

Activation-Enabled Syntheses of Functionalized Pillar[5]arene Derivatives

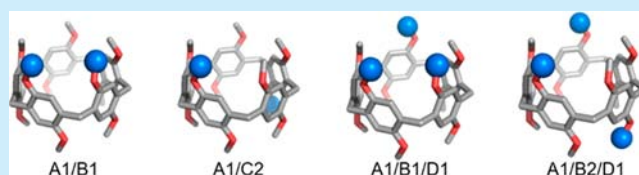
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S Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: A series of regioselective di- and trifunctionalized pillar[5]arene derivatives have been synthesized by a deprotection-followed-by-activation strategy, and their constitutions have been established as a result of having access to their solid-state structures. De-*O*-methylation occurs in a stepwise manner at lower temperatures under kinetic control, affording the desired oligo-substituted pillar[5]arene derivatives. In addition, the regioisomers of these derivatives can be



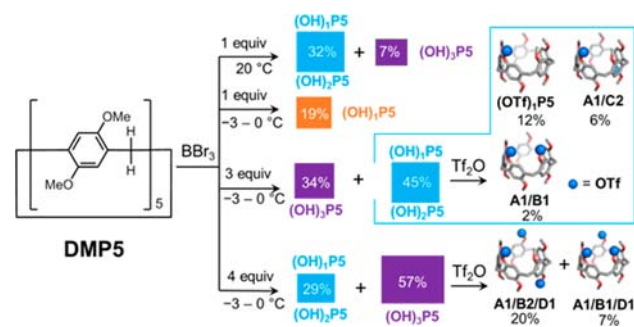
isolated by installing triflate groups on the free hydroxyl groups.

Macrocyclic compounds, such as cyclodextrins,¹ crown ethers,² cucurbiturils,³ calixarenes,⁴ and pillar[*n*]arenes,⁵ have been developed as host molecules to bind selectively a variety of guests, based on noncovalent bonding interactions, e.g., hydrophobic bonding, donor–acceptor interactions, hydrogen bonding, electrostatic interactions, halogen bonding, and van der Waals interactions. Chemical modification of these macrocyclic compounds enables the installation of functional groups which enhance their ability to express molecular recognition and promote their uses in areas as diverse as molecular sensing,⁶ molecular electronics,⁷ and drug delivery.⁸ Despite success^{5b,9} in synthesizing mono- and per-substituted macrocycles, the development of approaches to the regioselective oligo-substitution of macrocycles remains a considerable challenge.

Among these macrocycles, pillar[5]arene (P5)—which is composed of five hydroquinone units bridged by methylene groups at their *para* positions—has attracted considerable attention since its introduction by Ogoshi et al.^{5a} in 2008, on account of its facile synthesis¹⁰ and its ability to bind cationic¹¹ and neutral molecules,¹² in addition to its applications in the production of supramolecular assemblies and hybrid materials.¹³ A number of synthetic strategies have been developed that make it possible to obtain regioselectively mono-, di-, and tetrafunctionalized P5 derivatives. These strategies include (i) direct deprotection,^{9b,14} (ii) cocyclization,^{10a,b,13c} (iii) oxidation-followed-by-reduction,¹⁵ and (iv) *in situ* cyclization-followed-by-deprotection¹⁶ protocols. Among these protocols, the direct deprotection of the alkoxy groups on P5 can, in principle, provide all of the possible regioisomers. In practice, however, this strategy was accompanied by challenges, when it came to separations and purifications, for the simple reason that these regioisomers exhibit almost identical properties during column chromatography. Up until now, chromatographic separation has been employed mainly in the preparation of

monofunctionalized P5. Herein, we report the syntheses (Scheme 1) and solid-state structures of a series of di- and

Scheme 1. Synthesis of Mono-, Di-, and Trifunctionalized Pillar[5]arenes



triflated P5 regioisomers by means of a deprotection-followed-by-activation strategy. Thus, de-*O*-methylation, in tandem with triflation of the 1,4-dimethoxypillar[5]arene (DMP5), has led to the separation and isolation of four regioisomers in reasonable amounts, i.e., percentage yields in the range of 2–20%.

