

Palladium-Catalyzed Cocyclotrimerization of Allenes with Arynes: Selective Synthesis of Phenanthrenes

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Palladium-catalyzed cocyclotrimerization of allenes with arynes has been developed for selectively synthesizing phenanthrenes. In the presence of $[(allyl)PdCl]_2$ and $P(o-tol)_3$, a variety of allenes, including internal and terminal allenes, underwent the cocyclotrimerization with arynes to afford the corresponding phenanthrenes in moderate to good yields. The results showed the selectivity of the reaction based on allenes.

o-Silyl aryltriflates as benzyne precursors were first reported by Kobayashi in 1983.¹ Shortly after, many efficient methods were developed on the basis of *o*-silyl aryltriflates because *o*-silyl aryltriflates could be readily converted into benzynes in situ under mild conditions.¹⁻⁴ A representative example is cyclotrimerization of arynes with unsaturated compounds, such as alkynes, allenes, alkenes, or arynes, to construct the phenanthrene frameworks.³ Both the Pérez group^{3a-h} and the Yamamoto group,^{3i-k} for example, have independently reported palladium-catalyzed cyclotrimerizations of benzynes with alkynes to afford the corresponding phenanthrenes. Subsequently, Larock and co-workers have described a novel route to prepare phenanthrene derivatives by palladium-catalyzed annulation of arynes with 2-halobiaryls.³¹⁻ⁿ Cheng and co-workers have also developed a palladium-catalyzed [2+2+2] cocylotrimerization SCHEME 1



of benzynes with bicyclic alkenes to give 9,10-dihydrophenanthrene derivatives.³⁰ However, both regio- and chemoselectivities of these cycloaddition transformations are unsatisfactory. As an alternative to these methods, Cheng and co-workers recently demonstrated a highly chemoselective NiBr₂(PPh₃)₂catalyzed cocyclotrimerization of benzynes with allenes to afford 10-methylene-9,10-dihydrophenanthrenes in moderate yields (eq 1, Scheme 1).^{3p} However, an excess amount of Zn was necessary and only aliphatic terminal allenes were screened. Pd(PPh₃)₄ was also investigated, and the results showed that it was less effective for the cocyclotrimerization of benzynes with (propa-1,2-dienyl)cyclohexane (eq 1, Scheme 1). Thus, the development of some general and selective routes involving new catalytic systems for the synthesis of phenanthrenes from the aryne

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TABLE 1.Palladium-Catalyzed Cocyclotrimerization of Ethyl4-Phenylbuta-2,3-dienoate (1a) with 2-(Trimethylsilyl)phenylTriffate $(2a)^a$

				Ph / CO ₂ Et
Ph	TMS	\checkmark	Pd, CsF	\succ
	=∖ +		_	
	CO₂Et TfO	\sim	×	_/_/_/
1a		2a		
entry	[Pd]	<i>t</i> (°C)	time (h)	yield $(\%)^b$
1^c	Pd(dba) ₂	80	20	30
2	$Pd(dba)_2$	80	20	39
3	PdCl ₂	80	10	8
4	Pd(PPh ₃) ₄	80	10	23
5	$Pd(OAc)_2$	80	6	38
6	[(allyl)PdCl] ₂	80	6	40
7	[(allyl)PdCl] ₂	60	24	54
8	[(allyl)PdCl] ₂	0	24	12
9^d	[(allyl)PdCl] ₂	0 to 60	3	71
10^{d}	$Pd(OAc)_2$	0 to 60	12	49
11		0 to 60	20	0
12^e	[(allyl)PdCl] ₂	0 to 60	20	17

^{*a*} Reaction conditions: **1a** (0.2 mmol), **2a** (2 equiv), [Pd] (5 mol %), $P(o-tol)_3$ (10 mol %), and CsF (3 equiv) in MeCN (2 mL). ^{*b*} Isolated yield. The benzyne cyclotrimerization product was observed by GC-MS analysis. ^{*c*} Without P(o-tol)₃. ^{*d*} At 0 °C for 2 h, then at 60 °C for 1 h. ^{*e*} In THF (2 mL) instead of MeCN.

partners is still a challenging area. Here, we report a selective cocyclotrimerization of benzynes with allenes to synthesize phenanthrenes in moderate yields using $[(allyl)PdCl]_2$ and $P(o-tol)_3$ catalytic systems (eq 2, Scheme 1).

