

Evidence for in Situ Catalyst Modification during the Pd-Catalyzed Conversion of Aryl Triflates to Aryl Fluorides

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S Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: A mechanistic investigation of the Pd-catalyzed conversion of aryl triflates to fluorides is presented. Studies reveal that C–F reductive elimination from a LPd^{II}-(aryl)F complex (L = *t*-BuBrettPhos or RockPhos) does not occur when the aryl group is electron rich. Evidence is presented that a modified phosphine, generated in situ, serves as the actual supporting ligand during catalysis with such substrates. A preliminary study of the reactivity of a LPd^{II}-(aryl)F complex based on this modified ligand is reported.

Owing to their desirable metabolic properties and unique electronic characteristics, aryl fluoride-containing compounds are highly valued in a number of fields,¹ but the construction of aryl C–F bonds remains quite challenging.² Metal-catalyzed coupling of heavier aryl halides and pseudohalides (X = Cl, Br, I, OTf) with a simple metal fluoride salt would be an ideal route to generate aryl fluorides with respect to waste, simplicity, and generality (Figure 1).

Elegant studies by Grushin³ and Yandulov⁴ have shed considerable light on the challenges associated with developing a Pd-catalyzed nucleophilic fluorination. A difficult C–F reductive elimination step, the formation of stable Pd(II) fluoride-bridged dimers, and myriad fluoride-induced ligand decomposition pathways have cast doubt as to whether accessing the catalytic cycle shown in Figure 1 is possible. To avoid these problems, processes in which C–F reductive elimination occurs from a higher oxidation state metal fluoride, notably Pd(IV), have attracted significant interest.⁵ We recently described the catalytic conversion of aryl triflates to aryl fluorides, which we believe operates by a Pd(0)/Pd(II) cycle;⁶ key to its success was the use of bulky, monodentate biaryl phosphines—catalysts based on these ligands appear to circumvent many of the aforementioned problems. While C–F reductive elimination was demonstrated from BrettPhos-ligated **1**·Pd(Ar)F complexes,⁶ it was only observed when the aryl group was electron deficient and possessed an *ortho* alkyl group, two structural features known to favor reductive elimination (Figure 2).⁷ In addition, Pd catalysts based on BrettPhos (**1**) are not active in most fluorination reactions; only catalysts derived from the di-*tert*-butyl-based ligand *t*-BuBrettPhos (**2**) were able to transform a wide range of aryl triflates to their corresponding fluorides. We have now discovered that catalysts based on the structurally similar RockPhos (**3**) also perform well in these fluorination reactions with product yields similar to those obtained with **2** (vide infra).⁸

In our previous report, we described the formation of regioisomeric aryl fluoride products whose quantities increased as the

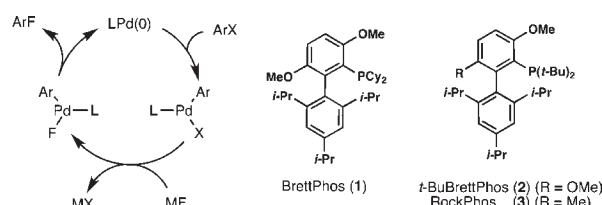


Figure 1. Presumed mechanism of Pd-catalyzed nucleophilic fluorination and ligands used in this study.

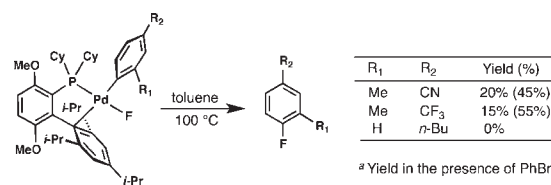


Figure 2. Previously reported C–F reductive elimination from a Pd(II) fluoride.

arene became more electron rich (Figure 3).⁶ Because the product ratios obtained differ from those reported for a process involving external fluoride attack on a benzyne-type intermediate,^{3g} we felt it was possible that a discrete LPd^{II}(Ar)F complex is involved in the fluorination of electron-rich aryl triflates. To address this question, a better understanding of the C–F reductive elimination process from electron-rich LPd^{II}(Ar)F complexes supported by ligands relevant to the catalytic reaction was required.

Herein we report results that cast doubt as to whether **2** (or **3**) serves as the actual supporting ligand in many of these reactions but suggest that reductive elimination from LPd(Ar)F complexes (with electron-rich aryl groups) is possible and likely occurs as part of the catalytic cycle.

