

Palladium/Copper Co-catalyzed Oxidative C–H/C–H Carbonylation of Diphenylamines: A Way To Access Acridones

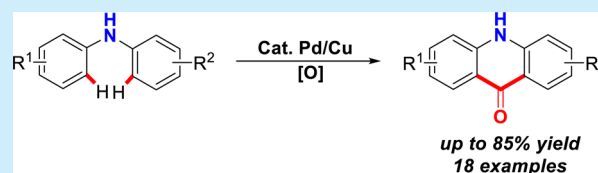
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S Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: An efficient palladium/copper co-catalyzed oxidative double C(sp²)–H functionalization/carbonylation of diphenylamines for synthesis of acridones has been developed. This method utilizes readily available starting materials and mild reaction conditions. The protocol provides a simple, efficient, and atom-economic way to access acridones. Notably, the present protocol has excellent functional group tolerance and application value.



As one of the most important heterocyclic compounds, acridones have been thought as privileged structures in dyestuffs, pharmaceuticals, and biomaterials.¹ Moreover, the acridones were considered ideal building blocks for the synthesis of nitrogen-containing compounds, which widely exist in antileishmanial, antifungal, and DNA-intercalating anticancer drugs^{1h} and as fluorescent labels.² For example, 10-CMA, a known antiviral agent which is the most potent inducer of interferons forms leukocytes and macrophages (Figure 1, A).³ In particular, acridone as the framework

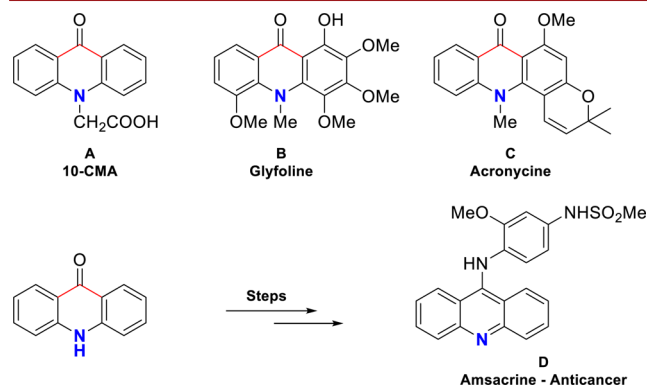


Figure 1. Representative acridone-based natural products and anticancer drugs.

(antitumor drugs, Figure 1, B, C)⁴ gives very important structural motifs. Acridones are especially revealed to be essential precursors for the synthesis of biologically active drugs (present as the central core of antitumor agents, Figure 1, D).⁵ Consequently, substantial efforts have been devoted to the synthesis of acridones.

In general, classical routes to construct this scaffold are mainly based on the acid-promoted cyclization of *N*-phenyl-

anthranilic acids or intramolecular nucleophilic substitution of 2-amino-2'-halobenzophenones.⁶ Moreover, Larock, Greaney, and Jiang have described novel approaches to acridones through nucleophilic addition coupling of benzamides or benzoates with arynes generated from silylaryl triflate precursors.^{6c,7} However, most of these methods suffer from some limitations, such as low atom economy, tedious workup procedures, unready available starting materials, and/or harsh reaction conditions. It is still a challenging but attractive task to develop a simple, efficient reaction system to afford a variety of important and structurally diverse functional acridones. Here, we report a simple and direct oxidative carbonylation of diphenylamines toward acridones by Pd/Cu co-catalysis.

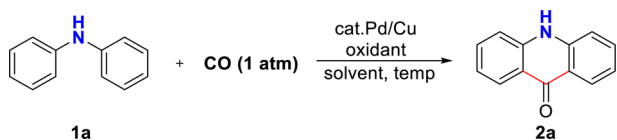
Transition-metal-catalyzed C–H carbonylation has emerged as one of the most efficient methods for constructing carbonyl compounds and has received more attention over the past decade.⁸ Among these transformations, oxidative C–H/C–H carbonylation of hydrocarbons represents an ideal way to access ketones.⁹ Though transition-metal-catalyzed oxidative C–H/C–H cross-coupling has undergone tremendous development in recent years, methods for developing oxidative C–H/C–H carbonylation are rare.¹⁰ This might be due to the facile direct C–H/C–H cross-coupling in the attempts at oxidative C–H/C–H carbonylation reactions.¹¹ In recent years, the oxidative C–H/C–H carbonylation access to carbonyl compounds has seen preliminary development. Consequently, we report a simple and efficient method for the construction of acridones through the double C–H oxidative carbonylation strategy.

