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## Development of effective Lewis acids for the catalytic Diels–Alder reaction of  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ -unsaturated lactones with cyclopentadiene

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Abstract—We found that 'Tf<sub>2</sub>CH<sub>2</sub> + Me<sub>3</sub>Al' systems are effective catalytic systems for the DA reaction of less reactive  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ -unsaturated lactone derivatives, compared to  $\alpha$ , $\beta$ -unsaturated ester derivatives, with cyclopentadiene. Mononuclear aluminum methide complex, Tf<sub>2</sub>CHAlMe<sub>2</sub>, 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  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ -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,<sup>[1](#page-3-0)</sup> cytotoxic<sup>[2](#page-4-0)</sup> and immunosuppressive activities<sup>[3](#page-4-0)</sup> 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](#page-4-0) 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  $\alpha$ , $\beta$ -unsaturated lactones with 1,3dienes have many advantages for the construction of polycyclic lactone frameworks,<sup>[7,8](#page-4-0)</sup> it is known that the reactivity of  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ -unsaturated lactones as dienophiles is lower than that of the corresponding acyclic  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ -unsatu-rated esters.<sup>[9](#page-4-0)</sup> Thus, drastic reaction conditions, such as high reaction temperature and/or high pressure, are required for smooth reaction.[10](#page-4-0)

To solve such a low reactivity of  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ -unsaturated lactones as dienophiles, we have reported that bis-aluminated triflic amides  $[TfN(AIR^1R^2)_2, Tf = CF_3SO_2]$ , as bidentate Lewis acids, highly activate  $\alpha, \beta$ -unsaturated lactones to efficiently promote the DA reactions under mild conditions.<sup>11,12</sup> 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](#page-4-0) Similar tendency was also observed in our previous work. Thus, the *inter*molecular DA reaction of  $\gamma$ -crotonolactone 1a with isoprene in the presence of sub-stoichiometric amount (50 mol %) of TfN[Al(Me)Cl]<sub>2</sub> gave DA product 2 in poor yield, although catalytic amount (30 mol %) of  $TfN[A](Me)Cl$ <sub>2</sub> could efficiently promote the *intra*molecular DA reaction of ester-tethered 1,7,9-triene 3 to give cyclized product 4 in good yield under mild conditions ([Scheme 1](#page-1-0)).<sup>[14,15](#page-4-0)</sup>

To develop a sterically bulky and strong Lewis acid effective for both high activation of  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ -unsaturated lactones and low catalyst loading, we planned to use bis(trifluoromethanesulfonyl)methane (Tf<sub>2</sub>CH<sub>2</sub>, p $K_a =$  $-1$ ) as a Lewis acid ligand.<sup>[16](#page-4-0)</sup> It was reported that compared to Me<sub>3</sub>SiOTf, trimethylsilylated analogues of Tf<sub>2</sub>NH and Tf<sub>2</sub>CHC<sub>6</sub>F<sub>5</sub> activate  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ -unsaturated aldehydes more strongly due to the steric bulk of these ligands.[17](#page-4-0) However, to the best of our knowledge, the reaction of  $Tf_2CH_2$  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  $Me<sub>3</sub>Al$  mononuclear

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<span id="page-1-0"></span>

Scheme 1.

