International Edition: DOI: 10.1002/anie.201505789 German Edition: DOI: 10.1002/ange.201505789

Dehydrogenative Carbon–Carbon Bond Formation Using Alkynyloxy Moieties as Hydrogen-Accepting Directing Groups

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Abstract: In the presence of a catalyst system consisting of $Pd(OAc)_2$, PCy_3 , and $Zn(OAc)_2$, the reaction of alkynyl aryl ethers with bicycloalkenes, α,β -unsaturated esters, or heteroarenes results in the site-selective cleavage of two C–H bonds followed by the formation of C–C bonds. In all cases, the alkynyloxy group acts as a directing group for the activation of an ortho C–H bond and as a hydrogen acceptor, thus rendering the use of additives such as an oxidant or base unnecessary.

Cross-dehydrogenative bond-forming reactions are highly attractive methods in the toolbox of synthetic organic chemistry, especially considering their potential in terms of atom and step economy. Representative examples are the cross-dehydrogenative formation of carbon-carbon, carbonboron, and carbon-silicon bonds.^[1-3] This concept also enables the custom-tailored construction of a variety of highly functionalized compounds, and the site-selective cleavage of two C-H bonds and the subsequent removal of the eliminated hydrogen atoms are key factors in this context. To trap the emitted hydrogen, several additives, such as olefins or oxidants, have been successfully used, as the release of dihydrogen only meets with difficulty. However, the use of such additives may be problematic from a practical perspective, as they potentially interfere with the dehydrogenative reaction.

Directing groups have been successfully employed for effective site- and regioselective C–H functionalization.^[4] In one of our previous studies, we demonstrated that alkynyloxy groups ($-OC\equiv CR$) are able to act as directing groups for the activation of adjacent C–H bonds, and subsequently engage in addition reactions.^[5] For example, the reaction with alkynes furnishes chromene derivatives by sequential insertions into *ortho* C–H bonds.^[5a] On the basis of these results, we expected that the alkynyloxy group might also be able to act as a hydrogen acceptor and enable the cleavage of two C–H bonds, thus facilitating a dehydrogenative carbon–carbon bond-forming reaction. Moreover, this synthetic approach would avoid the use of additives, such as oxidants (e.g.,

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	Supporting information for this article is available on the W/V

Supporting information for this article is available on the WWW under http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/anie.201505789.

benzoquinone) or bases, and the vinyloxy groups resulting from dihydrogenation of the alkynyloxy groups are highly useful functional groups.^[6] Herein, we report a series of dehydrogenative reactions between alkynyl aryl ethers and bicycloalkenes, α , β -unsaturated esters, or heteroarenes. This approach represents a convenient strategy for additive-free catalytic cross-dehydrogenative C–C bond-forming reactions.

Recently, we reported that the reaction between triisopropylsilyl (TIPS)-substituted para-methoxyphenyl ether 1a and norbornene (2a) in the presence of $[Pd(PCy_3)_2]$ (5 mol %) and Zn (5 mol%) proceeds by ortho C-H insertion/annulation to afford **4a**.^[5f] However, when the reaction between **1a** and **2a** was carried out in the presence of $Pd(OAc)_2$ (5 mol %), PCy₃ (10 mol %), and Zn(OAc)₂ (20 mol %) at 100°C for 24 h, benzocyclobutene 3a with a Z-configured silylethenoxy moiety was obtained in 75% yield, most likely by the cleavage of the ortho and meta C-H bonds (Table 1, entry 1).^[7-10] When the amount of **2a** (1.5 equiv) was reduced, 3a was generated in a similar yield, albeit more slowly with concomitant formation of the *E* isomer 3'a (entry 2). We also examined other phosphine ligands, such as PBuAd₂ and XPhos, which also proved to be effective in this reaction. The use of PBuAd₂ afforded **3a** and **3'a** (91:9) in a combined yield of 80%, whereas the use of XPhos provided 3a in 86% yield (entries 3 and 4). The absence of $Zn(OAc)_2$ resulted in the formation of 3a in 49% yield, whereas the increased formation of 4a (27%) suggested that the co-catalyst $Zn(OAc)_2$ promotes the generation of **3**. It should be noted that no traces of the corresponding dihydrogenated adduct 5 or ethynyloxy-substituted benzocyclobutene 6 were observed. This observation is consistent with the formation of a fourmembered cycle and subsequent dihydrogenation.

