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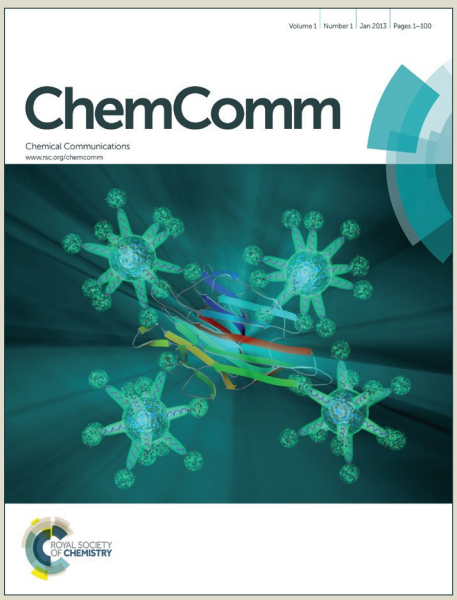

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ARTICLE TYPE

Pd-Catalyzed α-Selective C(sp^3)-H Acetoxylation of Amides through an Unusual Cyclopalladation Mechanism

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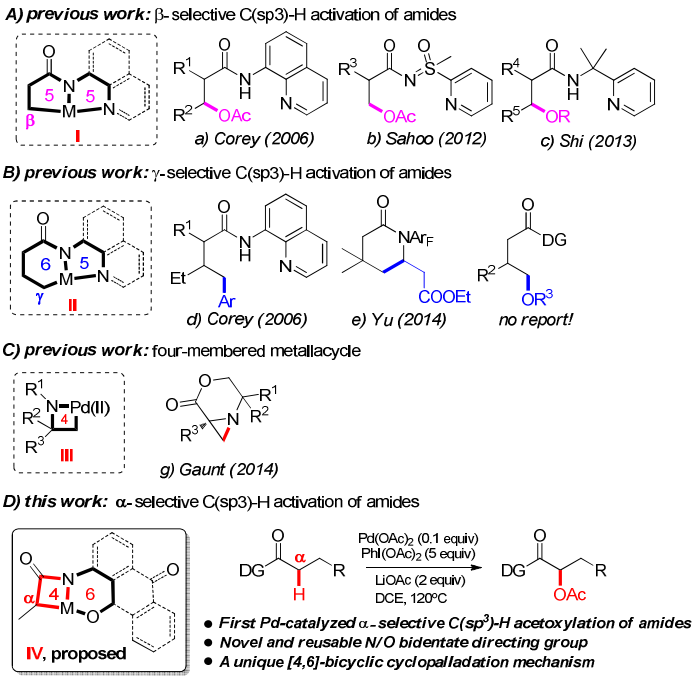
Received (in XXX, XXX) Xth XXXXXXXXX 20XX, Accepted Xth XXXXXXXXX 20XX
DOI: 10.1039/b000000x

We report the first example of Pd-catalyzed site-selective α-C(sp^3)-H oxidation/acetoxylation of amides through an unusual [4,6]-bicyclic metallacycle intermediate with 1-aminonanthraquinone as a new bidentate directing group. In addition to the distinct mechanism and high efficiency, the reaction is highly appealing due to the ample commercial source, low-costing, as well as easy removal and recycling of the auxiliary group.

Recent years have witnessed explosive advances in the field of directed C-H activation/functionalization.[1] However, functionalization of C(sp^3)-H bonds remains a challenging task.[2] Fortunately, bidentate directing groups (BDGs)[3] have been introduced as a new option to promote activation of many C(sp^3)-H bonds. 8-Aminoquinoline[4] as the earliest BDG was reported by Daugulis[4b] in 2005 and opened a new avenue for C(sp^3)-H activation. Later on, a few analogous BDGs have been developed and used in numerous C(sp^3)-H activation and subsequent transformations.[4,5]

Notably, nearly all BDGs prefer to assist β-selective C(sp^3)-H bond activation through a fused [5,5]-bicyclic metallacycle intermediate **I** (Scheme 1A).[3] For example, Corey's laboratory achieved β-selective C(sp^3)-H acetoxylation of various protected amino acid derivatives with 8-aminoquinoline as the BDG in 2006 (Scheme 1A, a).[4e] Sahoo[5a] and Shi's[5b] groups respectively developed substituted pyridine BDGs for the selective acetoxylation and alkoxylation at the β-positions of amides in 2012 and 2013 (Scheme 1A, b and c). In comparison to the majority of β-selective C-H functionalization, a few examples of γ-arylation and olefination were reported as well although limited to substrates either with bulky tertiary β-C-H bonds (Scheme 1B, d)[4e] or in the absence of β-C-H bonds (Scheme 1B, e).[6] While γ- or α-oxidation of amides controlled by BDGs, to the best of our knowledge, has not been explored yet.

