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Lithium bromide/triethylamine promoted tandem cycloaddition–oxidation reaction: A convenient access to 3-trifluoroacetyl pyrroles from N-alkylidene 2-amino esters and β -trifluoroacetyl vinyl ethyl ether

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1. Introduction

Owing to the increasing importance of fluorine-containing heterocycles in the fields of biology and pharmacology, the development of efficient methods for the synthesis of these motifs have long been an interesting subject [\[1\].](#page-3-0) Among those welldeveloped methodologies for constructing 5-membered heterocycles, 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition represents one of the most versatile tools $[2]$. β -Trifluoroacetyl vinyl ethers were first prepared in 1967 [\[3\],](#page-3-0) and the existence of polarized $C=C$ and reactive trifluoroacetyl group have made them widely used as building blocks for the synthesis of fluorine-containing heterocycles [\[4\]](#page-3-0).

Recently, 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition reactions have been developed based on N-alkylidene 2-amino esters, which are known as stabilized azomethine yields. Many catalyst such as Cu(I), Ag(I), lithium salts, Fesulphos, organocatalysts and composite catalysts are commonly used in the reactions between N-alkylidene 2 amino esters and electron-deficient or polarized double bond in a stereoselective and regioselective manner [\[5a–f\].](#page-3-0) Considering about the efficiency and versatility of the reaction, it becomes one of the most convergent and practical approaches to the

ABSTRACT

A convenient lithium bromide/triethylamine promoted tandem cycloaddition–oxidation reaction was developed to afford 3-trifluoroacetyl pyrroles in moderate to good yields from N-alkylidene 2-amino esters and β -trifluoroacetyl vinyl ethyl ether.

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synthesis of pyrrolidines and proline derivatives. Herein, we report a convenient access to 3-trifluoroacetyl pyrroles from easily available N-alkylidene 2-amino esters and β -trifluoroacetyl vinyl ethyl ether.

2. Results and discussion

Initial study was investigated from (E) -4-ethoxy-1,1,1-trifluorobut-3-en-2-one 1 and (E) -methyl 2-(benzylideneamino)acetate 2a in the presence of one equivalent of pyridine ([Table 1](#page-1-0), entry 1). However, the reaction proceeded rather tediously. And no significant acceleration was observed with addition of $AgNO₃$ [\[6\],](#page-3-0) which may be due to the low solubility of $AgNO₃$ in THF. When lithium bromide hydrate was employed as catalyst, to our delight, the reaction could be finished within 3 h. Investigation of the 1 H NMR and ¹⁹F NMR suggested that the ethoxyl group was eliminated during the reaction while trifluoroacyl group remained intact (-73.7 ppm).Moreover, the mass spectrum indicated a loss of two H atoms of the cycloaddition product, which was also proved by the ¹H NMR. Concerning with other spectra, the structure was determined as a pyrrole cycle [\[7\]](#page-3-0). It should be noted that the synthesis of 3 trifluoroacetyl substituted pyrroles were normally reported by multiple-step reactions, either through a protection–acylation– deprotection or addition–oxidation process [\[8a,b\]](#page-3-0).

In order to improve the yield, the effect of bases was investigated and the results are summarized in [Table 1.](#page-1-0) It is

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Table 1

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Effect of bases on the reaction azomethine yield 2a and 1.

^a Determined by ¹⁹F NMR except entry 2, adding 0.5 mmol trifluoromethylbenzene as standard.

obvious that stronger base led to a relatively higher yield whether it is organic or inorganic. In view of the feasibility and efficiency, triethylamine was chosen as optimal base (entry 6), although KOH and NaOH both led to a satisfactory yield (entries 11 and 12).

Table 2

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Synthesis of CF₃CO-bearing Pyrroles.

CF ₃	

Fig. 1. Molecular structure of compound 3e.

With the optimized reaction condition in hand, we then extended the reaction with a series of N-alkylidene 2-amino esters. All the results are summarized in Table 2. It is implied that with an EWG attached on Ph, the reaction proceeded faster and led to a higher yield.

The molecular structure of 3e was further confirmed by an Xray crystal structure analysis (Fig. 1).

The pyrrole products might be generated as shown in Scheme 1. Lithium enolate a was generated from 2 in the presence of LiBr and NEt₃. Then, under the chelation effect of lithium [\[5d\]](#page-3-0), which highly contributed to the acceleration of the reaction, concerted 1,3 dipolar cycloaddition led to c. The following elimination of ethanol afforded d [\[9\].](#page-3-0) Then, as a result of the tendency of aromatization [\[1,10\],](#page-3-0) spontaneous air oxidation led to a substituted pyrrole. When there is an EWG attached on Ph, the chelation complex **b** can be generated easier than there is an EDG.

^a Isolated yield.