Initially, diphenylamine (1a) was chosen as the model substrate to optimize the reaction conditions. To our delight, the desired product 2a was obtained in 40% yield when the reaction was carried out by utilizing PdCl₂ and Cu(OPiv)₂ in a

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mixed solvent of toluene/DMSO at 100 °C under 1 atm of CO using O₂ as the terminal oxidant (Table 1, entry 1). Further

Table 1. Condition Optimization of the Palladium-/Copper-Catalyzed Oxidative C–H/C–H Functionalization/Carbonylation for the Synthesis of Acridones^a



| entry | cat. [Pd] | oxidant | solvent | yield ^b (%) |
|-------|--|--|----------|------------------------|
| 1 | PdCl ₂ | O ₂ | Tol/DMSO | 40 |
| 2 | PdCl ₂ | O ₂ | DMF | 38 |
| 3 | PdCl ₂ | O ₂ | Tol | 15 |
| 4 | PdCl ₂ | O ₂ | dioxane | 50 |
| 5 | PdCl ₂ | O ₂ | AcOH | 48 |
| 6 | PdCl ₂ | O ₂ | PhCl | 27 |
| 7 | PdCl ₂ | O ₂ | DMA | 25 |
| 8 | PdCl ₂ | O ₂ | DMSO | 82 |
| 9 | | O ₂ | DMSO | n.d. |
| 10 | Pd(OAc) ₂ | O ₂ | DMSO | 39 |
| 11 | Pd(PPh ₃) ₄ | O ₂ | DMSO | 41 |
| 12 | PdCl ₂ (PPh ₃) ₂ | O ₂ | DMSO | 63 |
| 13 | PdCl ₂ (dppb) | O ₂ | DMSO | 46 |
| 14 | Pd(OPiv) ₂ | O ₂ | DMSO | 20 |
| 15 | PdCl ₂ | TBHP | DMSO | nd |
| 16 | PdCl ₂ | PhI(OAc) ₂ | DMSO | nd |
| 17 | PdCl ₂ | K ₂ S ₂ O ₈ | DMSO | nd |
| 18 | PdCl ₂ | DCP | DMSO | 66 |
| 19 | PdCl ₂ | DTBP | DMSO | 72 ^c |
| 20 | PdCl ₂ | DTBP | DMSO | 85 ^d |
| 21 | PdCl ₂ | DTBP | DMSO | 20 ^e |
| 22 | PdCl ₂ | DTBP | DMSO | 67 ^f |
| 23 | PdCl ₂ | DTBP | DMSO | 51 ^g |

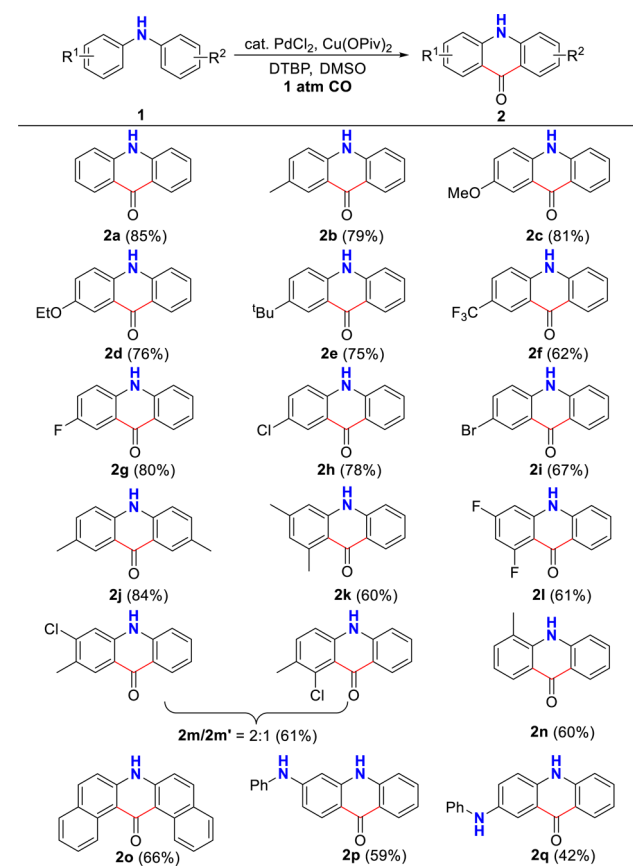
^aReaction conditions: **1a** (0.25 mmol), PdCl₂ (10 mol %), Cu(OPiv)₂ (20 mol %), CO/O₂ = 1:7, DMSO (3.0 mL), 100 °C, 24 h. TBHP: *tert*-butyl hydroperoxide, 65% solution in water. DTBP: di-*tert*-butyl peroxide. DCP: dicumyl peroxide. ^bIsolated yields. ^cDTBP (2 equiv). ^dDTBP (3 equiv). ^eCu(OPiv)₂ (1.0 equiv). ^f80 °C. ^g120 °C.

