# Palladium-catalyzed selective alkoxycarbonylation of α,β-unsaturated amides: a novel approach toward new ω-amido esters and N-substituted cyclic succinimides

Rami Suleiman, Bassam El Ali *

*Chemistry Department, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM), Dhahran 31261, Saudi Arabia*

ABSTRACT

The alkoxycarbonylation of α,β-unsaturated amides proceeded efficiently and regioselectivity to give ω-amido esters with complete conversion in the presence of the catalyst system: $Pd(PPh_3)_2Cl_2/MeOH/CO/H_2O$. The reaction was successfully applied to the alkoxycarbonylation of bis-acrylamides yielding, selectively, the corresponding di-ω-amido esters. These mono and di-ω-amido esters have been used as precursors for the synthesis of N-substituted cyclic succinimides in moderate to high yields.

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## 1. Introduction

N-Substituted cyclic succinimides represent a group of imide derivatives that have good antifungal, antidepressant, and antituberculosis activities.[1,2] Numerous methods have been reported for the synthesis of cyclic succinimides.[3–5] However, the availability of simple routes for their synthesis is still limited. Moreover, carbonylation methodology has never been reported as a route for the synthesis of such compounds. The alkoxycarbonylation of α,β-unsaturated amides represents a potential method for the synthesis of ω-amido esters, which can be converted into N-substituted cyclic succinimides. The synthesis of a variety of ω-amido ester precursors in high yields and regioselectivity using carbonylation methodology represents a significant advantage for the synthesis of N-substituted cyclic succinimides. The alkoxycarbonylation of unsaturated amides with alcohols normally leads to γ-amido esters and ω-amido esters. Catalytic systems developed for the alkoxycarbonylation of α,β-unsaturated amides have focused on the production of α,γ-amido esters, since these products are good precursors for the synthesis of amino acids.[6–8] To the best of our knowledge, there are no reports describing the preparation of ω-amido esters regioselectively via the alkoxycarbonylation of α,β-unsaturated amides. Moreover, the carbonylation of a double bond conjugated to carbonyl and phenyl groups in α,β-unsaturated amides has not been reported.
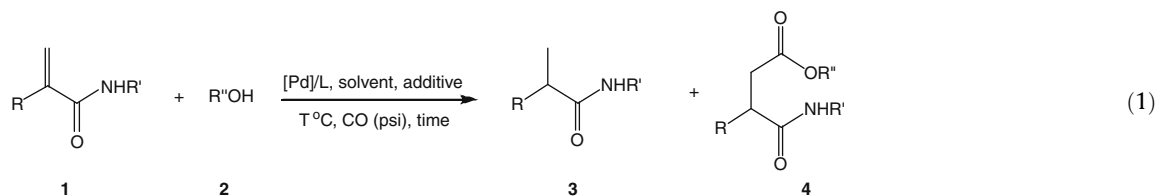
Considering the synthetic importance of the alkoxycarbonylation of α,β-unsaturated amides for the preparation of α,ω-amido esters, we report here the palladium-catalyzed synthesis of mono and di-α,ω-amido esters in high yields and regioselectivity. In addition, the resulting mono and di-ω-amido esters undergo elimination of an alcohol group to yield the corresponding N-substituted cyclic succinimides.

The alkoxycarbonylation of N-cyclohexyl-2-phenylpropenamide (**1a**, R = Ph; R′ = cyclohexyl), adopted as a model substrate, using palladium–phosphine systems was studied by varying the reaction parameters (Eq. 1) in order to optimize the reaction conditions. ω-Amido ester **4a** was the desired product, while the hydrogenation product **3a** was a by-product of the reaction. It is worth mentioning that the branched isomeric ester that normally results from carbonylation of an internal olefin was not detected in this reaction.