Transition metal-catalyzed α-arylation and alkylation have been reported through enolate intermediate.[7,8] However, in the case of α-C(sp^3)-H bond oxidation of amides, only traditional enolate oxidations are available, in which strong bases, such as LiHMDS or NaHMDS, anhydrous condition, and much low temperature are generally necessary.[9] Therefore, we decide to take advantage of the C-H activation strategy[4,5,10] by developing an appropriate BDG to facilitate α-C(sp^3)-H bond activation/acetoxylation of amides in a more economic and convenient fashion.



Scheme 1. DG-controlled site-selective acetoxylation of carbonates.

The major obstacle of α-C(sp^3)-H bond activation via a bidentate auxiliary directing procedure other than an enolization intermediate lies in the difficulty in the formation of a proposed [4,6]-bicyclic metallacycle intermediate **IV** (scheme 1D), which is structurally distinct from the common and thermodynamically more stable [5,5]-bicyclic counterpart (e.g. **I**) for β-C(sp^3)-H bond activation, or the [6,5]-bicyclic intermediate (e.g. **II**) for γ-C(sp^3)-H bond activation. To reach our goal, we first attempted to discover a new type of BDGs, which has the capacity to provide a larger coordination angle to allow forming the expected six-membered metallacycle as in **IV** (Scheme 1D). This expanded six-membered BDG-metal coordination would then likely force the metal complex to insert into the α-C(sp^3)-H via a highly strained four-membered metallacycle intermediate (as in **IV**). Very recently, Gaunt's group communicated on Nature a Pd-catalyzed C-H activation of aliphatic amines through a unique four-membered ring cyclopalladation intermediate **III** (Scheme 1C) for the first time.[11] This extraordinary work convinced us the likelihood of achieving α-C(sp^3)-H bond activation/acetoxylation

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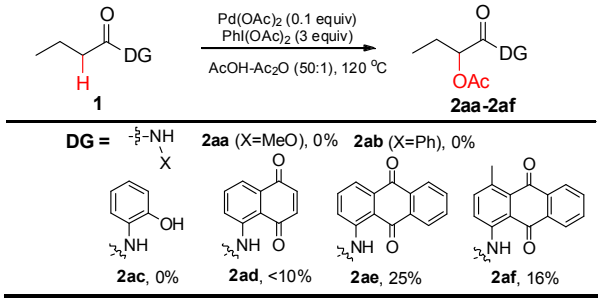
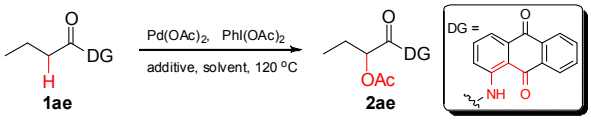
via a four-six-membered bicyclic metallacycle **IV**.



Scheme 2. Effect of the directing groups

We first screened a number of widely used MDGs (monodendate directing groups) and BDGs (Scheme 2). No reactions were observed using MDGs (**2aa** and **2ab**), or 2-aminophenol as a BDG (**2ac**). Gratifyingly, the expected α-acetoxylated product **2ad** was obtained when 1-aminonaphthoquinone was used as the BDG, albeit in a low yield of 10%. Slightly higher yields were obtained by using the tricyclic 1-aminoanthraquinones as the BDGs (**2ae** and **2af**).