Scheme 1. Mechanism of the cycloaddition–oxidation.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, we have developed a convenient tandem cycloaddition–oxidation reaction in the presence of lithium bromide. 3-Trifluoroacetyl substituted pyrroles could be synthesized in good yields from easily available N-alkylidene 2-amino esters and β -trifluoroacetyl vinyl ethyl ethers. The mild condition and satisfactory yield will provide this reaction as a useful method for the construction of chemical library with pyrrole motifs.

4. Experimental

Melting points are measured on a Temp-Melt apparatus and are uncorrected. ¹H (300 MHz), ¹³C NMR (75 MHz) and ¹⁹F NMR (282 MHz) spectra were recorded on a Bruker AM-300 ultra shield, 300 MHz, high performance digital FT-NMR spectrometer with Me₄Si and CFCl₃ as the internal and external standards, respectively.
¹³C NMR (100 MHz) spectra were recorded on a Bruker AV-400 ultra shield plus, 400 MHz, high performance digital FT-NMR spectrometer with Me4Si as the internal standard. FTIR spectra were obtained with a Nicolet AV-360 spectrophotometer. Low resolution mass spectra (LRMS) and high resolution mass spectra (HRMS) were obtained on a Finnigan GC–MS 4021 and a Finnigan MAT-8430 instrument using the electron impact ionization technique (70 eV) or electrospray ionization. Elemental analyses were performed by this institute. Single crystal X-ray structure analysis was performed on a Bruker P4 instrument. All solvents and reagents were used without further purification unless otherwise stated.

4.1. General procedure

The α -imino esters were prepared following the literature procedure [\[5a\]](#page-3-0).

To a single-necked flask containing THF (15 mL) was added 4 ethoxy-1,1,1-trifluorobut-3-en-2-one 1 (504 mg, 3 mmol), corresponding N-alkylidene 2-amino ester 2 (3 mmol), lithium bromide hydrate (315 mg, 3 mmol) and triethylamine (303 mg, 3 mmol) in one portion at room temperature. When the reaction was completed monitored by TLC, the reaction was quenched by saturated NH₄Cl (15 mL) and extracted by ethyl ether (30 mL \times 3), and the organic layer was dried over anhydrous $Na₂SO₄$. After removal of the solvent under reduced pressure, the residue was purified by flash chromatography on silica gel (ethyl acetate–nhexane, 1:5) to afford 3.

4.1.1. Methyl 5-phenyl-4-(2,2,2-trifluoroacetyl)-1H-pyrrole-2 carboxylate 3a

Colorless crystals. Mp = 183 °C. FTIR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 3260, 1691, 1567, 1462, 1211, 1137, 895, 762, 695. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 9.96 (br s, 1H, NH), 7.64–7.61 (m, 2H, ArH), 7.49–7.45 (m, 4H, ArH and H_{pyrrole}), 3.86 (s, 3H, COOCH₃). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 175.6 (q, J = 34.0 Hz), 161.0, 144.6, 130.2, 129.6, 129.1, 128.5, 123.2, 118.1 (q, J = 4.0 Hz), 116.7 (q, J = 290.0 Hz), 114.4, 52.2. ¹⁹F NMR (282 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = -73.7 (s). ESI-MS: m/z [M+H]⁺ = 298, m/z [M+NH₄]⁺ = 315, m/z [M+Na]⁺ = 320. HRMS (ESI): m/z calcd. for $C_{14}H_{10}F_3N_1O_3$ [M+Na]: 320.0505; found: 320.0504.

4.1.2. Methyl 5-(4-methoxyphenyl)-4-(2,2,2-trifluoroacetyl)-1Hpyrrole-2-carboxylate 3b

Colorless crystals. Mp = $171-172$ °C. FTIR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 3280, 2444, 1746, 1689, 1611, 1545, 1442, 892, 758, 734. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 9.65 (br s, 1H, NH), 7.60 (d, 2H, J = 9.0 Hz, ArH), 7.44 (s, 1H, H_{pyrrole}), 6.99 (d, 2H, J = 9.0 Hz, ArH), 3.90 (s, 3H, Ar–OCH₃), 3.87 (s, 3H, COOCH₃). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 174.6 (q, J = 33.0 Hz), 161.1, 160.1, 145.3, 131.2, 123.7, 121.9, 117.3 (q, J = 4.0 Hz), 117.1 (q, J = 290.0 Hz), 113.4, 113.2, 54.9, 51.2.

¹⁹F NMR (282 MHz, CDCl₃): $\delta = -73.6$ (s). ESI-MS: m/z $[M+H]^{+}$ = 328. HRMS: m/z calcd. for $C_{15}H_{12}F_{3}N_{1}O_{4}$ [M+Na]: 350.0611; found: 350.0614.

