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Development of effective Lewis acids for the catalytic Diels–Alder reaction of α,β-unsaturated lactones with cyclopentadiene

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Abstract—We found that 'Tf₂CH₂ + Me₃Al' systems are effective catalytic systems for the DA reaction of less reactive α , β -unsaturated lactone derivatives, compared to α , β -unsaturated ester derivatives, with cyclopentadiene. Mononuclear aluminum methide complex, Tf₂CHAlMe₂, as an active species is formed in these catalytic systems. Effects of lactone ring-size on the reactivity and stereoselectivity were also examined. By expanding ring-size, reactivity of α , β -unsaturated lactones reduced but *endo*-selectivity notably increased.

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Lactone derivatives are one of the most popular compounds in nature and their clinically interesting bioactivities such as antibacterial,¹ cytotoxic² and immunosuppressive activities³ have been reported. From a viewpoint of organic synthesis, lactone derivatives have also been used as useful building blocks toward efficient preparations of hydroxylated carbonyl compounds,⁴ more complex polycyclic lactone derivatives,⁵ or other type of compounds,⁶ because a variety of lactones is readily available either by simple procedures or by commercial route. Although Diels-Alder (DA) reactions of α , β -unsaturated lactones with 1,3dienes have many advantages for the construction of polycyclic lactone frameworks,^{7,8} it is known that the reactivity of α , β -unsaturated lactones as dienophiles is lower than that of the corresponding acyclic α , β -unsaturated esters.⁹ Thus, drastic reaction conditions, such as high reaction temperature and/or high pressure, are required for smooth reaction.¹⁰

To solve such a low reactivity of α , β -unsaturated lactones as dienophiles, we have reported that bis-aluminated triffic amides [TfN(AlR¹R²)₂, Tf = CF₃SO₂], as bidentate Lewis acids, highly activate α , β -unsaturated

lactones to efficiently promote the DA reactions under mild conditions.^{11,12} Generally, Lewis basicity of a lactone conformationally locked in cisoid form is stronger than that of the corresponding acyclic ester. This enhanced basicity of lactones often causes high catalyst loading (generally, more than a stoichiometric amount) in the Lewis acid-mediated reactions.¹³ Similar tendency was also observed in our previous work. Thus, the intermolecular DA reaction of γ -crotonolactone 1a with isoprene in the presence of sub-stoichiometric amount (50 mol %) of TfN[Al(Me)Cl]₂ gave DA product 2 in poor yield, although catalytic amount (30 mol %) of TfN[Al(Me)Cl]₂ could efficiently promote the intramolecular DA reaction of ester-tethered 1,7,9-triene 3 to give cyclized product 4 in good yield under mild conditions (Scheme 1).^{14,15}

To develop a sterically bulky and strong Lewis acid effective for both high activation of α , β -unsaturated lactones and low catalyst loading, we planned to use bis(trifluoromethanesulfonyl)methane (Tf₂CH₂, pK_a = -1) as a Lewis acid ligand.¹⁶ It was reported that compared to Me₃SiOTf, trimethylsilylated analogues of Tf₂NH and Tf₂CHC₆F₅ activate α , β -unsaturated aldehydes more strongly due to the steric bulk of these ligands.¹⁷ However, to the best of our knowledge, the reaction of Tf₂CH₂ with alkylaluminums and synthetic application of the resultant aluminum methide complexes have not been reported. Herein, we disclose that in the presence of excess of Me₃Al mononuclear

Keywords: Lewis acid; Bis(trifluoromethanesulfonyl)methane; Diels–Alder reaction; α , β -Unsaturated lactones.

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Scheme 1.

aluminum methide, Tf₂CHAlMe₂, generated by simply mixing Tf₂CH₂ and Me₃Al can efficiently catalyze the DA reaction of α , β -unsaturated lactones with cyclopentadiene (CP).