Since varying the solvent had a noticeable influence on both the conversion and the regioselectivity of the catalytic reactions, we carried out the alkoxycarbonylation of **1a** using $Pd(PPh_3)_2Cl_2$ as a catalyst in the presence of different solvents and the results are summarized in Table 1. No conversion of **1a** in n-hexane or dichloromethane was observed (Table 1, entries 1 and 2), while THF led to moderate conversion, but mainly with formation of the hydrogenation product **3a** (Table 1, entry 3). Promising regioselectivity in the formation of ω-amido ester **4a** was obtained when acetonitrile was used as the solvent (Table 1, entry 4). Our attempts to increase the conversion and the regioselectivity of the

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* Corresponding author. Fax: +966 3 8604277.
  *E-mail address:* belali@kfupm.edu.sa (B. El Ali).

$$\text{1} \quad + \quad \text{R''OH} \quad \xrightarrow[\text{T °C, CO (psi), time}]{\text{[Pd]/L, solvent, additive}} \quad \text{3} \quad + \quad \text{4} \tag{1}$$

alkoxycarbonylation reaction forming **4a** were successful using neat methanol which acts as both the solvent and trapping agent (Table 1, entry 5), and also by adding an optimized amount of $H_2O$ (8 mmol) (Table 1, entry 6). The addition of water may be necessary to improve the reactivity of the α,β-unsaturated amide; perhaps a water molecule remains in proximity to the palladium throughout the catalytic cycle.[9]

In order to better understand the nature of the active palladium

phine ligand was crucial for the reaction since no catalytic activity was observed with $PdCl_2$ alone as the catalyst (Table 2, entry 9). No catalytic activity was observed in the absence of chloride; $Pd(OAc)_2$ and $Pd(PPh_3)_4$ gave no reaction even in the presence of different monophosphine ligands in the alkoxycarbonylation of **1a** (Table 2, entries 11–13).

The use of $Pd(PPh_3)_2Cl_2$ as the catalyst has been reported before for the alkoxycarbonylation of N-vinylphthalimide.[10] However, our
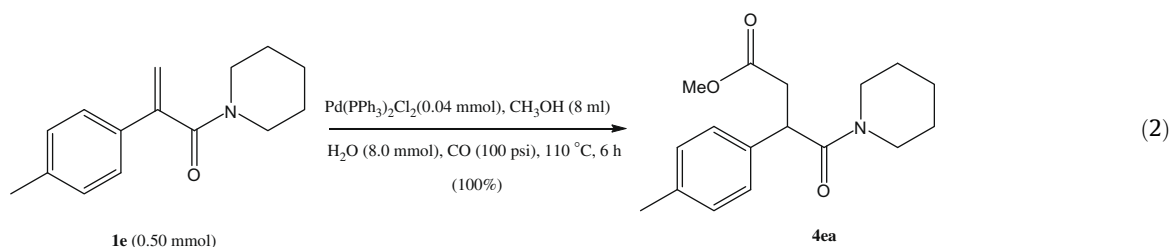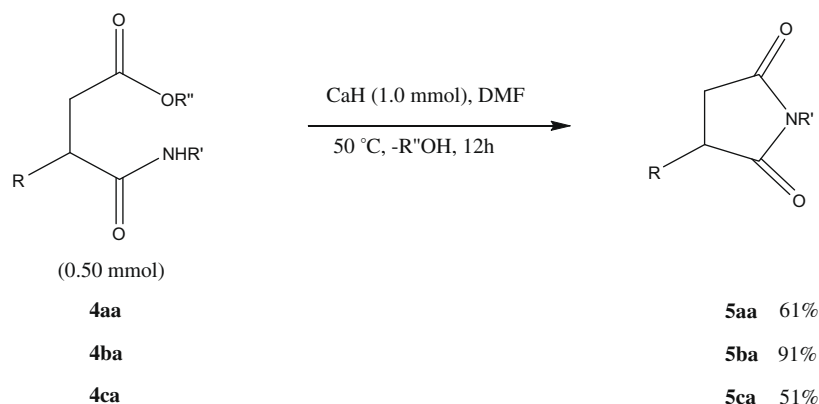
$$\text{1e (0.50 mmol)} \quad \xrightarrow[\substack{H_2O \text{ (8.0 mmol), CO (100 psi), 110 °C, 6 h} \\ (100\%)}]{Pd(PPh_3)_2Cl_2 \text{(0.04 mmol), } CH_3OH \text{ (8 ml)}} \quad \text{4ea} \tag{2}$$

proposed method showed opposite regioselectivity under milder reaction conditions.

