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The first samarium(II)-mediated aryl radical cyclisation onto an aromatic ring

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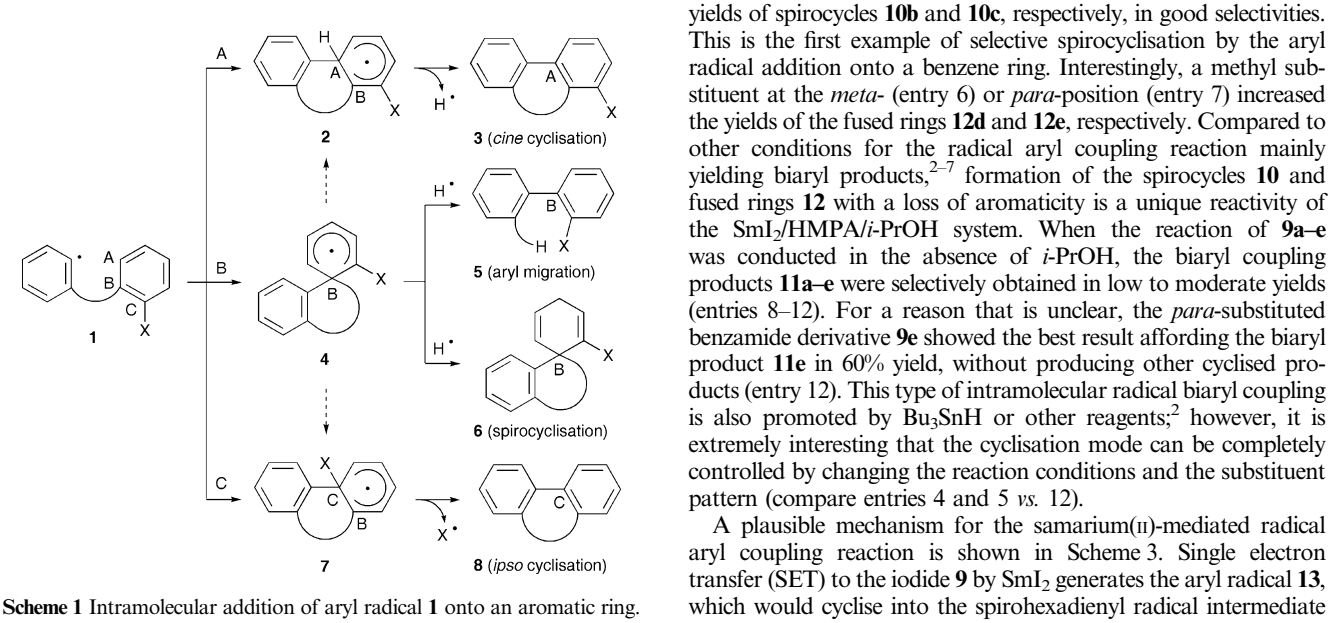
Received (in Cambridge, UK) 8th July 2004, Accepted 23rd July 2004
First published as an Advance Article on the web 23rd August 2004

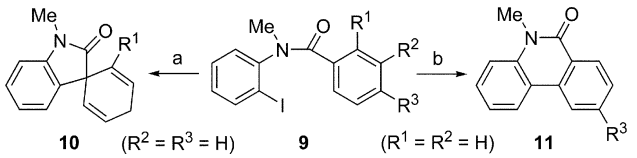
Intramolecular arylation of aryl radicals was mediated by SmI_2/HMPA in the presence of *i*-PrOH to give spirocycles and/or reduced *cine*-cyclised products, while the reaction in the absence of *i*-PrOH gave the rearomatised fused rings.

Aryl radical addition onto an aromatic ring has become an important tool in organic synthesis. The traditional method is heavy metal-mediated oxidative radical arylation of arenes through the cation radical intermediates, which is a useful procedure for the biaryl coupling of electron-rich arenes.[1] Recently, intramolecular reductive radical arylation using Bu_3SnH or other hydrogen sources has been extensively studied. As shown in Scheme 1, the intramolecular addition of aryl radical **1** can take place at three different carbons (A, B, and C). (1) The reaction at the carbon A forms the cyclohexadienyl radical intermediate **2**, which was converted into the fused ring **3** by hydrogen abstraction.[2,3] (2) Attack at the carbon B generates the unstable spirocyclohexadienyl radical intermediate **4**, which easily undergoes aryl migration to give **5**.[4] Otherwise, the intermediate **4** was trapped to give the spirocyclic compounds such as **6**.[5] (3) Attack of the aryl radical at the carbon C followed by elimination of the X radical gives the cyclised product **8**.[6] In some cases, the intramolecular radical arylation suffers from low regioselectivity of the radical addition.[7]