We began by preparing the **3**·Pd(Ar)F complex **5**, presumed to be an intermediate in the catalytic fluorination of 4-*n*BuPhOTf (Scheme 1). In general, Pd complexes derived from **3** have proven superior to those originating from **2** in terms of isolation, characterization, and synthetic manipulation. Simply by stirring (COD)Pd(CH₂TMS)₂, **3**, and 4-*n*BuPhBr in a minimum quantity of cyclohexane, the desired oxidative addition complex **4** precipitated as a bright yellow solid in good yield (76%). X-ray crystallographic analysis showed that **4** adopts a C-bound conformation in the solid state with a Pd–Br bond length of

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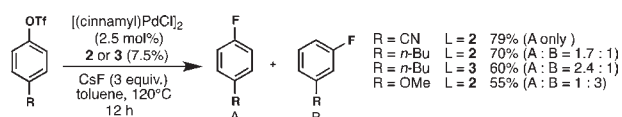
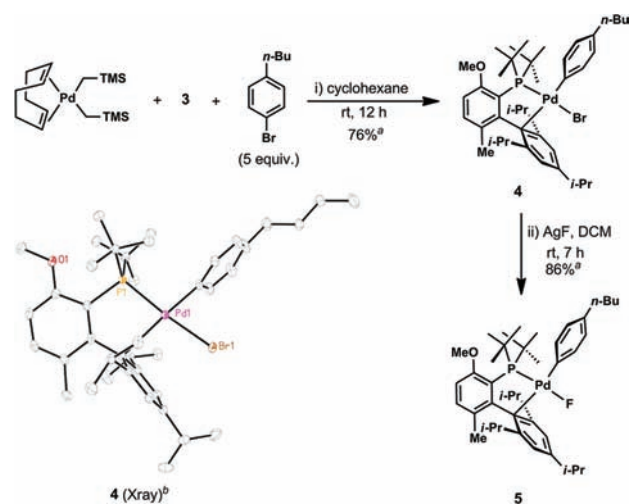
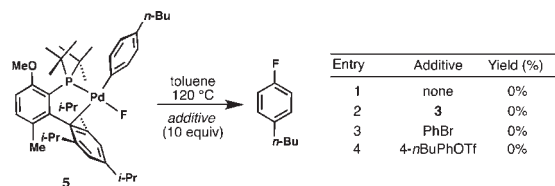


Figure 3. Regioisomer formation.

Scheme 1. Preparation of 3·Pd(Ar)F Complex 5^{a,b}

^a Isolated yields are given. ^b Thermal ellipsoid plot at 50% probability; hydrogen atoms are omitted.

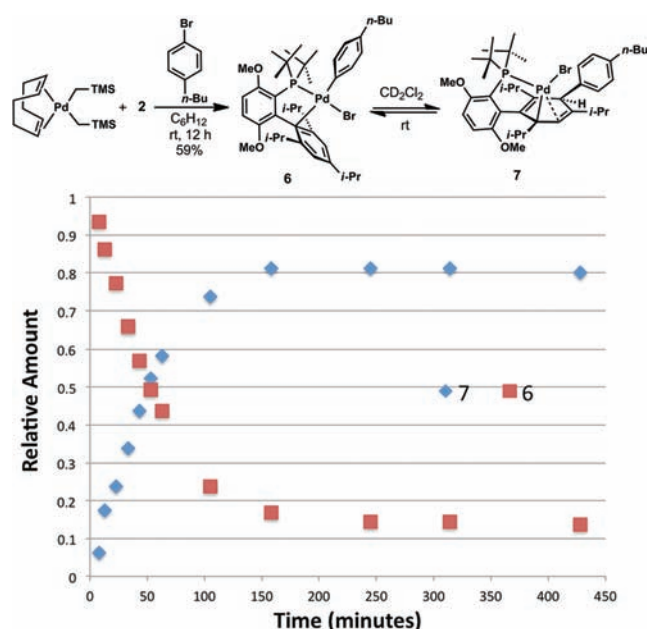
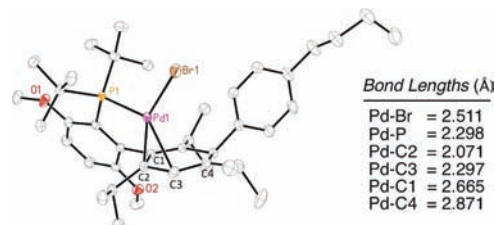
Table 1. Thermolysis of 3·Pd(Ar)F Complex 5



2.4663(3) Å. It is worth noting that, unlike with **1**, oxidative addition complexes derived from **3** show no signs of an *O*-bound conformation in solution.⁹ Halide exchange of **4** with AgF afforded the desired LPd(Ar)F complex **5**.