Furthermore, we carried out the alkoxycarbonylation of several α,β-unsaturated amides, prepared by aminocarbonylation of terminal alkynes,[11] using various alcohols and the results are presented in Table 3. In the majority of cases, the reactions proceeded cleanly to give the desired products **4** in high yields (Table 3, entries 1–5). Surprisingly, the alkoxycarbonylation of α,β-unsaturated amide **1d** was accompanied by formation of the corresponding cyclic product **5da** (Fig. 1) in a moderate yield (Table 3, entry 6). It was interesting to observe that the activity and selectivity of the alkoxycarbonylation of α,β-unsaturated amides were not affected by the type of alcohol employed (Table 3, entries 1–3). On the other hand, the catalyst system promoted alkoxycarbonylation of the geminal bond in **1c** selectively, and not the other olefinic bond present in the molecule (Table 3, entry 5).

It is important to note that the alkoxycarbonylation reaction takes place selectively with N,N-disubstituted α,β-unsaturated amides also, for example, **1e** (Eq. 2).

The successful preparation of the ω-amido esters **4aa–ca** encouraged us to examine the cyclization of these compounds to afford the corresponding N-substituted cyclic succinimides **5aa–ca** (Eq. 3). The cyclic products were obtained in moderate to excellent yields by reacting **4aa–ca** with CaH as base in DMF at 50 °C. Addition of the base was essential for this cyclization step, since simple heating gave no product. DMF was the only solvent that led to good conversions compared to other polar and non-polar solvents.

Using a similar strategy, novel N-substituted bis-succinimides **9aa,ba** were synthesized in good yields via alkoxycarbonylation of N-substituted bis-acrylate amides **7aa,ba**, followed by ring closure of the resulting ω-bis-amido esters **8aa,8ba** (Scheme 1). The ω-bis-amido esters **8aa** and **8ba** were obtained as a 1:1 mixtures of diastereomers. To the best of our knowledge, the alkoxycarbonylation of diacrylate amides has not been reported in the literature. It is worth noting that compounds **7aa** and **7ba** have

**Table 1**
Effect of solvent on the palladium-catalyzed alkoxycarbonylation of **1a** by $Pd(PPh_3)_2Cl_2$[a]

| Entry | Solvent | Conversion[b] (%) | Product distribution[c] (%) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 3a | 4a [ ][d] |
| 1 | n-Hexane | 0 | – | – |
| 2 | $CH_2Cl_2$ | 0 | – | – |
| 3 | THF | 64 | 93 | 7 |
| 4 | $CH_3CN$ | 40 | 38 | 62 [23] |
| 5 | $CH_3OH$ | 84 | 1 | 99 [79] |
| 6[e] | $CH_3OH$ | 100 | 0 | 100 [96] |

[a] Reaction conditions: $Pd(PPh_3)_2Cl_2$ (0.04 mmol), **1a** (0.50 mmol), $CH_3OH$ (8.0 mmol), solvent (8 ml), CO (100 psi), 110 °C, 6 h.
[b] Determined by GC.
[c] Determined by GC and $^1H$ NMR spectroscopy.
[d] Isolated yield.
[e] $H_2O$ (8 mmol) added.

catalytic species involved in the alkoxycarbonylation of α,β-unsaturated amides, we studied the alkoxycarbonylation of **1a** using different palladium complexes (Table 2). A preliminary experiment with $Pd(PhCN)_2Cl_2$ as the catalyst precursor resulted in no catalytic activity in the absence of any added ligand (Table 2, entry 1). The crucial role of a phosphine ligand in enhancing the activity of the catalyst system was proved with the addition of monodentate or bidentate phosphine ligands. In these cases, good conversions and complete regioselectivity for the ω-amido ester **4a** were achieved (Table 2, entries 2–4). The good conversion obtained with $PPh_3$ as the ligand (Table 2, entry 4) encouraged us to examine the $Pd(PPh_3)_2Cl_2$ complex for the alkoxycarbonylation of **1a** (Table 2, entries 5–7), where excellent conversions and regioselectivities were obtained even in the absence of any added phosphines (Table 2, entry 6). The use of $PdCl_2/PPh_3$ as the catalyst system led to comparable activity and regioselectivity as that obtained with $Pd(PPh_3)_2Cl_2$ (Table 2, entry 8). Again, the presence of the phos-

$$(3)$$

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **4aa** | | **5aa** | 61% |
| **4ba** | | **5ba** | 91% |
| **4ca** | | **5ca** | 51% |

(0.50 mmol)