optimization of solvents demonstrated that DMSO was the optimized reaction medium for the formation of product **2a** (Table 1, entries 1–8). Replacing PdCl₂ with other catalysts such as Pd(OAc)₂, Pd(PPh₃)₄, PdCl₂(PPh₃)₂, PdCl₂(dppb), and Pd(OPiv)₂ did not improve the reaction efficiency (Table 1, entries 9–14). Subsequently, the effects of oxidants such as CuCl, CuBr, CuI, CuCN, CuO, Cu(OAc)₂, and Cu(OPiv)₂ were separately examined. Among the above oxidants tested, Cu(OPiv)₂ stood out to be the best choice, while others including CuCl, CuBr, CuI, CuCN, CuO, and Cu(OAc)₂ were less effective (see Table S1). However, no conversion was observed when the reaction was performed separately in Cu(OTf)₂ and Cu(acac)₂ (see Table S1). In particular, when Cu(OAc)₂·H₂O was utilized as the oxidant and trimethylacetic acid as the additive, the desired product could be obtained in 30% yield (see Table S1, entry 10). However, no desired product was generated when PdCl₂ was replaced with Pd(OPiv)₂ (see Table S1, entry 11). Form the above experimental results, consequently, the Cu(OPiv)₂ may have two different roles; one is oxidation of Pd⁰ to Pd^{II}, and the other is the exchange of PdCl₂ with the anion. Moreover, other

terminal oxidants also have been separately investigated, such as TBHP, K₂S₂O₈, PhI(OAc)₂, DCP, and DTBP. Better results were obtained when the terminal oxidant O₂ was replaced by DTBP (Table 1, entries 15–20). Notably, the desired product was obtained 20% yield when DTBP was removed and stoichiometric Cu(OPiv)₂ was used as the oxidant (Table 1, entry 21). In addition, the best yield of **2a** was obtained when the reaction was performed at 100 °C (Table 1, entries 22 and 23). After extensive screening of the reaction parameters, the optimized conditions was obtained by employing PdCl₂ (10 mol %), Cu(OPiv)₂ (20 mol %), and DTBP (3.0 equiv) in DMSO at 100 °C under 1 atm of carbon monoxide in 24 h.

With the optimized conditions established, the substrate scope of this oxidative carbonylation reaction was explored, with some results summarized in Scheme 1. Gratifyingly,

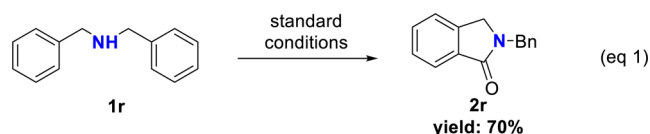
Scheme 1. Pd-Catalyzed Oxidative Double C–H Carbonylation of Different Diphenylamines^{a,b}



^aReaction conditions: **1a** (0.25 mmol), PdCl₂ (10 mol %), Cu(OPiv)₂ (20 mol %), DTBP (3 equiv), CO (1 atm) in DMSO (3.0 mL) at 100 °C for 24 h. ^bIsolated yields.

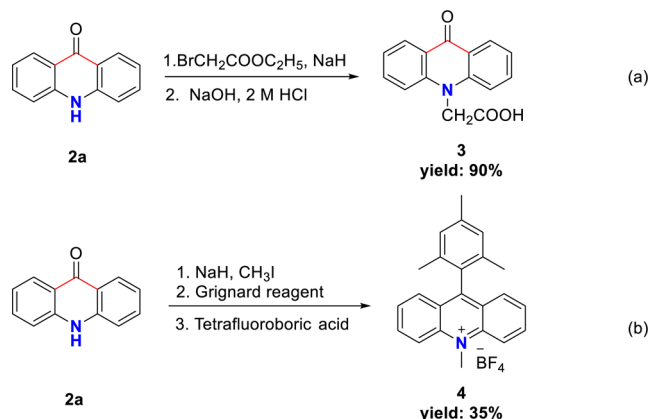
reaction of diphenylamine with electron-donating substituents (such as Me, OMe, OEt, and *t*-Bu) proceeded under the optimized reaction conditions in high yields (**2a–e**), while the electron-withdrawing group on the aromatic ring also furnished the desired products **2f**, but the yield was slightly lower. Moreover, the halogen substituent can be effectively compatible, and it is very important for further functionalization of acridones (**2g–i**). Subsequently, we investigated if oxidative carbonylation of symmetrical diphenylamines could form the corresponding desired product **2j**. Furthermore, the 3,5-dimethyl-*N*-phenylanilines and 3,5-difluoro-*N*-phenylanilines