When **5** was heated in toluene, no product of C–F reductive elimination was detected, with or without a variety of additives, despite **5** being fully consumed (Table 1). ¹⁹F and ³¹P NMR analysis of the crude reaction mixtures indicated the absence of aryl fluorides of any kind and no evidence for P–F bond formation.³ The major fluorine-containing species detected by ¹⁹F NMR (δ –136 and –148 ppm) vanished upon addition of Et₃N, leading us to speculate that a formal loss of HF may have occurred (vide infra).

While preparing the analogous *t*-BuBrettPhos-ligated LPd(Ar)Br complex **6**, we observed that the initially formed bright yellow complex (³¹P NMR: δ 69 ppm) that had precipitated from cyclohexane began to rapidly convert to a new dark red compound (³¹P NMR: δ 83 ppm) when dissolved in CD₂Cl₂, eventually reaching a ~6:1 mixture as determined by ¹H NMR (Figure 4). From this mixture, the major component could be crystallized, and X-ray analysis identified it as dearomatized Pd(II) bromide complex **7** with Pd–Br and Pd–P bond lengths

Figure 4. Synthesis and isomerization of *t*-BuBrettPhos oxidative addition complex **6**.Figure 5. X-ray structure of **7** and relevant bond lengths (thermal ellipsoid plot at 50% probability; hydrogen atoms are omitted).

of 2.511 and 2.298 Å, respectively (Figure 5).¹⁰ In **7**, the Pd atom is σ -bound to C2 and has an additional interaction with C3, analogous to the one-carbon Pd–arene interaction seen in **4** and previously observed.¹¹ Despite its twisted, dearomatized structure, **7** is air-stable and thermally robust. Dissolving pure crystalline **7** in CD₂Cl₂ re-established a nearly 6:1 mixture of **7**:**6**; remarkably, these compounds appear to be in equilibrium. Although the origin of the difference in reactivity between **4** and **6** is not yet known,¹² we have observed that complexes based on electron-deficient aryl groups show far less propensity to rearrange than those bearing electron-rich arenes. For example, after 60 h in CD₂Cl₂, 3·Pd(Ar)Br (Ar = 4-cyanophenyl) shows no detectable rearrangement, and the corresponding complex with **2** shows only ~10% isomerization.

Treating **7** with DBU (1.2 equiv) and 4-*n*BuPhBr (3 equiv) in THF led to the clean formation of a new bright yellow compound (³¹P NMR: δ 71 ppm) that was identified as the oxidative addition complex **8** by X-ray diffraction analysis (Figure 6). Importantly, this demonstrates that if complexes similar to **7** are formed in cross-coupling reactions using **2**, there exists a pathway by which they can return to a LPd(0) state if base is present. In contrast to **6**, **8** could be heated to 100 °C without any detectable decomposition or rearrangement as judged by ³¹P NMR.

With the reactivity of complexes of **2** and **3** brought to light, we began to probe their relevance to the catalytic fluorination reac-

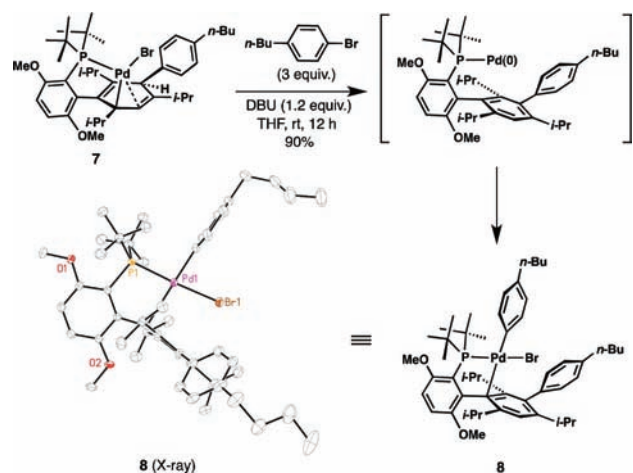


Figure 6. Rearomatization of **7** with concurrent oxidative addition (thermal ellipsoid plot at 50% probability; hydrogen atoms are omitted).

