common organic reactions are unable to realize a process consisting simultaneously of oxidation and reduction; that is, the electrolysis takes full advantage of the advantages of electrochemistry in which the reaction vessel contains both a cathode (reducing) and an anode (oxidizing). In this section, we describe paired electrosynthesis on the basis of the strategy outlined in Scheme 2: a difficult to reduce compound such as a nucleophilic species is anodically transformed into a



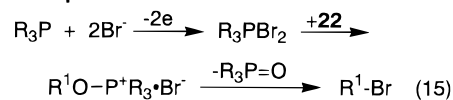
phosphonium salt, which is an activated form of the substrate for subsequent cathodic reaction. Hence, paired electrosynthesis with an undivided cell allows a nucleophile to be reduced in situ at a cathode through anodic *umpolung* to the corresponding electrophilic phosphonium salt (Scheme 2).

Paired electrosynthesis in CH₃CN containing R₃P (R = Ph, Bu, or PhO) and Et₄NBr was found to achieve one-step deoxygenation of alcohols **22**, except aliphatic tertiary alcohols, into alkanes **23** without any tedious derivatization, simply by appropriate selection of R in R₃P (eq 14).³⁹ The detailed mechanism of the transformation is not clear at present. However, it is likely that the reaction of anodically generated R₃PBr₂ with **22** forms an alkyl bromide, which is in turn reduced at the cathode to **23** (eqs 15 and 16).

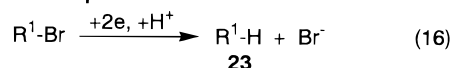
Overall process:



Anodic process:

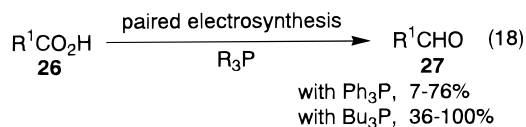
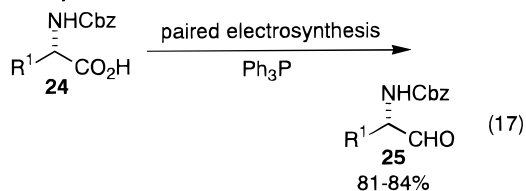


Cathodic process:

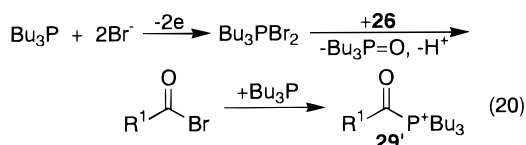
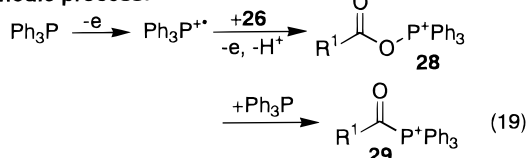


Carboxylic acids were also shown to undergo paired electrosynthesis in CH₂Cl₂ containing Ph₃P and Ph₃P⁺·ClO₄⁻. Electrolysis at -30 °C is appropriate for partial reduction of *N*-Cbz-L-α-amino acids **24** to amino aldehydes **25** with little or no racemization (eq 17).⁴⁰ Over-reduction to amino alcohols did not occur during this transformation. Partial reduction of carboxylic acids **26** with R¹ = aryl and primary alkyl groups into aldehydes **27** proceeded smoothly under the same electrochemical conditions (eq 18).⁴¹ In the case of **26** with R¹ = secondary alkyl groups, the transformation could be achieved by electrolysis under reflux, and with R¹ = *tert*-butyl, the aldehyde was obtained only in poor yield even under vigorous conditions. The mechanism depicted in eqs 19 and 21 is proposed on the basis of the voltammetric results of the anolyte in electrolysis of Ph₃P and various forms of **26** in a divided cell. Anodic oxidation yields an acyloxy phosphonium ion **28**,⁴² which reacts with another Ph₃P, leading to the formation of acyl phosphonium ion **29**; reduction to ylide **30** at the cathode followed by protonation provides phosphonium ion **31** as a final product in the electrolysis. Compound **31** decomposes into **27** through aqueous workup after electrolysis. A slow trans-