Next, the scope of the twofold C-H cleavage reaction with 2a using a suitable ligand, namely PCy₃, PBuAd₂, or XPhos, was examined, and the results are also summarized in Table 1. In the presence of PBuAd₂ at a lower concentration of 0.1m, tert-butyldiphenylsilyl (TBDPS)-substituted ethynyl ether 1b furnished cyclization product 3b in 82% yield (entry 5).^[11] Using XPhos, the substrate with a less bulky *tert*butyldimethylsilyl (TBDMS) group afforded 3c in lower yield (entry 6). Aryl tert-butylalkynyl ether 1d could also be converted into 3d in 51% yield in the presence of the XPhos ligand (entry 7). Substrates with a cyclohexyl, methyl, or phenyl group instead of the tert-butyl group attached to the ethynyl moiety were not suitable for this reaction.^[12] These results suggest that a bulky substituent on the ethynyl carbon atom is necessary for effective double C-H cleavage. The presence of para-, meta-, and ortho-substituted aryl groups in the TIPS ethynyloxy moiety did not hamper the reaction (entries 8-12). Silylethynyl 4-biphenyl ether 1i afforded 3i in

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Table 1: Pd-catalyzed dehydrogenative cleavage of two C-H bonds.^[a]



[a] Unless otherwise noted, a mixture of 1 (1 equiv), 2a (5 equiv), $Pd(OAc)_2$ (5 mol%), ligand (10 mol%), $Zn(OAc)_2$ (20 mol%), and toluene (1 M for entries 1–4 and 8–14, 0.1 M for entries 5–7) was heated to 100°C. [b] Yield of isolated product. [c] 2a (1.5 equiv). [d] Combined NMR yield of 3a and 3'a (67:33). [e] Combined NMR yield of 3a and 3'a (85:15). [f] 7h was formed in 32% yield. [g] 7k was formed in 10% yield. PBuAd₂ = *n*-butyldi-1-adamantyl-phosphine, XPhos = 2-dicyclohexylphosphino-2',4',6'-triisopropylbiphenyl.



78% yield (entry 12); the molecular structure of **3i** was confirmed by single-crystal X-ray diffraction.^[13] The 2- and 1- naphthyl-substituted TIPS-protected ethynyl ethers **1j** and **1k** provided the corresponding cyclic products **3j** and **3k** (entries 13 and 14). Substrates **1h** and **1k**, with an unsubstituted 4-position, also generated the side products **7h** and **7k**.

Subsequently, a variety of bicyclic alkenes were subjected to the double C–H functionalization reaction with 1j (Table 2). In these cases, only the PCy₃ ligand was effective, whereas XPhos afforded the desired products in reduced yields or not at all. The reaction with norbornadiene (2b) provided monoannulated 31 in 56% yield, whereas the cyclopentadiene dimer 2c afforded 3m in 78% yield. The presence of functional groups, such as esters or acid anhydrides, or benzannulated systems did not interfere with the reaction, and the desired products 3n-3p were obtained in good yields.

Representative synthetic applications for compounds such as **3j** are shown in Scheme 1. For example, acid hydrolysis of **3j** with a catalytic amount of HCl furnished 2-naphthol derivative **8** in 72% yield.^[14] When a stoichiometric amount of HCl was used, sequential deprotection and cyclization of **8** with an in situ generated aldehyde furnished 18*H*-dibenzo-[*a*,*j*]xanthene **9**.^[15]

To elucidate the mechanism for the formation of **3**, deuterium-labeling experiments were carried out. As evident from ¹H NMR analysis, the reaction between deuterated [D₅]-1h and 2a in toluene in the presence of Pd(OAc)₂/PCy₃/Zn(OAc)₂ resulted in the formation of $[D_5]$ -3h, demonstrating that the deuterium atoms originally located at the ortho and meta positions selectively shifted to the silvlethynyl group [Eq. (1)].^[16] The reaction between $[D_1]$ -11, which is deuterated only at the ortho position, provided $[D_2]$ -3q, with the deuterium atoms equally distributed over both vinyl carbon atoms [Eq. (2)]. A competition experiment between [D₅]-1h and 1a revealed that the three deuterium atoms from the 2-, 3-, and 6-positions in [D₅]-1h migrated to the vinyl moieties and the 6position in both $[D_5]$ -3h and $[D_1]$ -3a. Furthermore, H/ D scrambling was observed at the ortho positions in the two recovered substrates [Eq. (3)].^[17] These results suggest that cleavage of the ortho C-H bond should be reversible at an early stage and be followed by an irreversible meta C-H bond cleavage by a concerted metalation/deprotonation (CMD) pathway to form the aryl palladium complexes and acetic acid,^[10,18] delivering the hydrogen atoms to each alkynyl carbon atom (for a proposed reaction mechanism, see the Supporting Information).