De-*O*-methylation of DMP5 yields consecutively the monohydroxylated pillar[5]arene (OH)₁P5, the dihydroxylated pillar[5]arene (OH)₂P5, the trihydroxylated pillar[5]arene (OH)₃P5, and all the way up to the perhydroxylated pillar[5]arene (OH)₁₀P5. In the ideal situation, where de-*O*-methylation occurs in a stepwise manner, varying the stoichiometry of the deprotecting reagent can, in principle, enrich selectively the desired oligo-substituted P5 derivatives.

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Table 1. Summary of Reaction Conditions and Isolated Yields of Di- and Trifunctionalized Pillar[5]arenes Obtained by a Deprotection-Followed-by-Activation Strategy

entry	[DMP5]: [BBr ₃]	temperature (°C)	time (h)	yield (%) ^a			DMP5 recycled (%)
				(OTf) ₁ P5	(OTf) ₂ P5	(OTf) ₃ P5	
1	1:1	20	1	18	11 ^c	6 ^e	50
2	1:1	-3-0	1	8 ^b	trace	trace	83
3	1:1	-20	1	1 ^b	trace	trace	90
4	1:1	-3-0	2	18 ^b	trace	trace	67
5	1:2	-3-0	2	38	26 ^c A1/C2 (5) ^d A1/B1 (3) ^d	5 ^f	15
6	1:3	-3-0	2	12	42 ^c A1/C2 (6) ^d A1/B1 (2) ^d	21 ^e A1/B2/D1 (9) ^d A1/B1/D1 (4) ^d	0
7	1:4	-3-0	2	2	26 ^c A1/C2 (4) ^d A1/B1 trace	46 ^e A1/B2/D1 (20) ^d A1/B1/D1 (7) ^d	0

^aOverall yield of the two-step reaction. The isolated percentage yields of the regioisomers are shown in parentheses. ^bYield of (OH)₁P5. ^cYield of all isomers of (OTf)₂P5. ^dYield of single regioisomer. ^eYield of the all isomers of (OTf)₃P5. ^fYield of (OH)₃P5.

In practice, de-*O*-methylation of DMP5 with 1 equiv of BBr₃ in CHCl₃ at 20 °C afforded (Figure S3) a mixture of (OH)₁P5, (OH)₂P5, and (OH)₃P5. Although (OH)₃P5 could be isolated by silica gel chromatography, the separation of (OH)₂P5 from (OH)₁P5 is not as easy to achieve since both species possess nearly identical polarities and solubilities. In order to have a good understanding of the proportions of (OH)₁P5, (OH)₂P5, and (OH)₃P5, we attempted to separate each regioisomeric mixture by means of appending bulky substituents onto the hydroxyl groups. Since the versatility of organotriflate reagents has been demonstrated previously in nucleophilic substitutions¹⁷ and various coupling reactions,¹⁸ we sought to transform the mixture of (OH)₁P5 and (OH)₂P5 to the mono- and ditriflate derivatives of P5, namely, (OTf)₁P5 and (OTf)₂P5, by reacting the hydroxylated compounds with trifluoromethanesulfonic anhydride. The larger difference in *R_f* values between (OTf)₁P5 and (OTf)₂P5, as compared with the corresponding hydroxylated pillararenes, permitted their isolation by silica gel column chromatography. Since the triflation takes place efficiently in ~85% yield, the isolated yields of the triflated products should closely reflect those of the corresponding (OH)₁P5, (OH)₂P5, and (OH)₃P5.