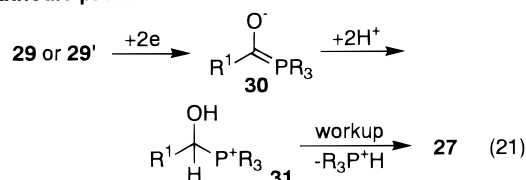
Overall process:



Anodic process:



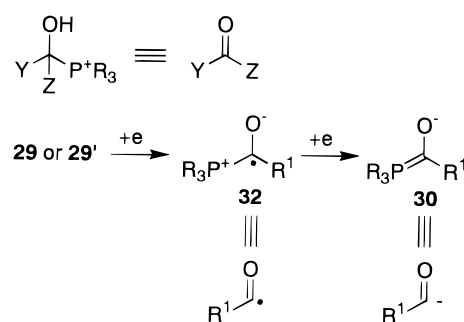
Cathodic process:



formation of **28** into **29** due to the weak nucleophilicity of Ph₃P may be responsible for the unsatisfactory results in the cases of secondary aliphatic **26** and pivalic acid. This problem was solved by introducing a phosphine with a higher nucleophilicity than Ph₃P. As a result, effective electrochemical partial reduction of various forms of **26** into **27** was achieved even at room temperature when Bu₃P was used instead of Ph₃P (eq 18).⁴³ In the electrolysis, Bu₄NBr and CH₃SO₃H were used as a supporting electrolyte and a proton source, respectively. For electrolysis with Bu₃P and Bu₄NBr, an anodic process appears to occur through oxidation of Br⁻, leading to the generation of Bu₃PBr₂ (eq 20). Through the formation of an acid bromide by the bromination reagent, **29'** is generated, and the phosphonium ion enters a similar cathodic reaction, affording **31** (eq 21). Workup with aqueous K₂CO₃ is required to generate **27** from **31** with R = Bu.

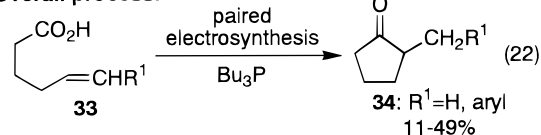
On the basis of the proposed mechanism in eqs 19–21 as well as the finding that the α-hydroxymethyl phosphonium moiety is equivalent to a carbonyl group, we expected the generation of novel acyl radical and acyl anion equivalents such as **32** and **30**, respectively, in Scheme 3 would proceed directly from a carboxyl group by paired electro-synthesis. When electrolysis with Bu₃P, Bu₄NBr, and CH₃SO₃H was carried out for **33** (R¹ = H, aryl), **34** was obtained in a reasonable yield (eq 22).⁴⁴ Cyclization could be more effectively achieved when the internal olefin contained a phenyl group with an electron-withdrawing substituent. These results suggest that **32**

Scheme 3

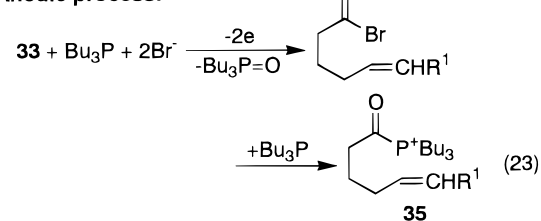


with R = Bu (Scheme 3) is nucleophilic in nature. The formation of a six-membered ring system by the electrolysis for 6-heptenoic acids failed. As in the partial reduction of carboxyl groups, anodic process generates acyl phosphonium ion **35** (eq 23). The key intermediate is cathodically reduced to a neutral radical **36**, which undergoes intramolecular cyclization, leading to the formation of **37** (eq 24). Workup with aqueous K₂CO₃ is required to obtain **34** after electrolysis, which will rule out the possibility that an acyl radical itself is generated from **36** and then cyclizes to the double bond to give **34**.