**Table 2**
The effect of different palladium complexes and phosphine ligands on the palladium-catalyzed alkoxycarbonylation of **1a**[a]

| Entry | Catalyst | Ligand | Conversion[b] (%) | Product distribution[c] (%) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | **3a** | **4a** [ ][d] |
| 1 | Pd(PhCN)$_2$Cl$_2$ | — | 0 | — | — |
| 2 | Pd(PhCN)$_2$Cl$_2$ | $t$-Bu(Ph)$_2$P | 64 | 0 | 100 [60] |
| 3 | Pd(PhCN)$_2$Cl$_2$ | dppb | 64 | 0 | 100 [61] |
| 4 | Pd(PhCN)$_2$Cl$_2$ | PPh$_3$ | 69 | 1 | 99 [63] |
| 5 | Pd(PPh$_3$)$_2$Cl$_2$ | $t$-Bu(Ph)$_2$P | 98 | 0 | 100 [93] |
| 6 | Pd(PPh$_3$)$_2$Cl$_2$ | — | 100 | 0 | 100 [96] |
| 7[e] | Pd(PPh$_3$)$_2$Cl$_2$ | — | 84 | 1 | 99 [79] |
| 8 | PdCl$_2$ | PPh$_3$ | 89 | 3 | 97 [80] |
| 9 | PdCl$_2$ | — | 15 | 100 | 0 |
| 10 | PdCl$_2$ | $t$-Bu(Ph)$_2$P | 46 | 10 | 90 [31] |
| 11 | Pd(OAc)$_2$ | $t$-Bu(Ph)$_2$P | 0 | — | — |
| 12 | Pd(OAc)$_2$ | PPh$_3$ | 0 | — | — |
| 13 | Pd(PPh$_3$)$_4$ | — | 0 | — | — |

[a] Reaction conditions: catalyst (0.04 mmol), ligand (0.08 mmol), **1a** (0.50 mmol), CH$_3$OH (8.0 ml), H$_2$O (8.0 mmol), CO (100 psi), 110 °C, 6 h.
[b] Determined by GC.
[c] Determined by GC and $^1$H NMR spectroscopy.
[d] Isolated yield.
[e] H$_2$O (8 mmol) added.

**Table 3**
Alkoxycarbonylation of unsaturated amides **1a–d** using alcohols **2a–c**[a]

| Entry | Unsaturated amide **1** | Alcohol **2** | Conversion[b] (%) | Product distribution[c] (%) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | **3** | **4** [ ][d] |
| 1 | **1a** R = Ph, R′ = Cy | **2a** R″ = Me | 100 | 0 | 100 [96] **4aa** |
| 2 | **1a** | **2b** R″ = Et | 99 | 3 | 97 [92] **4ab** |
| 3 | **1a** | **2c** R″ = $i$-Pr | 93 | 4 | 96 [85] **4ac** |
| 4 | **1b** R = Ph, R′ = Bn | **2a** | 100 | 0 | 100 [95] **4ba** |
| 5 | **1c** R = Cyclohexenyl, R′ = Cy | **2a** | 89 | 0 | 100 [85] **4ca** |
| 6[e] | **1d** R = Ph, R′ = Ph | **2a** | 97 | 0 | 100 [36] **4da** |

[a] Reaction conditions: Pd(PPh$_3$)$_2$Cl$_2$ (0.04 mmol), α,β-unsaturated amide (0.50 mmol), CH$_3$OH (8.0 ml), H$_2$O (8.0 mmol), CO (100 psi), 110 °C, 6 h.
[b] Determined by GC and $^1$H NMR spectroscopy.
[c] Determined by GC.
[d] Isolated yield.
[e] A 56% yield of cyclic product **5da** was obtained.

been successfully synthesized in high yields and regioselectivity via palladium-catalyzed aminocarbonylation of diacetylenes **6a,b** with cyclohexylamine.

In conclusion, the synthesis of mono and di-N-substituted cyclic succinimides has been successfully achieved via alkoxycarbonylation of unsaturated amides followed by ring closure. The alkoxy-carbonylation of unsaturated amides proceeds smoothly and effectively to afford the corresponding ω-amido esters using the catalyst Pd(PPh$_3$)$_2$Cl$_2$ under mild experimental conditions. This method tolerates a variety of unsaturated amides and alcohols and also represents an efficient procedure for the synthesis of N-substituted cyclic succinimides.
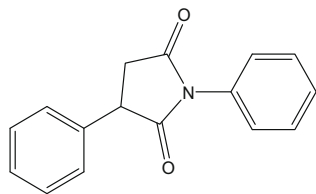
**Figure 1.** Structure of cyclic product **5da**.