Recently, synthesis of spirocycles has attracted a great deal of attention due to their unique molecular structure and diverse biological activities.[8] In our ongoing study on samarium(II)-mediated[9] cyclisation reaction onto an aromatic ring,[10,11] we planned to synthesize the spirocycles by radical aryl coupling. Generally, the aryl radical cyclisation onto an aromatic ring to form spirocycles such as **6** is extremely difficult, producing a considerable amount of the *cine*-cyclisation product **3**,[5] except for the reaction of indole derivatives.[12] This is presumably due to both the instability of spirocyclohexadienyl radical intermediate **4** and the reversible nature of the radical addition. In some cases, the unstable intermediate **4** rearranges to a fused-ring radical such as **2** or **7**.[2,4c] Based on our previous results, we expected that samarium(II) iodide would effectively trap the intermediate **4** by single electron transfer, which could realize the spirocyclisation. In this communication, we report a selective synthesis of spirocycles **10** and fused rings **11** mediated by samarium(II) iodide, by simply changing the substrate structure and reaction conditions (Scheme 2). This is the first example of samarium(II)-mediated arylation of aryl radicals.



Scheme 1 Intramolecular addition of aryl radical **1** onto an aromatic ring.



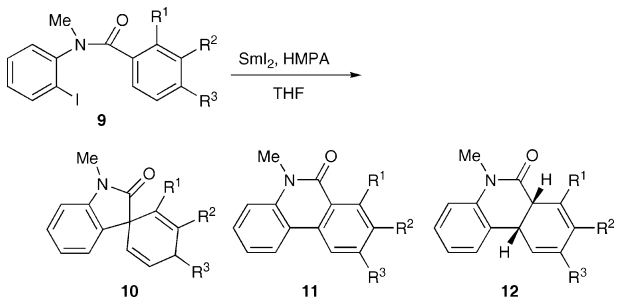
Scheme 2 Reaction conditions: (a) SmI_2, HMPA, *i*-PrOH, THF, −35 °C; (b) SmI_2, HMPA, THF, 0 °C.

We prepared various aryl radical precursors and investigated the samarium(II)-mediated intramolecular biaryl coupling reaction. First, we examined the reaction of 2-iodophenyl benzoate or *N*-(2-iodophenyl)benzamide with SmI_2/HMPA and obtained a complex mixture of unidentified products. However, we found that treatment of *N*-methylbenzamide derivative **9a** with SmI_2 and HMPA in the presence of *i*-PrOH (2 equiv.) gave spirocycle **10a** in 34% yield (Table 1, entry 1). Although increased loading of *i*-PrOH (20 equiv., entry 2) or lowering of the reaction temperature to −35 °C (entry 3) was not effective for improvement of the yield of spirocycle **10a**, a considerable amount of the reduced fused ring **12a** was obtained in both cases (28% and 30% yield, respectively). In contrast, the radical coupling reaction of the corresponding *ortho*-substituted analogues **9b** (entry 4) and **9c** (entry 5) afforded high yields of spirocycles **10b** and **10c**, respectively, in good selectivities. This is the first example of selective spirocyclisation by the aryl radical addition onto a benzene ring. Interestingly, a methyl substituent at the *meta*- (entry 6) or *para*-position (entry 7) increased the yields of the fused rings **12d** and **12e**, respectively. Compared to other conditions for the radical aryl coupling reaction mainly yielding biaryl products,[2–7] formation of the spirocycles **10** and fused rings **12** with a loss of aromaticity is a unique reactivity of the SmI_2/HMPA/*i*-PrOH system. When the reaction of **9a–e** was conducted in the absence of *i*-PrOH, the biaryl coupling products **11a–e** were selectively obtained in low to moderate yields (entries 8–12). For a reason that is unclear, the *para*-substituted benzamide derivative **9e** showed the best result affording the biaryl product **11e** in 60% yield, without producing other cyclised products (entry 12). This type of intramolecular radical biaryl coupling is also promoted by Bu_3SnH or other reagents;[2] however, it is extremely interesting that the cyclisation mode can be completely controlled by changing the reaction conditions and the substituent pattern (compare entries 4 and 5 *vs.* 12).