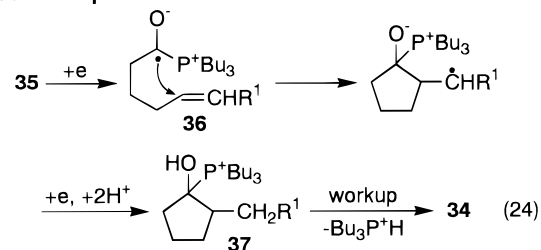
Overall process:



Anodic process:



Cathodic process:



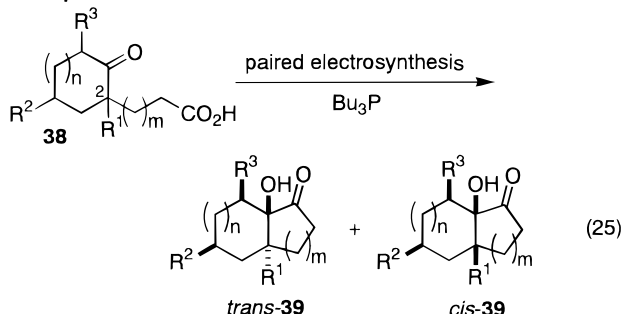
The paired electro-synthesis with Bu₃P has also proven to be useful for the generation of novel acyl anion equivalents from free carboxyl groups.^{45,46} Electrolysis with Bu₃P, PhCH₂(Et)₃NCl, and CH₃SO₃H induced the formation of bicyclo[*n.m.0*] skeletons with *m* = 1 or 2 from cyclic δ- or ε-keto acids **38** (eq 25). Although the chloride salt was used as a supporting electrolyte in the transformation, the anodic process generates acyl phosphonium ion **40** through a reaction scheme similar to the case of the above-mentioned partial reduction and radical cyclization (eq 26). Two-electron reduction of **40** will give ylide **41**, which cyclizes to internal carbonyl group, giving

Table 2. Transformation of Cyclic Keto Acids (38**) to Bicyclo α -Ketols (**39**) by Paired Electrosynthesis in the Presence of Bu_3P**

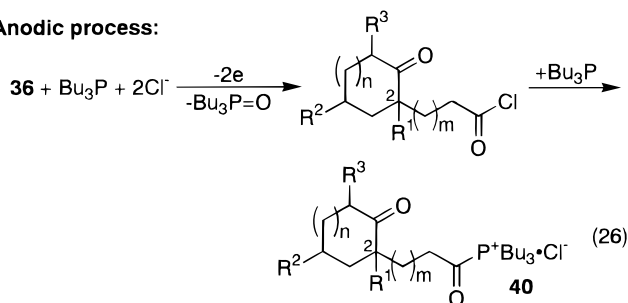
entry	38					yield of 39 (%) (<i>trans</i> / <i>cis</i>)
	R^1	R^2	R^3	n	m	
1	H	H	H	>0	1 or 2	44–73 (1.4–6.7)
2	H	H	H	0	1	29 (only <i>cis</i>)
3	Me	H	H	0	1	50 (only <i>cis</i>)
4	Me	H	H	1	1	44 (only <i>cis</i>)
5	H	<i>t</i> -Bu	H	1	1	54 (10)
6	H	H	Me	1	1	58 (9)

42 (eq 27). Deprotection of **42** to **39** is also achieved by

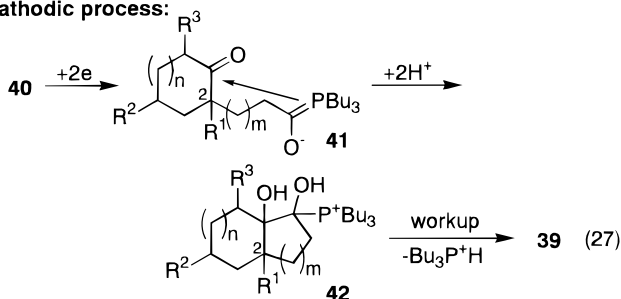
Overall process:



