Highly Carbon-Selective Monofluoromethylation of β -Ketoesters with Fluoromethyl lodide

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Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: A highly carbon-selective monofluoromethylation of a broad range of β -ketoesters with fluoromethyl iodide under mild conditions is described. The uses of lithium tert-butoxide as the base and diglyme as the solvent made great contributions to the high C/O regioselectivity.



ver the past 20 years, fluorine-containing compounds have attracted increasing attention in pharmaceutical and agrochemical fields.¹ Nowadays, the strategic incorporation of a fluorine atom or a fluoroalkyl group (such as CF₃, CF_2H , and CH_2F) in different stages of drug development has become routine practice in drug discovery.² In this context, monofluoromethyl compounds are particularly valuable because the CH₂F functionality can mimic CH₃ and CH₂OH groups, which are often encountered in biologically active molecules.³ But methods for the direct introduction of a monofluoromethyl group are far less developed in contrast.⁴ Direct monofluoromethylation has been reported by using fluoromethanol⁵ and its derivative fluoromethyl triflate⁶ or fluoromethyl halides (ClCH₂ F_1^7 BrCH₂ F_1^8 or ICH₂ F^9) (1a-e, Figure 1). Recently, more shelf-stable yet highly reactive monofluoromethylating reagents (1f-k, Figure 1) have been developed.¹⁰⁻¹⁵



Figure 1. Direct monofluoromethylating reagents.

The control of carbon/oxygen (C/O) regioselectivity in the alkylation of enolates is one of the oldest research areas in organic chemistry.¹⁶ The keto-enol tautomerism of substrates, alkylating agents, and reaction conditions, in particular, the base and solvents, play important roles in the C/O regioisomer ratio.¹⁷ Although the control of C/O regioselectivity in the difluoromethylation of 1,3-dicarbonyl compounds has been widely researched in recent years,¹⁸ the development of the control of C/O regioselectivity in the monofluoromethylation of 1,3-dicarbonyl compounds has been far less. In 2011, Shibata and coworkers discovered that an electrophilic monofluoromethylating reagent, N,N-dimethyl-S-monofluoromethyl-S-phenylsulfoximiniun hexafluorophosphate 1i, was able to react with a variety of 1,3-dicarbonyl compounds. But only O-selective monofluoromethylation was observed (Scheme 1a).¹³ Shortly after, Shen and coworkers developed

Scheme 1. Regioselective Electrophilic Monofluoromethylation of β -Ketoesters

a) Previous work: Regioselective O-monofluoromethylation of 1,3-dicarbonyl compounds



another two electrophilic monofluoromethylating reagents 1k, and both 2-aryl- and 2-alkyl-substituted malonates can react with monofluoromethyl(4-nitro-phenyl)sulfonium bis(carbomethoxy)methylide to generate the corresponding C-selective monofluoromethylated malonates (Scheme 1b).¹⁵ However, the direct introduction of CH₂F to the Csp³ center of general β -ketoesters remains challenging. Herein we report the first example of the highly carbon-selective monofluoromethylation of β -ketoesters with fluoromethyl iodide under mild conditions (Scheme 1c).

Initially, we chose the reaction of β -ketoester methyl 1-oxo-1,2,3,4-tetrahydronaphthalene-2-carboxylate 2a with fluoro-



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methyl iodide (reagent 1e) as a model reaction to optimize the reaction conditions. To the best of our knowledge, the base and solvent play the most important roles of the C/O-alkylation ratio. After screening plenty of inorganic bases such as different barium salts, sodium salts, and potassium salts in DMF, we found that the reactions occurred smoothly to give the monofluoromethylated products (3a + 4a) in good yields, but the C/O ratio was not satisfactory (Table 1, entries 1–7).