Since the formation of aluminum methide through the reaction of carbon acids with alkylaluminum reagents was not reported, we examined the reaction of Tf_2CH_2 with Me₃Al. As shown in Scheme 2, treatment of Tf₂CH₂ (1 mol) with Me₃Al (1 mol) in CH₂Cl₂ at room temperature for 30 min liberated 1 mol of methane gas. Further addition of Me₃Al (1 mol) to this reaction mixture resulted in no liberation of gas. In a separate experiment, when to a solution of 1 mol of Tf_2CH_2 in CH₂Cl₂, 2 moles of Me₃Al were added in one-portion at room temperature, almost the same result, namely, only 1 mol of methane liberation, was obtained.¹⁸ ¹³C NMR spectrum (100 MHz) of a 1:1.1 mixture of Tf₂CH₂ and Me₃Al in CDCl₃ at room temperature showed clean formation of the single complex (-10.9 ppm, 47.9 ppm)and 119.6 ppm) with complete consumption of Tf_2CH_2 .¹⁹ On the other hand, ¹³C NMR spectrum of a 1:2 mixture of Tf₂CH₂ and Me₃Al showed two kinds of the complexes, that is, major one is the same as above and the other newly formed complex has the signal of CF₃ moiety at 119.8 ppm. In ¹H NMR spectrum, a 1:1.1 mixture of Tf₂CH₂ and Me₃Al showed two sharp peaks at 4.42 ppm (Tf₂CH) and -0.53 ppm (AlCH₃).

Up-field shifts of Tf_2C carbon by 16.3 ppm and Tf_2CH proton by 0.54 ppm possibly indicate the formation of Tf₂CHAlMe₂ A having a carbon–aluminum bond.²⁰ NMR study of the complex derived from the present aluminum methide A and γ -crotonolactone 1a would provide further information of the structure of the complex and Lewis acidity of A. Thus, a mixture of 1a and aluminum methide \mathbf{A} (1.0 equiv) in CDCl₃ brought about new signals presumably due to the formation of a complex such as **D** (simple Lewis acid coordination model) or \mathbf{D}' (a bidentate model for Lewis acid coordination with hydrogen bonding), although the exact structure was not clear at this moment.²¹ Compared to crotonolactone 1a, complex D (or D') showed downfield shifts of carbonyl, β - and γ -carbons by 9.6, 11.3, and 7.2 ppm, respectively, and up-field shift of α -carbon by 1.4 ppm in ¹³C NMR spectrum.²² In the case of a mixture of **1a** and 'Tf₂CH₂ + 2.0Me₃Al' system, essentially the same peaks were observed in ¹³C NMR spectrum. These data may indicate the dissociation of Me₃Al from the complex possibly such as **B** or **C** by Lewis basic γ -crotonolactone **1a**. Since the chemical shift difference between C β and C α reflects the reactivity as a dienophile, the observed $\Delta C\beta$ -C α value (43.9 ppm) in Tf₂CHAlMe₂-1a complex also means significantly high activation of 1a by Tf₂CHAlMe₂, compared to the use of 1.1 equiv of Me₃Al ($\Delta C\beta$ -C α = 38.0 ppm).

To find out the efficiency of Tf₂CHAlMe₂, reaction of γ -crotonolactone **1a** with CP was conducted in the presence of a mixture of Tf₂CH₂ and Me₃Al in a various ratio. These results are summarized in Table 1. As shown in entry 1, catalytic amount of Tf₂CHAlMe₂ (20 mol %), which was generated from a 1:1 mixture of Tf₂CH₂ and Me₃Al, catalyzed the reaction to give cycloadduct **5a** in 52% yield after 8 h. A 1:1 mixture of Tf₂CH₂ and *i*-Bu₂AlH instead of Me₃Al did not promote the DA reaction (entry 2). The use of a 1:2 mixture of Tf₂CH₂ and S9% only after 4 h (entry 3). Catalyst loading of 'Tf₂CH₂ + 2.0Me₃Al' system could be reduced to 10 mol % without significant decrease in the yield of **5a** (entries 6, 7).