De-*O*-methylation of DMP5 with 1 equiv of BBr₃ at 20 °C, followed by triflation (Table 1, entry 1), afforded (OTf)₁P5, (OTf)₂P5, and (OTf)₃P5 in 18%, 11%, and 6% yields, respectively. When de-*O*-methylation was carried out just below 0 °C (Table 1, entry 2), (OH)₁P5 (8% yield) was the major product, while only trace amounts of (OH)₂P5 and none of the (OH)₃P5 were detected by thin layer chromatography. On lowering the reaction temperature to -20 °C, the deprotection was slowed down considerably (Table 1, entry 3). These results confirm that de-*O*-methylation occurs under kinetic control. Decreasing the reaction temperature reduces the propensity for unwanted side reactions and enables the deprotection to take place in a stepwise manner. Increasing the reaction time to 2 h led (Table 1, entry 4) to the efficient production of (OH)₁P5. By comparing the results in entries 1–4 in Table 1, it is found that the reaction conditions in entry 4 are the best to control the yield and regioselectivity. The effect

of the stoichiometry of the deprotecting reagent (BBr₃) on the results was investigated under the same reaction conditions. As expected, increasing the amount of BBr₃ could enhance the formation of both (OTf)₂P5 and (OTf)₃P5. For example, adding 2 equiv of BBr₃ to the reaction mixture (Table 1, entry 5) increases the production of (OTf)₂P5, affording a 26% yield, while increasing the amount of BBr₃ to 3 equiv (Table 1, entry 6) raises the yield¹⁹ of (OTf)₂P5 to 42%. When the amount of BBr₃ is increased yet further to 4 equiv (Table 1, entry 7), the yield of (OTf)₃P5 rises to 46%, and the yields of (OTf)₁P5 and (OTf)₂P5 decrease significantly. It is noteworthy that, upon addition of 3 or 4 equiv of BBr₃, all the DMP5 is consumed within 2 h and a small fraction of methylated P5 derivatives is observed.

The introduction of OTf groups results in separation of not only (OTf)₁P5 and (OTf)₂P5 but also two different regioisomers of (OTf)₂P5. In principle, (OTf)₂P5 can exist (Figure S1) as five possible regioisomers,¹⁶ namely, A1/A2, A1/B2, A1/B1, A1/C2, and A1/C1. In the mixture of (OTf)₂P5, one regioisomer with an *R_f* value of 0.70 on thin layer chromatography (SiO₂:CH₂Cl₂/hexanes = 1/1) can be isolated in 2% yield by column chromatography on silica gel and further recrystallization from CH₂Cl₂/hexanes (Table 1, entry 6). The ¹H NMR spectrum (Figure 1a) of this isomer shows ten aromatic, five methylene,²⁰ and eight methoxyl protons resonances, indicating a lack of symmetry in the molecule, pointing to either A1/B1 or A1/C1 as the two possible regioisomers. Since it was far from straightforward to assign the constitution to this regioisomer by either 1D or 2D NMR spectroscopy, crystals of it, suitable for single X-ray diffraction, were obtained by slow vapor diffusion of hexanes into a CH₂Cl₂ solution at room temperature. The solid-state structure (Figure S27) reveals that the constitution of this regioisomer is A1/B1. The cavity size of A1/B1 is very similar to that^{5a} of DMP5, rendering A1/B1 a potential host molecule. One *n*-hexane molecule is included inside the cavity of the P5 core and stabilized by C–H···π interactions with distances of 2.76–2.91 Å between the hydrogens of the *n*-hexane and the aromatic planes of the P5 core, thus forming a [2]-