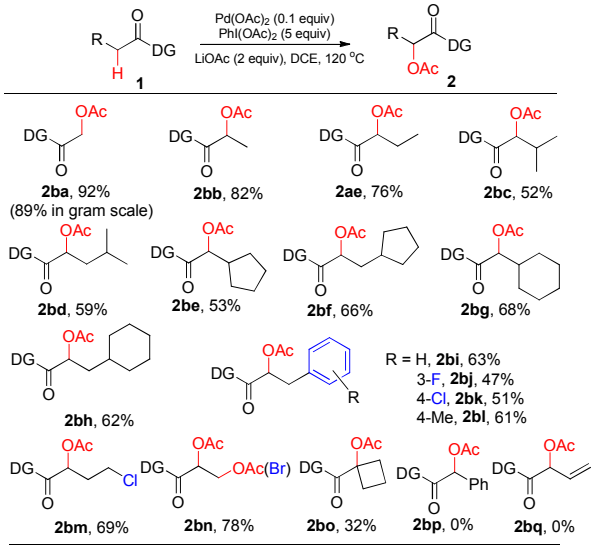
Table 1. Optimization of reaction conditions.[a,b]



Entry	Additive (2 equiv)	Solvent	Yield (%)
1	-	AcOH-Ac_2O (50:1)	25
2	-	Toluene	12
3	-	DCE	38
4	-	Dioxane	0
5	-	DMF	5
6	$K_2S_2O_8$	DCE	17
7	MeCOOO*t*-Bu	DCE	8
8	AgOAc	DCE	58
9	Ag_2O	DCE	48
10	CuI	DCE	5
11	LiOAc	DCE	62
12[c]	LiOAc	DCE	76
13	NaO*t*-Bu	DCE	47
14[d]	LiOAc	DCE	0
15[e]	LiOAc	DCE	0

[a]N-anthraquinon-1-ylbutyramide **1ae** (0.1 mmol), $Pd(OAc)_2$ (0.1 equiv), $PhI(OAc)_2$ (3 equiv) and additive (2 equiv) in solvent (0.5 mL) in a sealed tube at 120 °C for 12 h. [b]Isolated yields were listed. [c]5 equiv $PhI(OAc)_2$ were used. [d]Without $Pd(OAc)_2$. [e]Without $PhI(OAc)_2$.

Further optimization of the reaction conditions was set out using **1ae** as the model substrate (Table 1). Screening of solvents showed that DCE gave the highest yield (entries 1-5). The yield of **2ae** was increased slightly when Ag_2O (entry 9) or NaO*t*-Bu (entry 13) was added, but decreased much when $K_2S_2O_8$ (entry 6), $MeCO_3t$-Bu (entry 7), or CuI (entry 10) was used. It was of interest that addition of AgOAc (entry 8) or LiOAc (entry 11) led to dramatically increased yield. Finally, a high yield of 76% was achieved by using $Pd(OAc)_2$ (0.1 equiv), $PhI(OAc)_2$ (5 equiv), and LiOAc (2 equiv) in DCE at 120 °C for 12 h (entry 12).



Scheme 3. Acetoxylation of α-C(sp^3)-H bonds of amides.[a,b]
[a]The reactions were performed with **1** (0.1 mmol), $Pd(OAc)_2$ (0.1 equiv), $PhI(OAc)_2$ (5 equiv) and LiOAc (2 equiv) in DCE (0.5 mL) in a sealed tube at 120 °C for 12 h. [b]Isolated yields were listed.

With the optimized reaction conditions, we explored the reaction scope and generality with various amide substrates **1**. The results were summarized in Scheme 3. It was found that substrates containing primary α-C(sp^3)-H bonds gave excellent yields (**2ba**, 92%). Amides containing α-methylene C(sp^3)-H bonds, which were more difficult to cleave than primary ones, also proceeded smoothly under the optimal conditions, although with somewhat lower yields (**2bb-2bd**, 52-82%). Excellent α-selectivity was achieved under the standard conditions, especially for substrate **2bb**, which contained a primary β-C(sp^3)-H bond while no β-product was observed. Amides **1** with larger cyclic aliphatic substituents were tolerant as well, and gave corresponding products **2be-2bh** in 53-68% yields. Substrates with aromatic substituents were also tested, and all reactions went through smoothly providing products **2bi-2bl** in moderate yields (47-63%). No significant differences were observed between electron-neutral, electron-deficient, and electron-rich substituents. Chloro substituent was well survived (**2bm**, 69%), while bromo substituent on the substrate was acetoxylated simultaneously, leading to diacetate **2bn** in 78% yield. It was worth mentioning that acetoxylated product **2bo** containing an α-tertiary carbon center was also obtained through the proposed Pd-catalyzed α-C-H functionalization. However, phenyl acetamide and but-3-enamide were found unstable in the standard reaction conditions, and decomposition of the amide bond occurred in both cases (**2bp**, **2bq**).