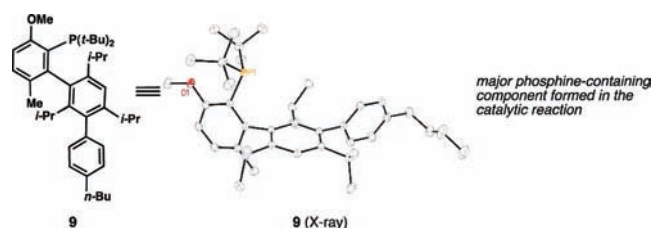


Figure 7. Arylated RockPhos ligand **9** isolated from the catalytic fluorination reaction.

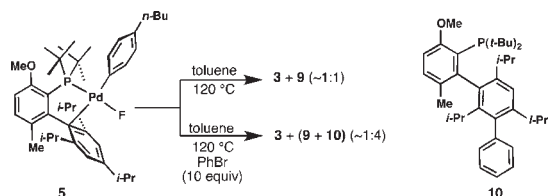
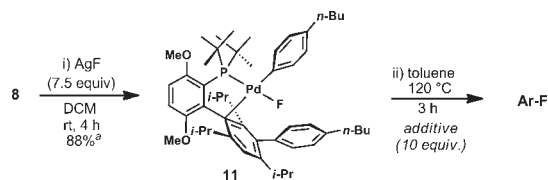


Figure 8. Fate of the ligand during experiments that failed to give products of C–F reductive elimination.

tion. Performing a C–F bond-forming reaction (utilizing **3** as ligand and 4-*n*BuPhOTf as the substrate) and re-isolating the phosphine present at the end of the reaction gave arylated phosphine **9**, whose structure and connectivity were confirmed by X-ray analysis (Figure 7).^{13,14} The very similar chemical shifts (³¹P NMR) of **9** relative to **3** had allowed it to previously evade our detection.¹⁵ We then compared the performance of **9** relative to **3** as supporting ligand. Using isolated ligand **9** in place of **3** led to an improvement in yield of 13% in the fluorination of 4-*n*BuPhOTf (73% vs 60%). No further arylation of **9** was detected as judged by ³¹P NMR of the crude reaction mixture.¹⁶ Thus the yield increase observed is likely due to factors beyond just the inability of **9** to undergo arylation.

To date, the kinetic profile of every fluorination reaction we have studied shows a substantial initial mass loss of ArOTf without the formation of an equivalent amount of ArF. During this stage, ArCl (chloride from the [(cinnamyl)PdCl]₂ precursor) and ArOAr are the only other products formed detectable by GC-MS analysis. After this induction period, zeroth-order overall decay of the remaining ArOTf is observed. Using ligand **9**, the

Table 2. Synthesis and Reactivity of LPd(Ar)F Complex **11**^{a-d}



Entry	Additive (10 equiv)	Ar-F Products (%) ^b
1	none	F- <i>n</i> -Bu (15%) ^c
2		F- <i>n</i> -Bu (40%) F- <i>n</i> -Bu (6%)
3		F- <i>n</i> -Bu (75%) F- <i>n</i> -Bu (~3%)
4	<i>n</i> -Bu- <i>n</i> -Bu-OTf	F- <i>n</i> -Bu (32%) ^d F- <i>n</i> -Bu (20%) ^d
5	<i>n</i> -Bu- <i>n</i> -Bu-Br	F- <i>n</i> -Bu (24%) F- <i>n</i> -Bu (3%)
6		F- <i>n</i> -Bu (30%) F- <i>n</i> -Bu (18%) MeO- <i>n</i> -Bu (7%)

^a Isolated yields are given. ^b Yields based on **11** and determined by ¹⁹F NMR. ^c Yield in cyclohexane = 20%. ^d Yield in cyclohexane = 40%, selectivity = 2:1.

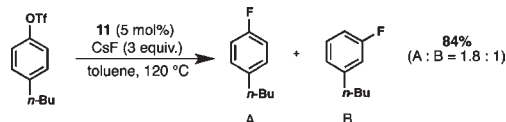


Figure 9. Catalytic competence of **11**.

initial mass loss of aryl triflate is less, and the zeroth-order decay begins rapidly compared to when **3** is employed (see SI).