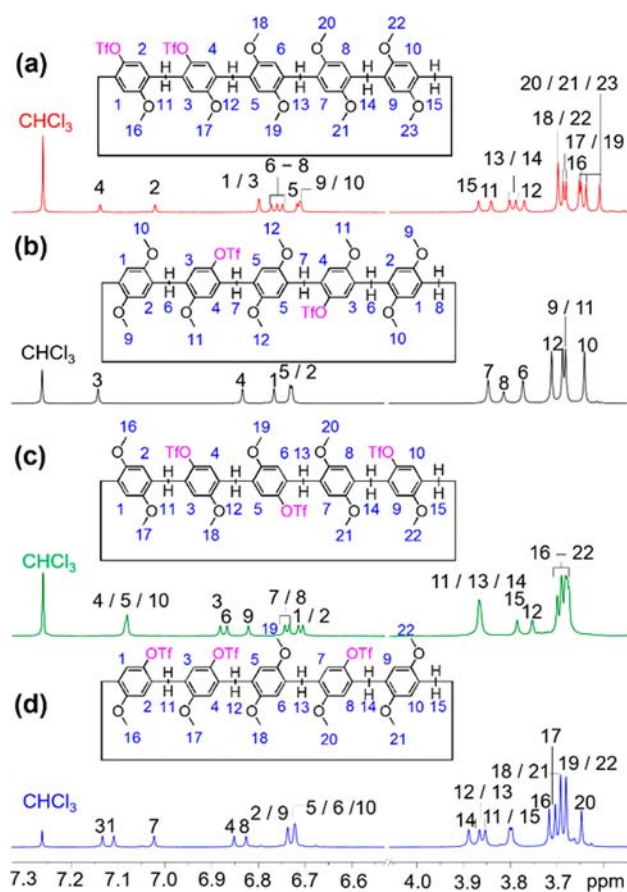


Figure 1. ^1H NMR spectra (500 MHz) of (a) A1/B1, (b) A1/C2, (c) A1/B2/D1, and (d) A1/B1/D1 in CDCl_3 at 298 K.

pseudorotaxane in the solid state while suggesting that A1/B1 may potentially serve as a host for long-chain hydrocarbons.

Fractional crystallization of the mixture of other isomers ($R_f = 0.78$) of $(\text{OTf})_2\text{P5}$ in $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2/\text{hexanes}$ affords yet another regioisomer in 6% yield (Table 1, entry 6) with the A1/C2 constitution, as revealed by its solid-state structure (Figure 2a–b). On account of the C_2 symmetry of A1/C2, there are five sets of aromatic protons (H1–H5, δ 7.12–6.70 in Figure 1b), three sets of methylene protons (H6–H8, δ 3.83–3.75 in

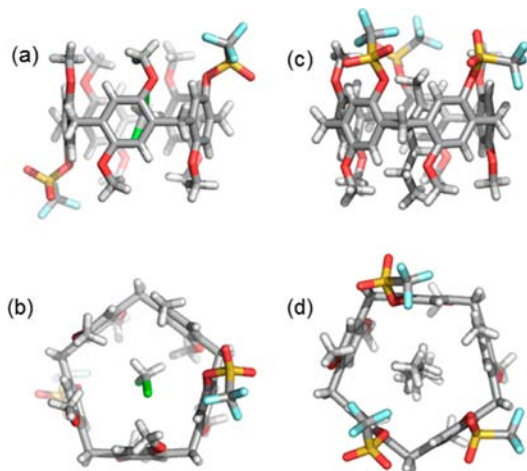


Figure 2. Side-on and plan views of the X-ray crystal superstructures of A1/C2 \supset CH_2Cl_2 (a,b) and A1/B1/D1 \supset n -hexane (c,d).

Figure 1b), and four sets of methoxyl protons (H9–H12, δ 3.69–3.62 in Figure 1b) observed in the ^1H NMR spectrum. It is noteworthy that A1/C2 is the major regioisomer of the disubstituted $(\text{OTf})_2\text{P5}$ after de-*O*-methylation and triflation, indicating the possible existence of a steric effect during the second de-*O*-methylation step. BBr_3 first forms a B–O bond on one aromatic unit of DMP5, while the second de-*O*-methylation prefers to take place at the nonadjacent aromatic ring.

A third regioisomer was also obtained from fractional crystallization of the mixture ($R_f = 0.78$) of $(\text{OTf})_2\text{P5}$. Its constitution is revealed (Figure S26) to be A1/B2 from its solid-state structure. The ^1H NMR spectrum of this fraction indicates a mixture of A1/B2 and a small amount of other unidentified isomers.