## 2. General procedure for the synthesis of unsaturated amides and diacrylate amides

α,β-Unsaturated amides **1a–c,e**[11] and **1d**[12] were synthesized according to literature procedures. α,β-Unsaturated amides **1c** and **1e** are novel while α,β-unsaturated amides **1a,b,d** are known.

The literature method[11] was adopted for the synthesis of bis-acrylate amido esters **6a,b**, but with a slight modification:

A mixture of Pd(OAc)$_2$ (0.02 mmol), 1,4-bis(diphenylphos-phino)butane (dppb) (0.08 mmol), p-TsOH (0.3 mmol), dialkyne (1.0 mmol), and cyclohexylamine (2.0 mmol) in MeCN (10 ml) was placed in a glass liner, equipped with a stirrer bar, and then placed in a 45 ml Parr autoclave. The autoclave was vented three times with CO and then pressured at room temperature with CO (100 psi). The mixture was stirred and heated at 110 °C for 20 h. After cooling, the pressure was released, and the products were collected on a filter paper, washed with MeOH, and dried under vacuum. The products were identified by $^1$H and $^{13}$C NMR, FT-IR, and EI-MS analyses.

### 2.1. 2,2′-(1,4-Phenylene)bis(N-cyclohexylacrylamide) (7aa)

White solid, mp 215–216 °C; IR (KBr) $v$ (cm$^{-1}$) 1636 (CO), 3263 (NH); $^1$H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl$_3$): δ 1.10–1.97 (m, 20H, –(CH$_2$)$_5$–), 3.91 (m, 2H, NCH), 5.63 (br s, 2H, NH), 5.65 (s, 2H$_\alpha$, =CH$_2$), 6.02 (s, 2H$_\beta$, =CH$_2$), 7.40 (s, 4H arom.); $^{13}$C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl$_3$): δ 24.8, 25.4, 32.9, 48.5, 121.1, 128.1, 137.0, 144.7, 166.5; EI-MS m/z 380 (M$^+$). Anal. Calcd for C$_{24}$H$_{32}$N$_2$O$_2$ (380.64): C, 75.73; H, 8.47; N, 7.39. Found: C, 75.66; H, 8.43; N, 7.33.

## 3. General procedure for the alkoxycarbonylation of mono and bis-acrylate amides

A mixture of Pd(PPh$_3$)$_2$Cl$_2$ (0.04 mmol), α,β-unsaturated amide (0.5 mmol for mono amide, and 0.25 mmol for bis amide), and H$_2$O (8.0 mmol) in methanol (8 ml) was placed in a glass liner, equipped with a stirring bar, and placed in a 45 ml Parr autoclave. The autoclave was vented three times with CO and then pressured at room temperature with CO (100 psi). The mixture was stirred and heated at 110 °C for 6 h. After cooling, the pressure was re-leased, and the reaction mixture was filtered after adding anhy-drous Na$_2$SO$_4$. A sample of the filtrate was analyzed by GC and GC–MS. The solvent was removed and the products were separated by preparative TLC (30% EtOAc/petroleum ether 40–70 °C). The products were identified by $^1$H and $^{13}$C NMR, FT-IR, and GC–MS analyses. All the ω-amido esters obtained in this study are new compounds. The hydrogenation by-product **3aa** is known.[13]