Scheme 2.

Table 1. Effects of Lewis acids on DA reaction of γ -crotonolactone 1a with CP



Entry	Lewis acid (mol %)	Solvent	Time (h)	Yield ^a (%)	Ratio ^b (endo/exo)
1	$Tf_2CH_2 + 1.0Me_3Al$ (20)	CH_2Cl_2	8	52	6.8:1
2	$Tf_2CH_2 + 1.0DIBAL-H$ (20)	CH_2Cl_2	12	Trace	Nd ^c
3	$Tf_2CH_2 + 2.0Me_3Al(20)$	CH_2Cl_2	4	89	6.8:1
4	$Tf_2CH_2 + 2.0Me_3Al(20)$	Toluene	5	85	6.3:1
5	$Tf_2CH_2 + 3.0Me_3Al$ (20)	CH_2Cl_2	4	77	7.1:1
6	$Tf_2CH_2 + 2.0Me_3Al(10)$	CH_2Cl_2	5	83	7.8:1
7	$Tf_2CH_2 + 2.0Me_3Al(5)$	CH_2Cl_2	5	33	7.9:1
8	None	Toluene	14	0	
9^{d}	TfN(Ali-Bu ₂) ₂ (110)	Toluene	13	97	5.5:1
10	$Me_{3}Al$ (40)	CH_2Cl_2	8	21	9.7:1

^a Isolated yield.

^b Determined by ¹H NMR.

^cNot determined.

^d Ref. 12.

To check the effects of an excess amount of Me₃Al over Tf₂CH₂, the DA reaction of **1a** was conducted in the presence of only Me₃Al (40 mol %) for 8 h, but the yield of **5a** was only 21% (entry 10, *endo/exo* = 9.7:1). This result indicated that catalytic amount of Me₃Al does not effectively catalyze the DA reaction of **1a**. Without an addition of Lewis acid DA product **5a** was not obtained after stirring for 14 h (entry 8). While we have reported that bidentate Lewis acid, TfN(Al*i*-Bu₂)₂, promoted the DA reaction of **1a** with CP, the use of stoichiometric amount of this sulfonamide-based Lewis acid (110 mol %) and longer reaction time (13 h) were needed for the smooth reaction (entry 9).¹²

Further study was made to examine the effect of a ratio of Tf₂CH₂ (20 mol %) and Me₃Al on the yield of **5a**. Results are shown in Figure 1 by plotting the yield of **5a** on y axis and the molar ratio of Tf₂CH₂ and Me₃Al on the x axis. Interestingly, when the ratio of Tf₂CH₂ and Me₃Al was between 1.3 and 2.0, very little difference in the product yield was observed keeping in a range of 83–89% yield. As a ratio of Tf₂CH₂ and Me₃Al decreased to 1.2 and 1.0, the yield of **5a** was gradually lowered to 73% and 52%, respectively.

As shown above, in the presence of 20 mol% of ${}^{\circ}Tf_2CH_2 + 1.3Me_3Al'$ system, γ -crotonolactone **1a** smoothly reacted with CP to give cycloadduct **5a** in 88% yield with high *endo* selectivity (*endo/exo* = 8.3:1, see also Table 2, entry 1). Under the similar conditions, the use of Tf_2CHMe instead of Tf_2CH_2 reduced the yield of **5a** to 76% (*endo/exo* = 8.1:1, entry 2).²¹

Next, to see the scope of the present Lewis acid systems for the catalytic DA reaction of α , β -unsaturated lactones, we examined the reaction of various lactone substrates. Reactivity and *endo/exo* selectivity were found to depend on the ring size of the lactone used (Table 2). Compared to γ -butenolide **1a**, the reactivity of δ -