aluminum methide,  $Tf_2CHAlMe_2$ , generated by simply mixing  $Tf_2CH_2$  and Me<sub>3</sub>Al can efficiently catalyze the DA reaction of  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ -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 Me<sub>3</sub>Al. As shown in Scheme 2, treatment of  $Tf_2CH_2$  (1 mol) with Me<sub>3</sub>Al (1 mol) in  $CH_2Cl_2$  at room temperature for 30 min liberated 1 mol of methane gas. Further addition of  $Me<sub>3</sub>Al$  (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  $CH_2Cl_2$ , 2 moles of Me<sub>3</sub>Al were added in one-portion at room temperature, almost the same result, namely, only 1 mol of methane liberation, was obtained.<sup>[18](#page-4-0)</sup> <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectrum (100 MHz) of a 1:1.1 mixture of  $Tf_2CH_2$ and  $Me<sub>3</sub>Al$  in CDCl<sub>3</sub> at room temperature showed clean formation of the single complex  $(-10.9$  ppm, 47.9 ppm and 119.6 ppm) with complete consumption of  $Tf_2CH_2$ .<sup>[19](#page-4-0)</sup> On the other hand, <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectrum of a 1:2 mixture of  $Tf_2CH_2$  and Me<sub>3</sub>Al 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  $CF_3$  moiety at 119.8 ppm. In <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum, a 1:1.1 mixture of  $Tf_2CH_2$  and Me<sub>3</sub>Al showed two sharp peaks at 4.42 ppm (Tf<sub>2</sub>CH) and  $-0.53$  ppm (AlCH<sub>3</sub>).

Up-field shifts of Tf<sub>2</sub>C carbon by 16.3 ppm and Tf<sub>2</sub>CH proton by 0.54 ppm possibly indicate the formation of  $Tf_2CHAlMe_2$  A having a carbon–aluminum bond.<sup>[20](#page-4-0)</sup> NMR study of the complex derived from the present aluminum methide  $A$  and  $\gamma$ -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  $\vec{A}$  (1.0 equiv) in CDCl<sub>3</sub> 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.<sup>[21](#page-4-0)</sup> Compared to crotonolactone 1a, complex  $\mathbf D$  (or  $\mathbf D'$ ) showed downfield shifts of carbonyl,  $\beta$ - and  $\gamma$ -carbons by 9.6, 11.3, and 7.2 ppm, respectively, and up-field shift of  $\alpha$ -carbon by 1.4 ppm in  $^{13}$ C NMR spectrum.<sup>22</sup> In the case of a mixture of 1a and 'Tf<sub>2</sub>CH<sub>2</sub> + 2.0Me<sub>3</sub>Al' system, essentially the same peaks were observed in  ${}^{13}C$  NMR spectrum. These data may indicate the dissociation of  $Me<sub>3</sub>Al$  from the complex possibly such as **B** or **C** by Lewis basic  $\gamma$ -crotonolactone 1a. Since the chemical shift difference between  $\text{C}\beta$  and  $\text{C}\alpha$  reflects the reactivity as a dienophile, the observed  $\Delta$ C $\beta$ -C $\alpha$  value (43.9 ppm) in  $Tf_2CHAlMe_2-1a$  complex also means significantly high activation of 1a by  $Tf_2CHAlMe_2$ , compared to the use of 1.1 equiv of Me<sub>3</sub>Al ( $\Delta C\beta$ -C $\alpha$  = 38.0 ppm).

To find out the efficiency of  $Tf_2CHAlMe_2$ , reaction of  $\gamma$ -crotonolactone 1a with CP was conducted in the presence of a mixture of  $Tf_2CH_2$  and Me<sub>3</sub>Al in a various ratio. These results are summarized in [Table 1.](#page-2-0) As shown in entry 1, catalytic amount of  $Tf_2CHAlMe<sub>2</sub>$  $(20 \text{ mol } \%)$ , which was generated from a 1:1 mixture of  $Tf_2CH_2$  and Me<sub>3</sub>Al, catalyzed the reaction to give cycloadduct 5a in 52% yield after 8 h. A 1:1 mixture of  $Tf_2CH_2$  and *i*-Bu<sub>2</sub>AlH instead of Me<sub>3</sub>Al did not promote the DA reaction (entry 2). The use of a 1:2 mixture of  $Tf_2CH_2$  and Me<sub>3</sub>Al remarkably increased the yield of 5a to 89% only after 4 h (entry 3). Catalyst loading of ' $Tf_2CH_2 + 2.0Me<sub>3</sub>Al'$  system could be reduced to 10 mol % without significant decrease in the yield of 5a (entries 6, 7).