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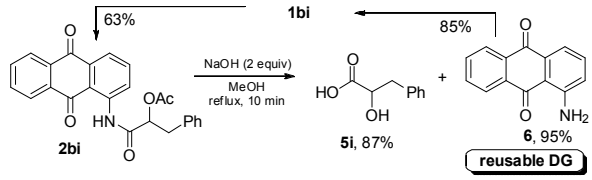
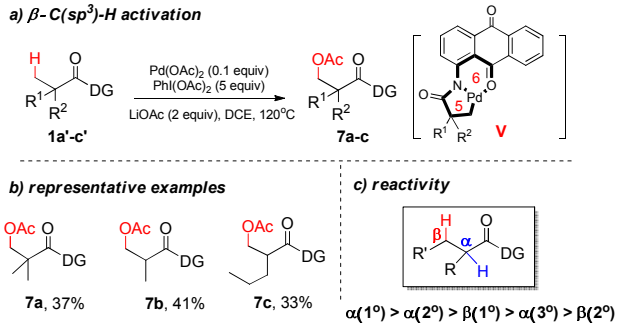
To evaluate the efficiency and practicality of this catalytic process, a scale-up experiment (1.0 g of **1ba**) was carried out. As a result, gram-scale preparation of **2ba** was achieved in 89% yield (Scheme 3). Encouraged by the successful acetoxylation of α-C(sp^3)-H bonds, we further expanded the reaction protocol to the *ortho* C(sp^2)-H bond activation and obtained the corresponding aryl acetates in high yields (ESI). The new BDG - 1-aminoanthraquinone could be easily cleaved and recycled. As shown in Scheme 4, refluxing product **2bi** in MeOH with 2 equiv NaOH for 10 minutes gave the α-hydroxyl acid **5i** in 87% yield, together with 1-aminoanthraquinone (**6**) recovered in nearly quantitative yield (95%). The recycled crude 1-aminoanthraquinone was then used directly in the preparation of amides **1** for further C-H activation without significant loss of yields.



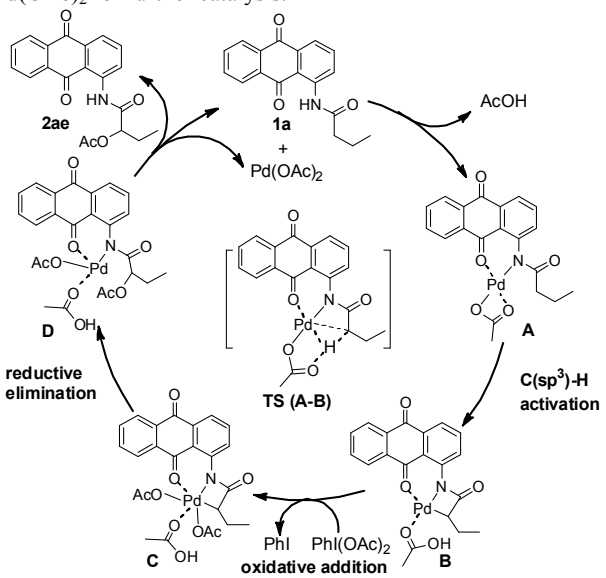
Scheme 4. Reusability of the directing group (DG).

With the aim to rule out a Pd-enolate mechanism, as well as to explore the practical utility of our BDG, blocking experiments at the α-position were conducted. As shown in Scheme 5, substrate with α-position fully blocked (**1a'**) gave β-acetoxylation product **7a**, indicating that β-acetoxylation is a competitive path to the α-acetoxylation, although it is unfavorable (37%) in our current condition. To compare the reactivity of β(1°)-C-H and α(3°)-C-H bonds, methyl propanamide **1b'** and methyl pentanamide **1c'** were tested as well. β-Acetoxylated products **7b** and **7c** were obtained in 41 and 33% yields, respectively through the intermediate **V**, but no α-acetoxylated products were detected. This result ruled out the possibility of a traditional Pd-enolate process involved in current protocol. These findings, together with that from Scheme 3, suggested a C-H activation preferring sequence as α(1°) > α(2°) > β(1°) > α(3°) > β(2°) (Scheme 5C).