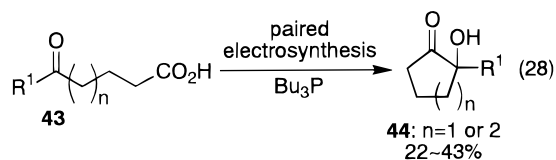
Anodic process:



Cathodic process:



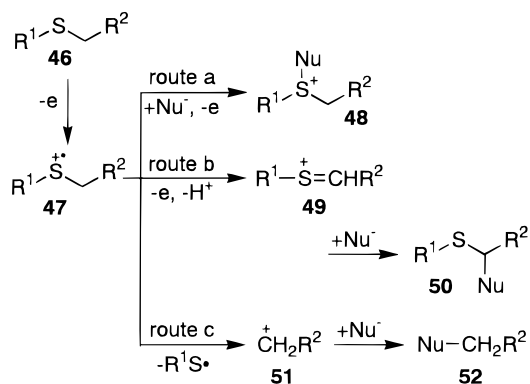
aqueous basic workup, indicating that generation of an acyl anion itself from **41** will not be involved in the transformation. The electrochemical formation of the bicyclic products showed a strong preference for *trans*-**39** over *cis*-**39** except for the cyclization on a cyclopentanone moiety (Table 2, entries 1 and 2). Electrolysis is also applicable to acyclic keto acids. The δ - and ϵ -keto alkanolic acids **43** were transformed into α -hydroxy cyclopentanones and cyclohexanones **44** in a reasonable yield (eq 28). Attempts to prepare four- and seven-membered ring carbocycles were unsuccessful. The effects of substituents in **38** upon the transformation were also investigated (Table 2).⁴⁶ Putting a methyl group at the C2 position in **38** induced the selective formation of the *cis*-fused bicyclo[4.3.0] skeleton (entry 4), and improved the



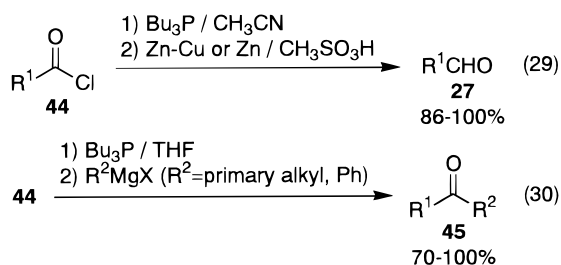
yield of *cis*-**39** with a bicyclo[3.3.0] skeleton (entry 3). In the case of **38** with an alkyl substituent at the C4 or C6 position, the corresponding products were afforded as a mixture of only two isomers, although the products were expected to consist of four isomers. Furthermore, high selectivity toward *trans*-**39** was retained in the formation of a bicyclo[4.3.0] system (entries 5 and 6). On the basis of these results, the stereochemical outcome of the present transformation of **38** into bicyclo[4.3.0]nonanones appears to be dictated primarily by the conformational bias in the starting acids. In particular, the conformational preference appears to be reflected in the stereochemistry of the product, where *trans*-**39** is formed from intermediates having the ylide moiety equatorial, whereas the nucleophilic site in the axial position results in the formation of *cis*-**39**. The process leading to the formation of *trans*-**39** is only disturbed by putting a methyl group at C2. Such a substituent will sterically hinder the approach of the nucleophilic ylide in the equatorial position to the carbonyl group, inducing the predominant formation of *cis*-**39**. Although various acyl anion equivalents have been developed and are well recognized as useful synthons for the direct introduction of a carbonyl moiety,⁴⁷ application of these equivalents to C–C bond formation is limited to intermolecular reactions. This is due to the difficulty in generating an acyl anion equivalent when an electrophilic site such as a carbonyl group exists in the same molecule. Thus, our methodology offers a novel approach to acyl anion equivalents applicable to intramolecular reactions. However, attempts to apply **30** with $\text{R} = \text{Bu}$ (Scheme 3) to intermolecular C–C bond formation have been unsuccessful to date. Electrochemical formation of **34** and **39** cannot be achieved when Ph_3P is utilized instead of Bu_3P for paired electrosynthesis.