Following a similar strategy, two triflated $(\text{OTf})_3\text{P5}$ regioisomers (Table 1, entry 7) were also isolated by silica gel column chromatography. $(\text{OTf})_3\text{P5}$ can exist (Figure S2) as 10 regioisomers,^{15b} namely A1/B1/C1, A1/B1/D1, A1/B1/C2, A1/B1/D2, A1/A2/B1, A1/A2/B2, A1/A2/C1, A1/A2/C2, A1/B2/C1, and A1/B2/D1. Since all of these regioisomers lack symmetry, their protons should give rise to ten aromatic, five methylene, and seven methoxyl resonances in the ^1H NMR spectra (Figure 1c and 1d); however, these resonances are far from easy to assign.

The constitutions of the two isolated regioisomers of $(\text{OTf})_3\text{P5}$ are revealed by their solid-state structures. Slow vapor diffusion of hexanes into CH_2Cl_2 solutions of the isolated isomers at room temperature afforded single crystals of both regioisomers, which are identified as the A1/B1/D1 and A1/B2/D1 isomers. In the solid state, A1/B1/D1 (Figure 2c–d) and A1/B2/D1 (Figure S27c–d) have similar cavity sizes that are comparable with the disubstituted derivatives A1/B1 and A1/B2, with one *n*-hexane molecule included in their cavities in each case. The host–guest complexes are stabilized by C–H $\cdots\pi$ interactions with distances of 2.48–2.83 Å between the hydrogens of the *n*-hexane and the aromatic planes of the pillar[5]arene core. The fact that A1/B2/D1 populate up to 43% of all $(\text{OTf})_3\text{P5}$ isomers (Table 1, entry 7) lends further support to the hypothesis that the stepwise de-*O*-methylation occurs under steric control, as this isomer has the least steric strain among the 10 possible isomers.

Although we have isolated several regioisomers in the case of the di- and trifunctionalized P5 derivatives, the full chromatographic resolution of di-, tri-, and even higher-order functionalized regioisomers of P5 remains elusive. When it comes to characterizing the multifunctionalized P5 isomers, however, the corresponding ^1H NMR spectra quickly become complicated to the extent that, with limited information, assigning constitutions becomes challenging. Assignment of the proton resonances (Figure 1) of the four isolated regioisomers is aided by observation of their solid-state structures. Nonetheless, this deprotection-followed-by-activation strategy could still provide a large variety of oligo-substituted regioisomers of pillar[*n*]arenes in reasonable yields.

In summary, a series of regioselective di- and trifunctionalized pillar[5]arene derivatives have been synthesized by a deprotection-followed-by-activation strategy and their constitutions have been established as a result of having access to their solid-state structures. It has been discovered that de-*O*-methylation occurs in a stepwise manner at low reaction temperatures under kinetic control, affording the desired oligo-substituted P5 derivatives. Furthermore, the regioisomers of the

oligo-functionalized **P5** derivatives can be isolated by installing triflate groups on the free hydroxyl groups. The deprotection-followed-by-activation strategy opens up a new avenue toward the separation and isolation of different regioisomers of higher-order functionalized pillararenes. The triflate groups on the **P5** derivatives could be used as active intermediates in the synthesis of **P5**-based functional compounds.

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

■ Supporting Information

Experimental procedures, ^1H , ^{13}C , and $^1\text{H} - ^1\text{H}$ NOESY NMR spectra, high resolution mass spectra, and crystallographic information (CIF) for all new compounds. The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website at DOI: 10.1021/acs.orglett.5b01418.

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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- (19) In principle, increasing the reaction time should increase the production of deprotected derivatives of **P5**. In our experiments, we noticed that increasing the amount of deprotecting agent can also lead to an increase in the yields of products in shorter reaction times.
- (20) The methylene protons in the labeled structures for the NMR spectra in Figure 1 are diastereotopic, but they are grouped together with one label. They are most likely exchanging rapidly on the NMR time scale; however, they are not equivalent as suggested by the label.