The reaction between ethyl 4-phenylbuta-2,3-dienoate (1a) and 2-(trimethylsilyl)phenyl triflate (2a) was conducted to optimize the reaction conditions, and the results are summarized in Table 1. Initially, a set of the Pd catalytic systems were investigated (entries 1-6). Without ligands, treatment of allene 1a with triflate 2a and Pd(dba)₂ at 80 °C afforded the corresponding product 3 in a 30% yield (entry 1). The yield of **3** was enhanced to 39% in the presence of $P(o-tol)_3$ (entry 2). Identical results were obtained with either Pd(OAc)₂ or [(al- $[v]PdCl_2$ (entries 5 and 6). However, both $PdCl_2$ and $Pd(PPh_3)_4$ were less effective (entries 3 and 4). The reaction temperature was subsequently examined in the presence of [(allyl)PdCl]₂ and $P(o-tol)_3$. The screening results demonstrated that the reaction temperature affected the reaction (entries 6-9). The yield of the target product 3 was enhanced to 54% at 60 °C (entry 7), and 12% yield was still isolated at 0 °C (entry 8). Interestingly, the yield of 3 was increased to 71% when the reaction was conducted at 0 °C for 2 h, then at 60 °C for 1 h (entry 9). However, Pd(OAc)₂ displayed less activity under the same conditions (entry 10). It is worthy noting that no desired product is observed by GC-MS analysis without Pd catalysts (entry 11).³ Another solvent, THF, was also tested, and the results showed that it was inferior to MeCN (entry 12).

With the optimal reaction conditions in hand, the scope of the cocyclotrimerzation reaction was screened (Table 2 and Scheme 2). As shown in Table 2, a variety of internal allenes 1b-i were first evaluated by reacting with triflate2a, [(allyl)P-dCl]₂, and P(*o*-tol)₃ (entries 1–8). The results demonstrated that the structures of the allenes affected the yield and selectivity to some extent. While ethyl 4-(4-methoxyphenyl)buta-2,3-dienoate 1b, for instance, was treated with triflate 2a, [(allyl)PdCl]₂, and P(*o*-tol)₃ to afford the desired product 4 in a 77% yield (entry 1), substrate 1d with an *o*-methoxyphenyl group reduced the yield of the corresponding product 6 to 53% under the same





^{*a*} Reaction conditions: **1** (0.2 mmol), **2** (2 equiv), $[(allyl)PdCl]_2$ (5 mol %), P(*o*-tol)₃ (10 mol %), and CsF (3 equiv) in MeCN (2 mL) at 0 °C for 2 h, then at 60 °C for 1 h. ^{*b*} Isolated yield. ^{*c*} (*Z*)/(*E*) isomers = 2:1 determined by ¹H NMR spectra.

conditions (entry 3). In the presence of $[(allyl)PdCl]_2$ and $P(o-tol)_3$, the other disubstituted allenes **1c**, **1e**, and **1g** also provided the target phenanthrene products in satisfactory yields (entries 2 and 4–6). Surprisingly, 9,10-dihydro-9-methylenephenan-

SCHEME 2. Cocyclotrimerization of Terminal Allenes 1j-l with Triflate 2a



SCHEME 3. A Possible Mechanism



threne 8 was obtained from the reaction of allene 1f (entry 5). We were interested to find that the chemoselectivities of trisubstituted allenes were shifted toward 9,10-dihydro-9methylenephenanthrenes (entries 7 and 8). In the presence of $[(allyl)PdCl]_2$ and $P(o-tol)_3$, the reaction of 2-methyl-1,4diphenylbuta-2,3-dien-1-one (1h) with triflate 2a was conducted smoothly to afford a mixture of (Z)- and (E)-9,10-dihydro-9methylenephenanthrene 10 in a 60% total yield (Z/E = 2:1; entry 7). It was found that a 29% yield was still achieved from the reaction between ethyl 4-methylpenta-2,3-dienoate (1i) and triflate 2a under the standard conditions (entry 8). Another triflate 2b was investigated by the reaction with allenes 1a, 1b, or **1e** in the presence of $[(allyl)PdCl]_2$ and $P(o-tol)_3$, and the results indicated that these reactions were carried out selectively in moderate yields (entries 9-11). However, triflate 2c reacted with allene 2a provided a mixture of products (entry 12).