Acyl phosphonium ion **29'** with $\text{R} = \text{Bu}$ also exhibits an interesting facility for nonelectrochemical synthetic reactions. Voltammetric examination demonstrated that **29'** with $\text{R} = \text{Bu}$ is much more susceptible to cathodic reduction than acid chloride.⁴³ These results imply that **29'** should be regarded as an activated form of an acid chloride, not only as an electron acceptor but also as an electrophile, since the electrophilicity of a compound will increase as its reduction potential becomes more positive. In addition, **29'** with $\text{R} = \text{Bu}$ is known to be accessible alternatively through chemical reaction of Bu_3P with acid chloride **44**.⁴⁸ Thus, we examined the possibility of employing in situ formed **29'** as a simple solution to address problems encountered in some reactions with **44** itself. In fact, transformation of **44** into the corresponding aldehyde **27** without overreduction to alcohol was achieved by reduction using Zn–Cu couple or Zn in the presence of $\text{CH}_3\text{SO}_3\text{H}$, after admixing **44** and Bu_3P in CH_3CN (eq 29).⁴⁹ Reaction of Grignard reagents with **44** fails to provide synthetically useful access to ketones **45** due to

Scheme 4



the inevitable formation of tertiary alcohols,⁵⁰ unless the reaction is carried out not only at very low temperature in THF but also with high excess of acid chlorides in many cases.⁵¹ The problem is easily solved simply by using the preformed **29'** ($R = \text{Bu}$) instead of **44**. Thus, reaction of **29'** in situ generated from **44** and Bu_3P in THF at -22°C with primary alkyl- and phenylmagnesium halides provides a convenient and simple procedure to prepare **45** from **44** in one pot (eq 30).⁵²

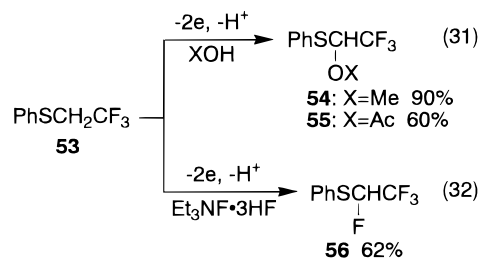


Electrochemistry of Sulfur Compounds

In contrast to the case of R_3P , one-electron oxidation of sulfides **46**, generating cation radicals **47**, is followed by three types of reactions, as shown in Scheme 4.^{53,54} Therefore, selective regulation of the fate of **47** plays an important role in the application of anodic oxidation of **46** as a synthetic tool. From a synthetic standpoint, molecular transformations via routes b and c are more intriguing than those via route a, because such reactions can provide versatile tools for introducing various nucleophilic species on carbon atoms. Thus, to develop a methodology that allows **47** to enter either route b or route c in a controllable manner has been of interest. In electrochemical conversion and functionalization of β -lactam antibiotics such as cephalosporins, such methodologies have already been established and reviewed extensively.⁵⁵ Accordingly, this Account emphasizes only the recent approaches, which provide the general background for molecular transformations initiated by anodic oxidation of divalent sulfur compounds.

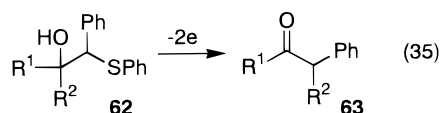
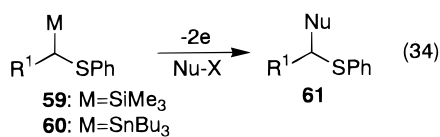
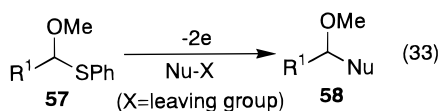
Placement of a perfluoroalkyl group on carbons α to sulfur atoms effectively induced molecular transformations via route b.⁵⁶ For example, anodic oxidation of **53** in MeOH and AcOH afforded **54** and **55**, respectively (eq 31). Similarly, a fluorine atom can be introduced by

electrolysis of **53** in CH_3CN containing $\text{Et}_3\text{NF}\cdot 3\text{HF}$ (eq 32).