Upon re-examination of the studies on stoichiometric reductive elimination of C–F bonds (Table 1), we observed that substantial quantities of ligand **9** were present in the crude reaction mixtures (Figure 8). For example, at the end of the reaction shown in entry 1, there was a ~1:1 mixture of **3** and **9** (³¹P NMR). When excess aryl bromide was included in the reaction mixture (entry 3), **3** had been mostly consumed, and two new, virtually identical ligands were detected by ³¹P NMR—**9** and, presumably, **10**.¹⁷ Although we were unable to directly observe a rearranged Pd(II) fluoride analogous to **7**, it is now clear that formal net loss of HF had taken place (vide supra).

The arylated LPd(Ar)F complex **11** could be readily prepared from **8** and its reactivity compared to **5** (Table 2). Upon heating **11** in toluene or cyclohexane, 4-*n*BuPhF was formed in yields of 15 and 20%, respectively. Heating **11** in the presence of excess PhBr produced primarily PhF (40%, entry 2). Similarly, in the presence of 1-naphthyltriflate, 1-fluoronaphthalene was formed in 75% yield (entry 3). The precise mechanism leading to formal aryl exchange is currently under investigation. Perhaps most relevant to the catalytic reaction was the fate of **11** when heated in the presence 4-*n*BuPhOTf (entry 4). A 1.6:1 mixture of 4-*n*BuPhF and 3-*n*BuPhF was produced in 52% combined yield—nearly the

same ratio of products seen in catalytic reactions employing **2**. This demonstrates that the formation of regioisomeric aryl fluorides in the catalytic reaction does not require the presence of highly basic CsF nor any other additional fluoride source.¹⁸ Notably, when this stoichiometric reaction was conducted in cyclohexane, a slightly improved ratio (2:1) of 4-*n*BuPhF to 3-*n*BuPhF was observed. This is similar to improvements in selectivity in the catalytic reaction we have seen when utilizing cyclohexane in lieu of toluene.⁶ If 4-*n*BuPhBr was used as the additive during thermolysis (entry 5), very little regioisomer was formed. Finally, inclusion of 4-MeO-PhOTf led to a 1.7:1 mixture of 4-*n*BuPhF and 3-*n*BuPhF along with small amounts of 3-MeOPhF (7%); interestingly, no 4-MeOPhF could be detected (entry 6). **11** was found to be catalytically competent in the fluorination of 4-*n*-BuPhOTf with the highest yield we have seen to date for this substrate (Figure 9).

It has not escaped our attention that the ability of ligands **2** and **3** to undergo arylation may play a role in their success (or failure) in other previously reported transformations.^{8,19} The findings reported herein also imply that there is a slightly different catalyst for each substrate and that processes using **3** and especially **2** may be more complicated than previously assumed.

In conclusion, we have shown that a 3·Pd(Ar)F complex does not undergo C–F reductive elimination when the arene is electron-rich. The observed facile and reversible rearrangement of oxidative addition complex **6** led us to discover the in situ formation of terarylphosphine ligands in the fluorination reaction when starting with **2** or **3**.²⁰ Addition of a third aryl ring to the phosphine ligand confers marked stability to the Pd complexes subsequently formed—this may be required for C–F bond formation to occur. Although we believe these results are interesting and informative, they do not directly relate to the mechanism of formation of different regioisomers in the catalytic C–F bond-forming process. This is a topic of ongoing investigations in our laboratory.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

S Supporting Information. Procedural, spectral, and X-ray crystallographic (CIF) data. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

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(12) After 2 h at room temperature, a CD₂Cl₂ solution of RockPhos complex **4** showed only ~5% of a rearranged compound.

(13) *t*-BuBrettPhos (**2**) is quantitatively arylated in the catalytic fluorination reaction; however, we have been unable to isolate arylated **2** in pure form from the crude mixture to resubject it to a catalytic reaction.

(14) Since chloride is also present in the catalytic reaction, we cannot rule out that the arylated ligand is formed via rearrangement of an initially formed LPd(Ar)Cl complex as opposed to a LPd(Ar)F complex.

(15) ³¹P NMR shifts of arylated ligands based on **2** or **3** have characteristic downfield shifts of ~1.2 ppm relative to the parent ligand.

(16) Spiking the crude reaction mixture with an authentic sample of **9** showed the presence of only **9** by ³¹P NMR. We assume a doubly arylated ligand would possess a slightly different ³¹P chemical shift.

(17) The ³¹P NMR shifts of **9** and what we presume to be **10** differ by only 0.04 ppm. LC-MS analysis of the crude mixture indicates the presence of a compound with the mass of **10** (MW = 545).

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