Scheme 5. Acetoxylation of β-C(sp^3)-H bonds of amides and C-H insertion propensity of different types of C-H bonds.

On the basis of these results, a plausible mechanism was depicted in Scheme 6. First, the 1-aminoanthraquinone component serves as a BDG that coordinates with palladium to form intermediate **A** by proton abstraction, followed by the key α-C(sp^3)-H activation step via a concerted metallation-deprotonation (CMD)[12,13] mechanism (**TS (A-B)**), thus leading to the cyclopalladated intermediate **B**. Next, oxidation of Pd(II) to Pd(IV) by PhI($OAc)_2$ forms intermediate **C**. Subsequent reductive elimination delivers the acetoxylation product **2a** and releases $Pd(OAc)_2$ for further catalysis.



Scheme 6. Proposed mechanism.

To further validate the α-selectivity in our C(sp^3)-H acetoxylation of amides, the density functional theory (DFT) calculations were performed with the Gaussian-09 software package.[12] Based on CMD transition states[13] of α- and β-C-H activation, participation of three-center two-electron agostic intermediates are suggested (Figure 1, **TS (A-B)**, **TS (A-B')**).

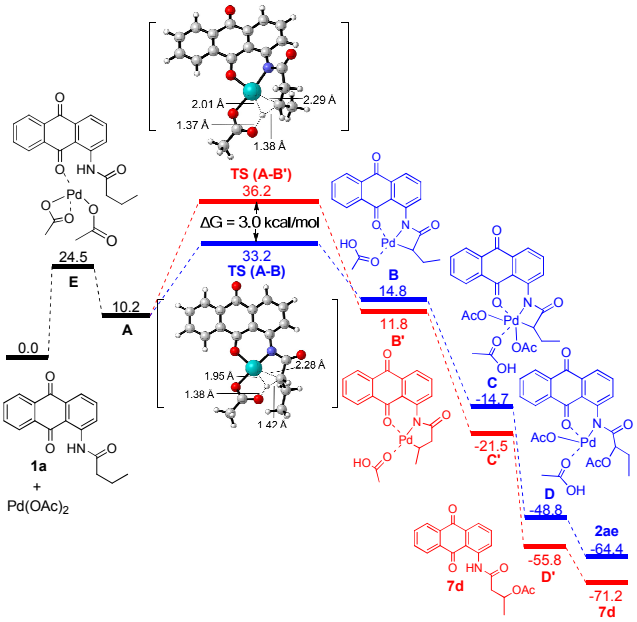


Figure 1. Free energy profile. Energies ΔG in kcal/mol.

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The calculated distances between the palladium atom and the C-H σ bond were 1.95 Å in **TS (A-B)** and 2.01 Å in **TS (A-B')**, respectively, obviously within the distance of a three-center two-electron agostic interaction. Besides, a lower energy discrepancy of about 3.0 kcal/mol was observed for **TS (A-B)** over **TS (A-B')**, suggesting a favorable α-selectivity in this C(sp^3)-H bond activation, which was in agreement with our experiment results. Further investigation on the geometry of the optimized intermediate **A** revealed that the 5,6-fused palladacycle is difficult to be formed as it requires a significant rotation of the C(O)-C(α) bond, which increases molecular energy apparently (See ESI).

Conclusions

In conclusion, we have successfully developed a novel removable bidentate directing group (BDG)-controlled α-C(sp^3)-H acetoxylation via a unique [4,6]-bicyclic cyclopalladation pathway. This is the first example of α-C(sp^3)-H oxidation/acetoxylation of amides through a Pd-catalyzed BDG-induced C-H activation process. The cheap and ample commercial source of the newly discovered BDG, together with its easy on-and-off property, makes this reaction with great practical utility.

Acknowledgment

This work is supported by Chinese National Natural Science Foundation (81430080, 81125021, 81373277) and by the Major State Basic Research Development Program (2015CB910603).

Notes and references

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† Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI) available: See DOI: 10.1039/b000000x/

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