4.1.3. Methyl 5-(4-bromophenyl)-4-(2,2,2-trifluoroacetyl)-1Hpyrrole-2-carboxylate 3c

Colorless crystals. Mp = 176 °C. FTIR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 3258, 2958, 1689, 1571, 899, 782, 720. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 10.15 (br s, 1H, NH), 7.61 (d, 2H, $J = 8.7$ Hz, ArH), 7.50 (d, 2H, $J = 8.7$ Hz, ArH), 7.45 (s, 1H, H_{pyrrole}), 3.85 (s, 3H, COOCH₃). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 175.3 (q, J = 34.0 Hz), 159.9, 143.5, 131.7, 131.1, 129.0, 124.2, 123.6, 117.2 (q, J = 4.0 Hz), 116.9 (q, J = 290.0 Hz), 113.9, 51.3. ¹⁹F NMR (282 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = -73.73 (s). ESI-MS: m/z $[M-H]^-$ = 374:376 = 1:1. HRMS: m/z $[M]^+$ calcd. for $C_{14}H_9Br_1F_3N_1O_3$: 374.9718, found: 374.9721; calcd.: 376.9697, found: 376.9699.

4.1.4. Methyl 5-(4-chlorophenyl)-4-(2,2,2-trifluoroacetyl)-1Hpyrrole-2-carboxylate 3d

Colorless crystals. Mp = 179-180 °C. FTIR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 3259, 2964, 1915, 1704, 152, 1345, 1029, 1004, 898, 860, 784, 645. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 10.6 (br s, 1H, NH), 7.57 (d, 2H, J = 6.6 Hz, ArH), 7.43 (m, 3H, ArH and H_{pyrrole}), 3.78 (s, 3H, COOCH₃). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, acetone- d_6): δ = 174.8 (q, J = 34.0 Hz), 160.0, 143.6, 135.3, 131.4, 128.6, 128.1, 124.3, 117.3 (q, J = 4.0 Hz), 116.9 $(q, J = 290.0 \text{ Hz})$, 112.6, 51.3. ¹⁹F NMR (282 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = -73.8 (s). ESI-MS: m/z [M+H]⁺ = 332:334 = 3:1. HRMS: m/z [M]⁺ calcd. for C₁₄H₉N₁O₃Cl₁F₃: 331.0223; found: 331.0220.

4.1.5. Methyl 5-(4-fluorophenyl)-4-(2,2,2-trifluoroacetyl)-1Hpyrrole-2-carboxylate 3e

Colorless crystals. Mp = 189-190 °C. FTIR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 3354, 2968, 1713, 1681, 1570, 90, 843, 761, 736. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 10.17 (br s, 1H, NH), 7.63 (dd, 2H, J = 5.7, 3.0 Hz, ArH), 7.44 (s, 1H, H_{pyrrole}), 7.16 (t, 2H, $J = 8.1$ Hz, ArH), 3.83 (s, 3H, COOCH₃). ¹⁹F NMR (282 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = -73.9 (s, 3F, CF₃CO), 110.0 (t, 1F, J = 8.5 Hz, ArF). ESI-MS: m/z (%) = 315 (M⁺, 42), 284 (6), 246 (34), 214 (100), 158 (26). Anal. Calcd. for $C_{14}H_9F_4NO_3$: C, 53.34; H, 2.88; N, 4.44. Found: C, 53.50; H, 2.92; N, 4.42.

Structural parameters for **3e**: $C_{14}H_9F_4NO_3$, yellow block, crystal dimension 0.26 mm \times 0.22 mm \times 0.15 mm, monoclinic, space group $P2(1)/n$, $a = 13.355$ (2) Å, $b = 7.6243$ (14) Å, $c = 13.642$ (2) Å, α = 90.00°, β = 109.211 (2)°, γ = 90.00°, V = 1311.7 (4) Å³, $Dc = 1.596 \text{ Mg/m}^3$, $\lambda(\text{Mo-Ka}) = 0.71073 \text{ Å}$. CCDC reference number 748896.

4.1.6. Methyl 5-(2-fluorophenyl)-4-(2,2,2-trifluoroacetyl)-1Hpyrrole-2-carboxylate 3f

Colorless crystals. Mp = 170 °C. FTIR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 3248, 2958, 1700, 1620, 1572, 1005, 900, 801, 759, 677. ¹ H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 10.73 (br s, 1H, NH), 7.67–7.54 (m, 3H, ArH and H_{pyrrole}), 7.37–7.29 (m, 2H, ArH), 3.86 (s, 3H, COOCH₃). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, acetone- d_6): δ 175.1 (q, J = 35.0 Hz), 160.1 (d, J = 247.0 Hz), 160.2, 137.7, 132.1 (d, $J = 9.0$ Hz), 131.8, 124.6, 124.2 (d, $J = 3.0$ Hz), 118.2 $(d, J = 15.0 \text{ Hz})$, 117.3, 116.7 $(q, J = 289.0 \text{ Hz})$, 116.4 $(q, J = 4.0 \text{ Hz})$, 115.6 (d, J = 22.0 Hz), 51.7. ¹⁹F NMR (282 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = -74.2 (s, $3F, CF_3CO$, -113.3 (s, 1F, ArF). ESI-MS: m/z (%) = 315 (M⁺, 36), 284 (6), 214 (100), 158 (26). HRMS: m/z [M]⁺ calcd. for C₁₄H₉N₁O₃F₄: 315.0519; found: 315.0515.