### 3.1. Dimethyl 3,3′-(1,4-phenylene)bis[4-(cyclohexylamino)-4-oxobutanoate] (8aa)

White solid, mp 175–176 °C, IR (KBr) $v$ (cm$^{-1}$) 1639 (CO amide), 1738 (CO ester), 3324 (NH); $^1$H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl$_3$): δ 0.95–1.89 (m, 20H, –(CH$_2$)$_5$–), 2.61 (m, 2H$_\alpha$, CH$_2$COOMe), 3.22 (m, 2H$_\beta$, CH$_2$COOMe), 3.63 (s, 6H, OCH$_3$), 3.69 (m, 2H, PhCH), 3.89 (m, 2H, NCH), 5.80 (br s, 2H, NH), 7.37 (s, 4H arom.); $^{13}$C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl$_3$): δ 24.5, 25.2, 32.5, 37.5, 48.0, 48.2, 51.5, 128.0, 138.2, 170.9, 172.3; EI-MS m/z 500 (M$^+$). Anal. Calcd for C$_{28}$H$_{40}$N$_2$O$_6$ (500.62): C, 67.18; H, 8.05; N, 5.59. Found: C, 67.24; H, 7.89; N, 5.64.
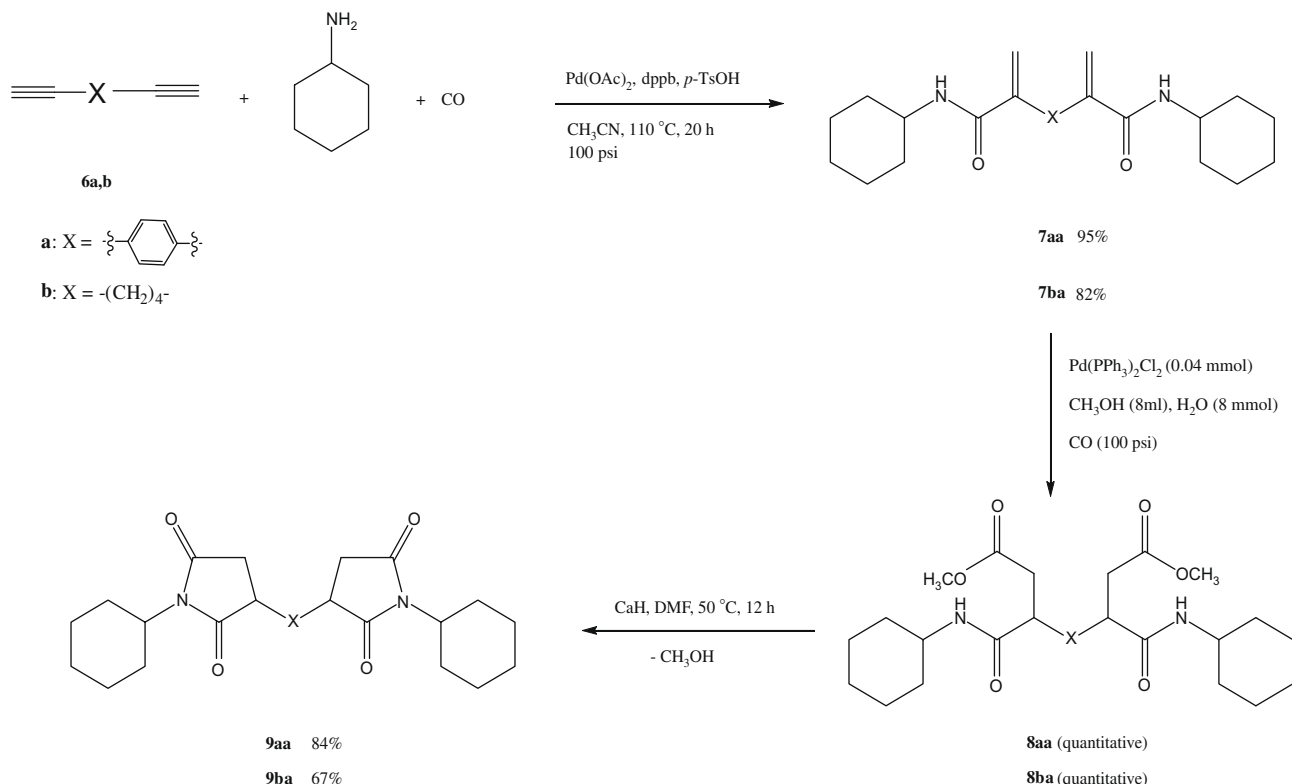


**Scheme 1.** The synthesis of N-substituted bis-cyclic succinimides **9** starting from diacetylenes **6** and cyclohexylamine.

## 4. General procedure for the ring closure of ω-amido esters

In a 50 ml round-bottomed flask, ω-amido ester (0.50 mmol) and CaH (1.0 mmol) were dissolved in DMF (30 ml) and the mixture was heated at 50 °C with stirring for 12 h. The mixture was filtered, poured into water (50 ml), extracted with dichloromethane (50 ml), concentrated to dryness, and purified by preparative TLC eluting with a mixture of EtOAc/petroleum ether (2:8) to afford pure products. The cyclic succinimides **5aa**, **5ba**, and **5da** are known compounds,[2,5,14] while the other cyclic succinimides are new.

## Acknowledgment

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