Figure 1. The plots of the yield and the composition of Lewis acid (molar ratio of Me₃Al and Tf₂CH₂) in the DA reaction of **1a** with CP. In the presence of 20 mol % Lewis acid generated by mixing Tf₂CH₂ and Me₃Al, γ -crotonolactone **1a** (0.5 mmol scale) was treated with CP (10 equiv) at room temperature for 2–4 h.

pentenolide **1b** decreased so much that a higher reaction temperature was needed to obtain the DA adduct **5b** within a short reaction time. Thus, in the presence of 20 mol % of 'Tf₂CH₂ + 1.3Me₃Al' system, the reaction of **1b** with CP (10 eq) for 4 h at 60 °C afforded DA product **5b** in 76% yield with high *endo* selectivity (*endo*/ *exo* = 14:1, entry 3). The use of 'Tf₂CH₂ + 2.0Me₃Al' system resulted in a better yield of product **5b**, but lower *endo/exo* selectivity was observed (81% yield, *endo/ exo* = 9.4, entry 4). Furthermore, 7-membered α , β unsaturated lactone **1c** was less reactive than 6-membered lactone **1b**. Thus, the reaction of **1c** with 20 molar equivalent of CP was not fully promoted by the use of 30 mol % of 'Tf₂CH₂ + 1.3Me₃Al' system to give the desired adduct **5c** in only 56% yield, but with high *endo*

Table 2. Effects of lactone ring-size on DA reaction with cyclopentadiene

	Tf ₂ CH ₂ + Me ₃ Al ►	
(10 cm/m)		H H H
1 (10 equiv.)	endo-5	5 <i>exo</i> -5

Entry	1	Lewis acid (mol %)	Temperature (°C)	Time (h)	Solvent	5	Yield ^a (%)	ratio ^b (endo/exo)
1	1a (<i>n</i> = 1)	$Tf_2CH_2 + 1.3Me_3Al$ (20)	rt	3	CH ₂ Cl ₂	5a	88	8.3:1
2	1a (<i>n</i> = 1)	$Tf_2CHMe + 1.3Me_3Al$ (20)	rt	3	CH_2Cl_2	5a	76	8.1:1
3	1b (<i>n</i> = 2)	$Tf_2CH_2 + 1.3Me_3Al(20)$	60	4	ClCH ₂ CH ₂ Cl	5b	76	14:1
4	1b (<i>n</i> = 2)	$Tf_2CH_2 + 2.0Me_3Al(20)$	60	4	ClCH ₂ CH ₂ Cl	5b	81	9.4:1
5°	1c $(n = 3)$	$Tf_2CH_2 + 1.3Me_3Al(30)$	60	4	ClCH ₂ CH ₂ Cl	5c	56	17:1 ^d
6 ^c	1c $(n = 3)$	$Tf_2CH_2 + 2.0Me_3Al(30)$	60	4	ClCH ₂ CH ₂ Cl	5c	85	21:1 ^d

^a Isolated yield.

^b Determined by ¹H NMR.

^c 20 equiv of CP was used.

^d Determined by isolated yield.



Figure 2. Proposed catalytic cycle on the catalytic DA reaction of α , β -unsaturated lactones 1.

selectivity (*endo/exo* = 17:1, entry 5). Both chemical yield and *endo/exo* selectivity were improved under 'Tf₂CH₂ + 2.0Me₃Al' catalyzed conditions (**5c** 85% yield, *endo/exo* = 21:1, entry 6).