Scheme 2.

<span id="page-2-0"></span>Table 1. Effects of Lewis acids on DA reaction of  $\gamma$ -crotonolactone 1a with CP

|    |             | Lewis acid<br>CH <sub>2</sub> Cl <sub>2</sub> , rt |         |        |  |
|----|-------------|--|---------|--------|--|
| 1a | (10 equiv.) |  | endo-5a | exo-5a |  |



<sup>a</sup> Isolated yield.

<sup>b</sup> Determined by <sup>1</sup>H NMR.

<sup>c</sup> Not determined.

 $d$  Ref. [12](#page-4-0).

To check the effects of an excess amount of  $Me<sub>3</sub>Al$  over  $Tf_2CH_2$ , 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 Me<sub>3</sub>Al 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,  $TfN(Ali-Bu<sub>2</sub>)<sub>2</sub>$ , promoted the DA reaction of 1a with CP, the use of stoichiometric amount of this sulfonamide-based Lewis acid  $(110 \text{ mol } \%)$  and longer reaction time  $(13 \text{ h})$  were needed for the smooth reaction (entry  $9$ ).<sup>[12](#page-4-0)</sup>

Further study was made to examine the effect of a ratio of  $Tf_2CH_2$  (20 mol %) and Me<sub>3</sub>Al 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  $Tf_2CH_2$  and Me<sub>3</sub>Al on the x axis. Interestingly, when the ratio of  $Tf_2CH_2$ 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  $Tf_2CH_2$  and Me<sub>3</sub>Al 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 'Tf<sub>2</sub>CH<sub>2</sub> + 1.3Me<sub>3</sub>Al' system,  $\gamma$ -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,](#page-3-0) 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).<sup>[21](#page-4-0)</sup>

Next, to see the scope of the present Lewis acid systems for the catalytic DA reaction of  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ -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 [\(Table](#page-3-0) [2\)](#page-3-0). Compared to  $\gamma$ -butenolide 1a, the reactivity of  $\delta$ -



Figure 1. The plots of the yield and the composition of Lewis acid (molar ratio of  $Me<sub>3</sub>Al$  and  $Tf<sub>2</sub>CH<sub>2</sub>$ ) in the DA reaction of 1a with CP. In the presence of 20 mol % Lewis acid generated by mixing  $Tf_2CH_2$ and Me<sub>3</sub>Al,  $\gamma$ -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 ' $Tf_2CH_2 + 1.3Me_3Al$ ' system, the reaction of 1b with CP (10 eq) for 4 h at 60  $\degree$ C afforded DA product 5b in 76% yield with high endo selectivity (endo/  $exo = 14:1$ , entry 3). The use of 'Tf<sub>2</sub>CH<sub>2</sub> + 2.0Me<sub>3</sub>Al' 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  $\alpha, \beta$ 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 ' $Tf_2CH_2 + 1.3Me_3Al$ ' system to give the desired adduct 5c in only 56% yield, but with high *endo* 

<span id="page-3-0"></span>Table 2. Effects of lactone ring-size on DA reaction with cyclopentadiene

|             | $Tf_2CH_2 + Me_3Al$ |         |
|-------------|---------------------|---------|
| (10 equiv.) | endo-5              | $exo-5$ |



<sup>a</sup> Isolated yield.

 $<sup>b</sup>$  Determined by  $<sup>1</sup>H$  NMR.</sup></sup>

 $\degree$  20 equiv of CP was used.

<sup>d</sup> Determined by isolated yield.



Figure 2. Proposed catalytic cycle on the catalytic DA reaction of  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ -unsaturated lactones 1.

selectivity (endo/exo = 17:1, entry 5). Both chemical yield and endo/exo selectivity were improved under  $Tf_2CH_2 + 2.0Me_3Al'$  catalyzed conditions (5c 85%) yield, *endo*/ $exo = 21:1$ , entry 6).