4.1.7. Methyl 5-(3-fluorophenyl)-4-(2,2,2-trifluoroacetyl)-1Hpyrrole-2-carboxylate 3g

Colorless crystals. FTIR (KBr) cm^{-1} : 3262, 2964, 1933, 1719, 1570, 902, 786, 786, 643, 603. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 10.74 (br s, 1H, NH), 7.46-7.39 (m, 3H, ArH), 7.36 (s, 1H, H_{pyrrole}), 7.19-7.14 (m, 1H, ArH), 3.77 (s, 3H, COOCH₃). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, acetone- d_6):

 δ = 174.9 (q, J = 36.0 Hz), 162.2 (d, J = 242.0 Hz), 159.9, 143.2, 132.0 $(d, J = 9.0 \text{ Hz})$, 129.9 $(d, J = 8.0 \text{ Hz})$, 125.8 $(d, J = 3.0 \text{ Hz})$, 124.4, 117.2 $(q, J = 4.0 \text{ Hz})$, 116.7 $(q, J = 290.0 \text{ Hz})$, 116.6 $(d, J = 47.0 \text{ Hz})$, 116.5 $(d,$ J = 3.0 Hz), 114.0, 51.3. ¹⁹F NMR (282 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = -73.9 (s, 3F, $CF₃CO$), -112.7 (s, 1F, ArF). ESI-MS: m/z [M+H]⁺ = 316, m/z $[M+NH_4]^+$ = 333. HRMS: m/z $[M]^+$ calcd. for $C_{14}H_9N_2O_3F_4$: 315.0519; found: 315.0521.

4.1.8. Methyl 4-(2,2,2-trifluoroacetyl)-5-(4-

(trifluoromethyl)phenyl)-1H-pyrrole-2-carboxylate 3h

Colorless crystals. Mp = $181-182$ °C. FTIR (KBr) cm⁻¹: 3346, 2968, 1966, 1716, 1678, 1453, 1289, 917, 845, 760, 663. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 10.71 (br s, 1H, NH), 7.76–7.73 (m, 4H, ArH and H_{pyrrole}), 7.47–7.46 (m, 1H, ArH), 3.72 (s, 3H, COOCH₃). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, acetone- d_6): δ 175.0 (q, J = 34 Hz), 159.9, 142.9, 133.9, 130.8 (q, J = 32 Hz), 130.6, 124.3 (q, J = 270 Hz), 124.8 (q, $J = 4$ Hz), 124.7, 117.8 (q, $J = 290$ Hz), 117.2 (q, $J = 4$ Hz), 114.3, 51.4. ¹⁹F NMR (282 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = -63.4 (s, 3F, ArCF₃), -73.9 (s, 3F, $CF₃CO$). ESI-MS: m/z [M+H]⁺ = 366, m/z [M+NH₄]⁺ = 383. HRMS: m/s z [M]⁺ calcd. for C₁₅H₉NO₃F₆: 365.0487; found: 365.0488.

4.1.9. Methyl 5-(4-(dimethylamino)phenyl)-4-(2,2,2 trifluoroacetyl)-1H-pyrrole-2-carboxylate 3i

Light yellow crystals. Mp = 208–209 °C FTIR (KBr) cm $^{-1}$: 3276, 2955, 1687, 1610, 1568, 896, 824, 770, 733. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 9.61 (br s, 1H, NH), 7.57 (d, 2H, J = 8.7 Hz, ArH), 7.42 (s, 1H, $H_{pyrrole}$), 6.75 (d, 2H, J = 8.7 Hz, ArH), 3.89 (s, 3H, COOCH₃), 3.04 (s, 6H, N(CH₃)₂). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃): $\delta = 175.2$ (q, $J = 34.0$ Hz), 161.2, 151.3, 150.0, 130.2, 117.1 (q, $J = 284.0$ Hz), 122.3, 118.5 (q, J = 12.0 Hz), 116.8, 113.4, 111.6, 52.1, 40.2. ¹⁹F NMR (282 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = -73.44 (s). ESI-MS: m/z (%) = 340 (M⁺, 62),

308 (100), 183 (88), 119 (35), 91 (12). HRMS: m/z [M]+ calcd. for $C_{16}H_{15}N2O_3F_3$: 340.1035; found: 340.1039.

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