Having successfully established a dehydrogenative reaction system, we applied it to cross-dehydrogenative reactions involving other alkenes and heteroarenes. The reaction between 1j and 1,4-epoxy-1,4-dihydronaphthalene $(10)^{[19]}$ using catalytic amounts of Pd-(OAc)₂, PCy₃, and Zn(OAc)₂ at 100 °C for 5 h afforded



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[a] Unless otherwise noted, a mixture of 1j (1 equiv), 2 (1.5 equiv), PC(3), 2(10 mol%), Zn(OAc)₂ (20 mol%), and toluene

Ή

Pd(OAc)₂ (5 mol%), PCy₃ (10 mol%), Zn(OAc)₂ (20 mol%), and toluene (1 м) was heated to 100°C. Yields of isolated products are given. [b] *Z/E* ratio. [c] 140°C. [d] Yield determined by NMR spectroscopy.



Scheme 1. Acid hydrolysis of 3 j with HCl.

H

the desired product **11** in 39% yield [Eq. (4)].^[20] Conversely, when the reaction was carried out at 140°C for 11 h, sevenmembered dioxepin **12** was formed in 45% yield.^[21] Subsequently, we examined the reaction with *tert*-butyl acrylate (**13**) and successfully obtained *ortho*-alkenylated Z-alkenoxy arene **14** in 66% yield [$E/Z = 95:5;^{[22]}$ Eq. (5)]. The bulky *tert*butyl group in **13** was an important factor for the success of the alkenylation; *n*-butyl acrylate, acrylonitrile, or styrene only afforded traces of the corresponding *ortho*-alkenylated products under these conditions. Finally, we focused on the development of dehydrogenative cross-coupling reactions between two aromatic compounds to establish aryl–aryl bond-forming reactions. Therefore, we examined the reaction of **1a** and benzothiophene dioxide (**15**), which resulted in the formation of *ortho*-arylated Z-alkenoxy arene **16** in 77% yield, together with the C–H *anti* addition product **17** in 22% yield in the presence of $Pd(OAc)_2$ and PCy_3 [Eq. (6)]. In this case, the absence of $Zn(OAc)_2$ was beneficial for the formation of **16**. However, the mechanistic details of the formation of both **16** and **17** still remain unclear at present.



In conclusion, we have described a series of dehydrogenative C-C bond-forming reactions involving alkynyloxy groups. In the presence of Pd(OAc)₂, a suitable phosphine ligand, and Zn(OAc)₂, the reaction between alkynyl aryl ethers and bicycloalkenes resulted in the formation of vinyloxy benzocyclobutenes. Deuterium-labeling experiments demonstrated that the hydrogen atoms originally attached to the ortho and meta positions of the alkynyl aryl ethers are cleaved and transferred onto the vinyl carbon atoms. This catalytic reaction system can be applied to a variety of dehydrogenative reactions, for example, with 1,4-epoxy-1,4dihydronaphthalene, tert-butyl acrylate, and benzothiophene dioxide, to form the corresponding products after C-C bond formation. The present reaction system, which induces a siteselective C-H bond cleavage, allows an additive-free dehydrogenative process, which is applicable to various alkenes and heteroarenes and generates desirable vinyloxy groups. Our current efforts are directed towards the further development of such dehydrogenative bond-forming reactions and towards a better understanding of the underlying reaction mechanisms.

Acknowledgements

This work has been supported financially by Grants in-Aid for Scientific Research (S) (21225005 to T.H.) and Young Scientists (B) (25870747 to Y.M.) from the JSPS. Y.M. would also like to acknowledge the Asahi Glass Foundation.

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Keywords: alkynes \cdot annulation \cdot C–C coupling \cdot C–H activation \cdot palladium

How to cite: Angew. Chem. Int. Ed. 2015, 54, 11813–11816 Angew. Chem. 2015, 127, 11979–11982

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Received: June 23, 2015 Revised: July 18, 2015 Published online: August 14, 2015