were suitable for this reaction, with the desired products obtained in excellent yields (**2k,l**). In addition, substitution on the *ortho*- or *meta*-position of the diphenylamines could also lead to the desired product in good yield (**2m–o**). To our delight, the reaction also worked well with di(naphthalen-2-yl)amines, leading to the corresponding product **2o** in 66% yield. Finally, the *N*₁,*N*₄-diphenylbenzene-1,3-diamines or 1,4-diamines that were used as substrates could also obtain the corresponding acridones **2p** and **2q** in 59% and 42% yields, respectively. It is worth noting that dibenzylamines did not generate the desired product. However, the 2-benzylisoindolin-1-one **2r** was obtained in satisfactory yield under the standard conditions (eq 1).¹²



Acridone having a keto group and a nitrogen atom at positions 9 and 10, respectively, resulted in a planar structure. This typical chemical structure scaffold is well reported to describe a wide range of biological potentials including anticancer, antimalarial, and fluorescence.^{1b,3c,13} We demonstrate herein the postsynthetic transformations of nitro-containing acridones as shown in Scheme 2. As one of the

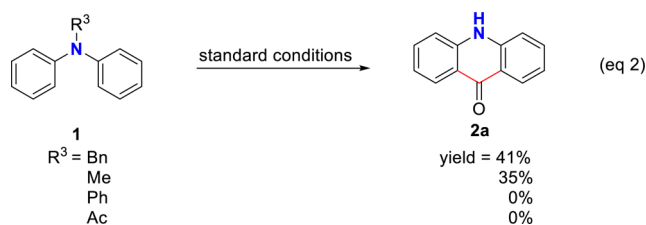
Scheme 2. Some of Synthetic Application of the Acridones



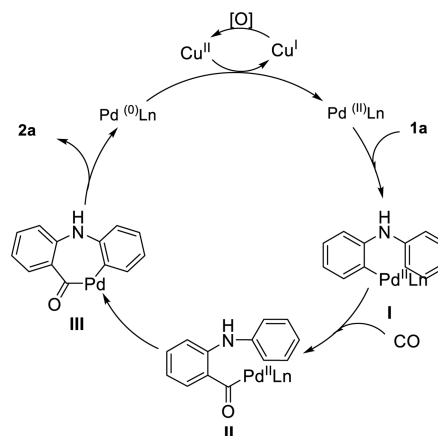
most potent low molecular weight antiviral agents, the traditional synthetic methods leading to 10-CMA often require tedious steps.¹⁴ However, only two steps are needed to obtain this product in 90% yield (Scheme 2a). Moreover, the photocatalyst **4** was also easily prepared in 35% yield in three steps by initial treatment of the corresponding acridones **2a** (Scheme 2b).¹⁵

Interestingly, changing the N-H group to N-Bn or N-Me could give the corresponding acridone **2a** in 41% and 35% yield by releasing the C–N bond.¹⁶ However, changing the N-H group to N-Ph or N-Ac failed to yield the desired product (eq 2).

Although the mechanism is not completely clear yet, based on our previous experiment results and the literature,^{8j,9c,17} a postulated reaction pathway is proposed as shown in Scheme 3. Initially, the electrophilic palladation of **1a** with Pd^{II} affords the arylpalladium species **I**, which further reacts with CO to produce the intermediate **II**. The subsequent intramolecular C–H functionalization and reductive elimination of **III** gives



Scheme 3. Postulated Reaction Pathway



the acridone **2a** and generates Pd⁰ species. Pd^{II} is then regenerated by oxidation of Cu^{II}. Finally, the Cu^{II} regenerated by oxidation of DTBP.

In conclusion, we have disclosed a palladium/copper-catalyzed oxidative C–H/C–H carbonylation of diphenylamines. This method provides an efficient and atom-economic way to access synthetically useful acridones. Various acridones were synthesized in good to high yields with excellent functional group tolerance. The acridone was also used in the synthesis of some useful materials. Application of oxidative C–H/C–H carbonylation in the synthesis of other cyclic compounds is underway in our laboratory.

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website at DOI: 10.1021/acs.orglett.6b03356.

Experimental procedures, optimization of reaction conditions, characterization data, and NMR spectra of the products (PDF)

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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