1,2-Radical Rearrangements of Aryl, Furanyl and Thiophenyl Groups from Carbon to Nitrogen

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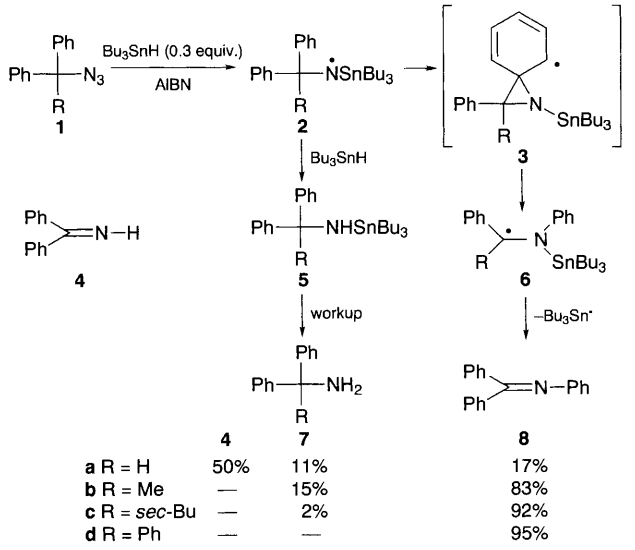
1,2-Radical rearrangements of aryl, furanyl and thiophenyl groups from carbon to nitrogen using azido groups as radical precursors are observed for the first time; the 1,2-aryl rearrangement is applied to the synthesis of phenanthridine derivatives from 6-fluorenyl azides.

The 1,2-radical rearrangement of aryl groups[1] has been well studied and have been shown to occur from carbon to carbon[2] and from carbon to oxygen.[3] However, there are relatively few examples of 1,2-radical rearrangements between carbon and heteroatoms[4] or between heteroatoms.[5] Although 1,2-aryl rearrangements from carbon to nitrogen, *via* intermediate alkyl nitrenes, has been observed in the thermolysis of tertiary alkyl azides,[6] as far as we are aware, a 1,2-aryl radical rearrangement from carbon to nitrogen has not yet been reported. In connection with our research interest in the synthetic utility of the radical reactions of alkyl azides,[7] we have studied the possibility of 1,2-aryl radical rearrangements from carbon to nitrogen using alkyl azides as radical precursors.

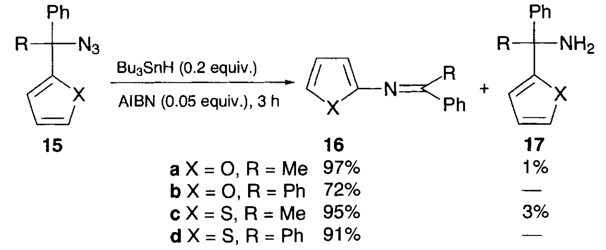
The radical reaction of azide **1a** with $\mathrm{Bu^n_3SnH}$ (0.3 equiv.) and AIBN (0.1 equiv.) in refluxing benzene for 5 h under high dilution, afforded imine **4** as the major product with amine **7a** and imine **8a** as minor products, Scheme 1. It is evident that **7a** was produced from the direct reduction of **2a** by $\mathrm{Bu^n_3SnH}$ and subsequent workup of **5a**. Although the mechanism for the conversion of azides to the corresponding imines was previously reported,[8] an exact mechanism for the formation of **4** requires further studies because the reaction of **1a** with AIBN or benzoyl peroxide without $\mathrm{Bu^n_3SnH}$ gave **4** only in very low yields (9, 13%, respectively). We thought that **8a** might result from the previously unknown 1,2-aryl rearrangement from carbon to nitrogen.



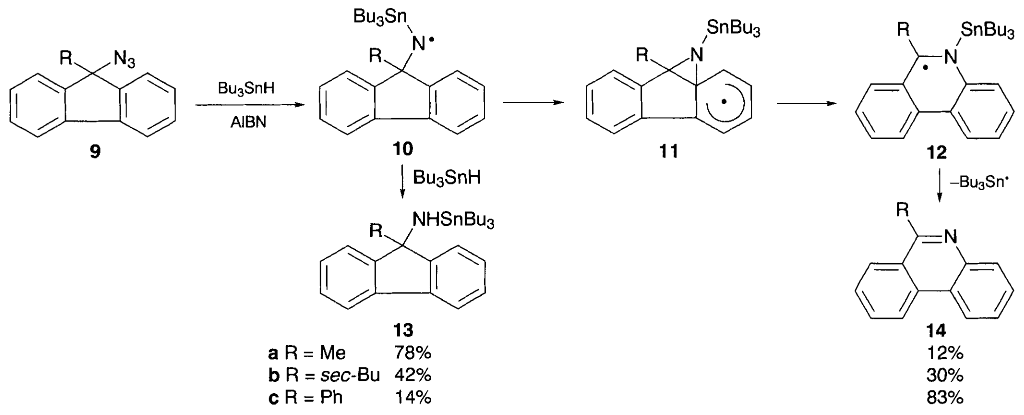
Scheme 1

It is expected that the 1,2-aryl rearrangement should proceed *via* an intermediate spiro cyclohexadienyl radical **3**, and should be largely affected by the stability of the intermediate radical **6**. Thus, the more stable the intermediate radical **6** is, the more efficient 1,2-aryl rearrangement should be. In order to prevent the formation of imine **4**, and to generate the more stable intermediate radical, the radical reaction was carried out with tertiary azide **1b** under the same conditions. As we expected, the 1,2-aryl rearranged product was isolated as the major product **9b** (83%) with the direct reduction product **8b** (15%). Much better results were obtained with **1c** and **1d**. In the case of **1d**, only the 1,2-aryl rearrangement took place.

To demonstrate the synthetic utility of 1,2-aryl radical rearrangements, we briefly studied the conversion of 9-azidofluorenes into phenanthridine derivatives as shown in Scheme 2. Treatment of **9a** in refluxing benzene with $\mathrm{Bu^n_3SnH}$–AIBN under high dilution, afforded the reduction



Scheme 3



Scheme 2

product **13a** in 78% yield with the 1,2-rearranged product **14a** in only 12% yield. Changing the R substituent from a methyl group to a *sec*-butyl or a phenyl group greatly improved the yield of the 1,2-rearranged product **14**, indicating that the success of the rearrangement depends on the stability of the intermediate radical **12**. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the 1,2-rearrangement of the phenyl group in **10c** did not occur.

We next focused our attention on the 1,2-furanyl and 1,2-thiophenyl rearrangement. Furans and thiophenes are expected to have strong migratory aptitude owing to their low resonance energy which would be lost during the rearrangement. 2-Furanyl azides **15a** and **15b** underwent 1,2-rearrangement to yield **16a** and **16b**, indicating preferential rearrangement of a furanyl group over a phenyl group. Similar results were obtained with 2-thiophenyl azides **15c** and **15d**, demonstrating the efficiency of the 1,2-radical rearrangement from carbon to nitrogen, although aminyl radicals have relatively low reactivity.

We are grateful to the Organic Chemistry Research Center (KOSEF) and KAIST for financial support of our research programme. We thank a referee for his helpful suggestion.

Received, 24th April 1995; Com. 5/02594J

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