As shown in Scheme 2, three terminal allenes 1j-l were also examined under the standard conditions. Treatment of aliphatic allenes 1j or 1k with triflate 2a, $[(allyl)PdCl]_2$, and $P(o-tol)_3$ afforded the corresponding 9,10-dihydro-9-methylenephenanthrenes 16 and 17, respectively, in moderate yields, whose selectivity is identical to Cheng's Pd results.^{3p} We were pleased to find that the reaction of the electron-deficient terminal allene 1l with triflate 2a was also conducted smoothly in a 57% total yield under the same conditions. However, the regioselectivity was not satisfactory, and a mixture of 18 and 19 was obtained in a 1:1 ratio.

A possible mechanism as outlined in Scheme 3 for the palladium-catalyzed cocyclotrimerization reaction is proposed on the basis of the present results and the previously reported mechanisms.^{1–4} Initially, complexation of the active $Pd(0)L_n$

species with allene 1 and benyne A, which is generated from the reaction of 2 with CsF, occurs readily to afford intermediate B. Subsequently, intermediate B undergoes cisaddition to give intermediate C, followed by insertion with another benzyne A to yield intermediate D. Finally, reductive elimination of intermediate D takes place to provide the target 9,10-dihydro-9-methylenephenanthrene product and regenerate the active Pd(0) species. Intermediate D to intermediate D readily occurs by isomerization to give the phenanthrene product due to the electronic effect of allenes. However, the formation of 9,10-dihydro-9-methylenephenanthrenes from allenes 1f, 1h, and 1i may be because the steric hindrance effects are presented among the reactions of the electronneutral and electron-deficient terminal allenes.

In summary, we have developed a selective protocol for the synthesis of phenanthrenes by palladium-catalyzed cocyclotrimerization of allenes with benzynes. This method allows for a wide range of various allenes, including internal and terminal allenes, to proceed the cocyclotrimerization with arynes. It is noteworthy that the products, phenanthrenes, are the common structural motifs in both naturally occurring biological compounds with antimalarial, anticancer and emetic activities,⁵ and materials with photoconducting, photochemical, and electroluminescent properties.

Experimental Section

Typical Experimental Procedure for the Palladium-Catalyzed Cocyclotrimerization of Allenes with Benzynes. A mixture of allene 1 (0.2 mmol), 2-(trimethylsilyl)phenyl triflate 2 (2 equiv), [(allyl)PdCl]₂ (5 mol %), P(o-tol)₃ (10 mol %), and CsF (3 equiv) was stirred in MeCN (2 mL) at 0 °C for 2 h, then at 60 °C for 1 h until complete consumption of starting material as monitored by TLC and GC-MS analysis. Then the mixture was filtered by crude flash column chromatography with diethyl ether, and evaporated under vacuum. The residue was purified by flash column chromatography to afford the pure product (hexane/ethyl acetate).

Ethyl 2-(10-phenylphenanthren-9-yl)acetate (3): pale yellow solid, mp 105.8 °C (uncorrected); ¹H NMR (500 MHz) δ 8.76 (d, J = 9.5 Hz, 1H), 8.72 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 8.01 (d, J = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 7.67–7.63 (m, 2H), 7.59 (t, J = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 7.51–7.43 (m, 3H), 7.42–7.40 (m, 1H), 7.38–7.35 (m, 3H), 4.11–4.06 (m, 2H), 3.90 (s, 2H), 1.15 (t, J = 7.5 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (125 MHz) δ 171.7, 139.7, 139.1, 132.1, 131.1, 130.2, 130.0, 128.4, 128.2, 128.0, 127.7, 127.4, 127.1, 127.0, 126.4, 126.3, 124.7, 123.0, 122.4, 60.7,

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37.0, 14.1; IR (KBr, cm⁻¹) 1727; LRMS (EI, 70 eV) m/z (%) 340 (M⁺, 55), 294 (29), 267 (100), 252 (28); HRMS (EI) for C₂₄H₂₀O₂ (M⁺) calcd. 340.1463, found 340.1461.

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Supporting Information Available: General experimental procedures, characterization data for 3-19, and copies of spectra. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

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