Regarding the effects of a ratio of Tf₂CH₂ and Me₃Al on the efficiency of the DA reaction, we propose a catalytic cycle shown in Figure 2. Since Tf₂CHAlMe₂ A readily generated by the 1:1 reaction of Tf₂CH₂ with Me₃Al would be more active than Me₃Al existing together in the reaction mixture (see Table 1, entry 10), complexation between Tf₂CHAlMe₂ A and α , β -unsaturated lactone 1 promotes the DA reaction with CP to give a DA adduct E. Since Tf₂CHAlMe₂ A has sterically bulky Tf₂CH moiety as a ligand, I-strain assisted dissociation of A from complex E proceeds to give the uncomplexed product 5 directly (path a). Alternatively, dissociation of A from complex E would be promoted by the formation of thermodynamically stable complex F through the ligand exchange reaction, in particular in the cases where 'Tf₂CH₂ + 2.0Me₃Al' rather than 'Tf₂CH₂ + 1.3Me₃Al' worked more efficiently (path b). Thus, co-existence of Me₃Al in the reaction mixture would be essential for

the efficient catalytic cycle of $Tf_2CHAlMe_2 A$ as in the cases of **1b** and **1c**.

In conclusion, we found that 'Tf₂CH₂ + Me₃Al' systems are effective catalysts for the DA reaction of less reactive α , β -unsaturated lactone derivatives with CP. Mononuclear aluminum methide complex, Tf₂CHAlMe₂, was determined as an active species in this catalytic systems by NMR study. Effects of lactone ring-size on the reactivity and stereoselectivity were also examined. Interestingly, by increasing ring-size, reactivity of α , β unsaturated lactones reduced but *endo*-selectivity was notably increased. Further study on synthetic application of these small and reactive lactone derivatives is proceeding in our laboratory.

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- 18. For Tf₂CH₂. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃, δ ppm): 4.96 (2H, s). ¹³C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl₃, δ ppm): 64.2, 118.8 (q, J = 327.8 Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (386 MHz, CDCl₃, δ ppm): -13.0 (6F, s). For Tf₂CHAlMe₂. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃, δ ppm): -0.53 (6H, s), 4.42 (1H, s). ¹³C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl₃, δ ppm): -10.9 (br), 47.9, 119.6 (q, J = 319.0 Hz).
- 19. This is a sharp contrast to $TfNH_2$, since reaction of $TfNH_2$ (1 mol) with Me₃Al (2 mol) gave $TfN(AlMe_2)_2$ with liberation of 2 moles of methane gas.
- 20. Previously, in the 1:2 reaction of TfNH₂ and Me₂AlCl in CDCl₃, we observed the formation of three kinds of complexes in ¹³C NMR study.^{14a} Jonas and co-workers also reported a rapid equilibrium of bis-silylated triflic amide between *N*,*N*-bis-silylated form and *N*,*O*-bis-silylated form. Jonas, S.; Westerhausen, M.; Simchen, G. *J. Organomet. Chem.* **1997**, *548*, 131–137.
- 21. Concerning this observed difference of these two Lewis acids derived from Tf_2CH_2 or Tf_2CHMe , although detail is not clear, we assume that acidic hydrogen of $Tf_2CHAIMe_2$ would act as a hydrogen bond donor to form complex **D**' as shown in Figure 1. In our previous works, we have proposed double coordination manner of α,β -unsaturated lactones and esters to bidentate Lewis acids, $TfN[AIR^1R^2]_2$, to explain high activation of these substrates by $TfN[AIR^1R^2]_2$.¹²
- 22. For γ-crotonolactone 1a. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃, δ ppm): 4.91 (2H, m), 6.17 (1H, dt, J = 5.8, 2.2 Hz), 7.58 (1H, dt, J = 5.8, 1.6 Hz). ¹³C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl₃, δ ppm): 72.1, 121.5, 152.7, 173.6. For Tf₂CHAlMe₂-1a complex. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃, δ ppm, rt): -0.62 (6H, s, AlCH₃), 4.09 (1H, s, Tf₂CH), 5.47 (2H, s, CγH₂), 6.52 (1H, dt, J = 5.7, 1.8 Hz, CαH), 8.26 (br d, J = 5.7 Hz, CβH). ¹³C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl₃, δ ppm, rt): -10.9, 51.3, 79.3, 120.1, 120.2 (q, J = 323.8), 164.0, 183.2.