Anodic transformation was unsuccessful or much less effective in electrolysis of a nonfluorinated sulfide under essentially the same conditions. Thus, strong electron-withdrawing perfluoroalkyl groups may promote deprotonation of **47**, to form **50** via route b (Scheme 4). On the basis of the mechanism, Fuchigami et al. expected other electron-withdrawing groups to exhibit useful effects similar to the trifluoromethyl group, allowing carbons α to sulfur atoms to be anodically fluorinated, which is what they observed.⁵⁷ α -Monofluorination of sulfides bearing ketones, esters, amides, nitriles, etc. at α -carbons was also successful.⁵⁷ Electrochemical monofluorination has also been applied successfully to the preparation of monofluorinated heterocycles.⁵⁸

The introduction of heteroatoms such as O, Si, and Sn at α -carbons of sulfides is a useful method to control the fate of cation radicals generated anodically from sulfides. In this case, a methoxy group facilitated the generation of carbocations **51** via route c, resulting in the formation of α -substituted ethers **58** (eq 33).⁵⁹ Electrochemical transformation was also applicable to intramolecular C–C bond formation, resulting in the formation of tetrahydropyrans from α -organo thioethers with internal olefins.⁵⁹ Anodic oxidation of sulfides with a trimethylsilyl or a tributylstannyl group was shown to favor reactions via route b, giving α -substituted sulfides **61** with cleavage of the C–Si or C–Sn bond (eq 34).⁶⁰ Compounds **57** and **59** are oxidized at a potential similar to that of the corresponding unsubstituted sulfides, while a tributylstannyl group appears to activate electron transfer from the sulfur atoms, allowing anodic oxidation of **60** to proceed at much more negative potentials. Molecular transformation via route c is also preferred in the anodic oxidation of β -hydroxy sulfides **62**.⁶¹ Anodically generated carbocations undergo pinacol-type rearrangements during electrolysis to yield ketones **63** (eq 35). A ring expansion reaction occurred during anodic oxidation of cyclic **62**. Electrochemical reactions were performed in CH_2Cl_2 –MeOH containing Et_4NCl . Since the chloride ion is subjected to anodic oxidation at a less positive potential than **62**, the initial anodic process is the oxidation of the chloride ion to a chloronium ion. Sawaki et al. proposed that carbocations are generated through C–S bond cleavage in the adduct (cf. **48** with $\text{Nu} = \text{Cl}$) of **62** to chloronium ion, rather than via route c.⁶¹ For detailed electrode processes of the transformations described in this section, original reports should be referred to.



Conclusion

Molecular transformations initiated by anodic oxidation of phosphorus and sulfur compounds are controlled by the selection of reaction conditions such as the supporting electrolyte and solvent as well as by the molecular design of the starting phosphines and sulfides. This offers exquisite control of organic synthesis. In particular, the anionic components of supporting electrolytes exhibit great influence on the chemical reaction course which follows the first one-electron oxidation process from the heteroatoms. In addition, nonelectrochemical methodologies for organic synthesis have been established on the basis of the results of electrochemical studies of phosphorus compounds (eqs 29 and 30). All the electrolyses described in this Account are performed under practical conditions consisting of a constant current in an undivided cell. Although electrolysis can be achieved under such conditions without any specialized equipment even in conventional synthetic organic laboratories,⁶² the application of electrochemical methods in everyday practice is unlikely at present. However, the results presented herein should provide some background of not only how electron-transfer reactions take place in organophosphorus and sulfur compounds, but also how the electrochemical and nonelectrochemical behaviors of the compounds are related. This should lead to the development of improved methodologies in the field of organic chemistry.

We are especially indebted to our collaborators Drs. Y. Mizuki, T. Takanami, and T. Maki, Misses H. Shimada, M. Tamaoka, S. Matsumoto, and J. Okamoto, and Messrs. K. Sakai, K. Konomoto, M. Kikuoka, T. Koide, and K. Eguchi for their continual intellectual and experimental efforts.

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AR970329Y