Regarding the effects of a ratio of  $Tf_2CH_2$  and Me<sub>3</sub>Al on the efficiency of the DA reaction, we propose a catalytic cycle shown in Figure 2. Since  $Tf_2CHAlMe_2$  A readily generated by the 1:1 reaction of  $Tf_2CH_2$  with Me<sub>3</sub>Al would be more active than Me<sub>3</sub>Al existing together in the reaction mixture (see [Table 1](#page-2-0), entry 10), complexation between  $Tf_2CHAlMe_2$  A and  $\alpha, \beta$ -unsaturated lactone 1 promotes the DA reaction with CP to give a DA adduct E. Since  $Tf_2CHAlMe_2$  A has sterically bulky  $Tf_2CH$  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  $Tf_2CH_2 + 2.0Me_3Al'$  rather than  $Tf_2CH_2 + 1.3Me_3Al'$ 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 ' $Tf_2CH_2 + Me_3Al$ ' systems are effective catalysts for the DA reaction of less reactive  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ -unsaturated lactone derivatives with CP. Mononuclear aluminum methide complex,  $Tf_2CHAlMe_2$ , 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  $\alpha$ ,  $\beta$ 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 Tf<sub>2</sub>CH<sub>2</sub>. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>,  $\delta$  ppm): 4.96 (2H, s). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>,  $\delta$  ppm): 64.2, 118.8 (q,  $J = 327.8$  Hz). <sup>19</sup>F NMR (386 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>,  $\delta$ ppm):  $-13.0$  (6F, s). For Tf<sub>2</sub>CHAlMe<sub>2</sub>. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>,  $\delta$  ppm): -0.53 (6H, s), 4.42 (1H, s).<br><sup>13</sup>C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>,  $\delta$  ppm): -10.9 (br), 47.9, 119.6 (q,  $J = 319.0$  Hz).
- 19. This is a sharp contrast to TfNH2, since reaction of TfNH<sub>2</sub> (1 mol) with Me<sub>3</sub>Al (2 mol) gave TfN(AlMe<sub>2</sub>)<sub>2</sub> with liberation of 2 moles of methane gas.
- 20. Previously, in the 1:2 reaction of  $TfNH<sub>2</sub>$  and  $Me<sub>2</sub>AlCl$  in CDCl3, we observed the formation of three kinds of complexes in  $^{13}$ C NMR study.<sup>14a</sup> 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<sub>2</sub>CHAlMe<sub>2</sub> would act as a hydrogen bond donor to form complex  $\mathbf{D}'$  as shown in [Figure 1](#page-2-0). In our previous works, we have proposed double coordination manner of  $\alpha, \beta$ -unsaturated lactones and esters to bidentate Lewis acids,  $TfN[AlR^1R^2]_2$ , to explain high activation of these substrates by  $\text{TrN}[\text{A}]\text{R}^1\text{R}^2]_2$ .<sup>12</sup>
- 22. For  $\gamma$ -crotonolactone 1a. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>,  $\delta$ 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). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>,  $\delta$ ppm): 72.1, 121.5, 152.7, 173.6. For Tf<sub>2</sub>CHAlMe<sub>2</sub>-1a complex. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>,  $\delta$  ppm, rt):  $-0.62$ (6H, s, AlCH<sub>3</sub>), 4.09 (1H, s, Tf<sub>2</sub>CH), 5.47 (2H, s, C $\gamma$ H<sub>2</sub>), 6.52 (1H, dt,  $J = 5.7$ , 1.8 Hz, C $\alpha$ H), 8.26 (br d,  $J = 5.7$  Hz, C $\beta H$ ). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (100.6 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>,  $\delta$  ppm, rt): -10.9, 51.3, 79.3, 120.1, 120.2 (q,  $J = 323.8$ ), 164.0, 183.2.