A plausible mechanism for the samarium(II)-mediated radical aryl coupling reaction is shown in Scheme 3. Single electron transfer (SET) to the iodide **9** by SmI_2 generates the aryl radical **13**, which would cyclise into the spirohexadienyl radical intermediate

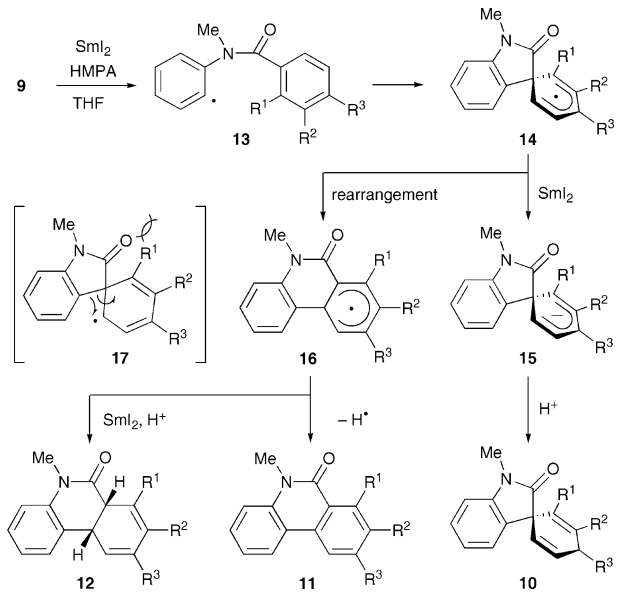
DOI: 10.1039/b410457a

Table 1 Samarium(II)-mediated aryl coupling reaction[a]



Entry	Substrate	R^1	R^2	R^3	*i*-PrOH (equiv.)	*T*/°C	Product yield (%) 10	11	12
1	**9a**	H	H	H	2	0	34	0	trace
2	**9a**	H	H	H	20	0	39	0	28
3	**9a**	H	H	H	2	−35	36	0	30
4	**9b**	Me	H	H	2	−35	89	0	6
5	**9c**	OMe	H	H	2	−35	89	0	9
6	**9d**	H	Me	H	2	−35	29	0	65
7	**9e**	H	H	Me	2	−35	31	0	53[b]
8	**9a**	H	H	H	0	0	0	26	0
9	**9b**	Me	H	H	0	0	0	26	0
10	**9c**	OMe	H	H	0	0	0	15	0
11	**9d**	H	Me	H	0	0	0	29[c]	0
12	**9e**	H	H	Me	0	0	0	60	0

[a] All the reactions were carried out in THF using SmI_2 (5 equiv.) and HMPA (18 equiv.). [b] Obtained as a mixture of regioisomers (1:1). [c] Obtained as a mixture of regioisomers (2:1).



Scheme 3 A plausible mechanistic pathway.

14. Further SET by SmI_2 and the protonation of the resulting cyclohexadienyl anion **15** by *i*-PrOH affords the spirocyclic 1,4-cyclohexadiene **10**. In contrast, rearrangement of the unstable intermediate **14** to the fused ring **16** followed by SET and the subsequent protonation would give the reduced fused ring **12**, while, in the absence of *i*-PrOH, the hydrogen abstraction from **16** yields aromatized product **11**. The presence of *i*-PrOH would promote the SET to **16**, by trapping the anionic intermediate.[11b] When the *ortho*-substituted benzamide derivatives **9b** and **9c** (R^1=Me or OMe) were used, the spirocycles **10b** and **10c** were selectively obtained (entries 4 and 5, Table 1). This is presumably due to the unfavourable steric interaction in the rearrangement of **14** to **16** as shown in the structure **17**, which provides more time to **14** for the SET and the subsequent protonation without rearrangement to **16**.

In conclusion, we have demonstrated a reductive cyclisation of aryl radicals onto an aromatic ring mediated by SmI_2/HMPA in the presence of *i*-PrOH. This is the first example of the highly selective synthesis of spirocycles by the aryl radical addition onto a benzene ring.

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