Table 1. Optimization of the Reaction Conditions^a

	OMe -	+ 1 base, solvent rt, 2 h		OMe CH ₂ F +	OCH ₂ F O OMe
2	la		3a		4a
entry	reagent	base	solvent	yield (%) ^b	C/O ratio ^c
1	1e	Cs ₂ CO ₃	DMF	91	8:92
2	1e	CsF	DMF	57	12:88
3	1e	CsOH·H ₂ O	DMF	77	9:91
4	1e	NaOH	DMF	71	37:63
5	1e	NaHCO ₃	DMF	trace	
6	1e	КОН	DMF	73	29:71
7	1e	K ₂ CO ₃	DMF	69	15:85
8	1e	DBU	DMF	NR	
9	1e	DIPEA	DMF	NR	
10	1e	Et ₃ N	DMF	NR	
11	1e	LiOH	DMF	88	69:31
12	1e	Li_2CO_3	DMF	<5	
13	1e	LiOAc	DMF	<5	
14	1e	tBuOLi	DMF	86	76:24
15	1e	tBuOLi	toluene	trace	
16	1e	tBuOLi	DCM	trace	
17	1e	<i>t</i> BuOLi	dioxane	20	45:55
18	1e	<i>t</i> BuOLi	NMP	67	56:44
19	1e	tBuOLi	DMA	80	52:48
20	1e	<i>t</i> BuOLi	DME	52	81:19
21	1e	<i>t</i> BuOLi	THF	27	75:25
22	1e	tBuOLi	diglyme	87	90:10
23	1e	<i>t</i> BuOLi	MeCN	48	68:32
24	1c	tBuOLi	diglyme	64	80:20
25	1d	tBuOLi	diglyme	70	85:15
26	1k	tBuOLi	diglyme	<10	

^{*a*}Reaction conditions: 2a (0.2 mmol), reagent 1 (0.5 mmol), base (0.4 mmol) in solvent (2 mL) at room temperature for 2 h. ^{*b*}Yields (3a + 4a) were determined by GC. ^{*c*}Ratio of 3a/4a was determined by ¹⁹F NMR spectroscopy with fluorobenzene as the internal standard.

When an organic base such as DBU, DIPEA, or Et₃N was used, no corresponding monofluoromethylated products were observed (Table 1, entries 8–10). Considering that lithium salts made great contributions to the highly C-selective difluoromethylation of β -ketoesters,^{18d,e} we then screened lithium salts as the base. To our delight, when a lithium salt LiOH was used, the C/O ratio was significantly improved to 69:31 (Table 1, entry 11). We then further investigated other lithium salts; the formation of monofluoromethylated products (**3a** + **4a**) was observed in <5% yield when Li₂CO₃ or LiOAc was used (Table 1, entries 12 and 13), but a slightly better result was observed when *t*BuOLi was used (Table 1, entry 14). Next, we studied the effect of the solvents on the yield and the regioselectivity of the reaction (Table 1, entries 15–23). It was found that diglyme gave the reaction satisfactory results in terms of both yield and regioselectivity (Table 1, entry 22). The screening of other monofluoromethylating reagents 1c, 1d, and 1k did not give better results (Table 1, entries 24–26). Furthermore, other reaction parameters such as time, temperature, and concentration were also screened. (For more details, see Table S1.) After screening the equivalent of ICH₂F, the equivalent of *t*BuOLi, the reaction temperature, the reaction time, and the reaction concentration, the combination of β -ketoesters 2/ICH₂F (2.5 equiv)/*t*BuOLi (2.0 equiv) in diglyme (0.1 M) at room temperature for 2 h was selected as the optimized reaction condition.

With the optimized reaction conditions in hand, the scope of the monofluoromethylation of β -ketoesters 2 was explored (Scheme 2). A wide range of both tetralone carboxylates and





^{*a*}Reaction conditions: **2** (0.2 mmol), reagent **1e** (0.5 mmol), *t*BuOLi (0.4 mmol) in diglyme (2 mL) at room temperature for 2 h. Isolated yields. The C/O ratio was determined by ¹⁹F NMR spectroscopy with fluorobenzene as the internal standard. ^{*b*}Gram-scale synthesis. ^{*c*}DMF was used as solvent. ^{*d*}Cs₂CO₃ was used as base and DMF was used as solvent.

indanone carboxylates reacted with fluoromethyl iodide to afford the corresponding Csp^3 - CH_2F products **3a-t** bearing a quaternary carbon center in good yield with high C/O regioselectivies. Tetralone carboxylates **2a** without a substituent afforded the corresponding product **3a** in 75% isolated yield with good C/O selectivity (90:10). Tetralone carboxylates with a methyl or methoxy group on the benzene ring provided the desired products **3b-d** with slightly improved yields and regioselectivities, whereas **2e** with a bromine atom on the benzene ring provided the product **3e** with slightly decreased yield. The ethyl tetralone carboxylates **2f** and the

allyl tetralone carboxylates 2g were also adapted to this reaction system, affording desired products 3f,g in good yield and with good regioselectivities. Moreover, indanone carboxylates 2h-t, including electron-donating-group-substituted methyl indanone carboxylates 2i-k, electron-withdrawinggroup-substituted substrates 2l-n, and alkyl, allyl, benzyl, and adamantyl indanone carboxylates 20-t, afforded the corresponding Csp³-CH₂F products 3h-t in high yield (69-86%) with high regioselectivities (C/O 90:10 to 98:2). Additionally, a decrease in yield (61%) and regioselectivity (71:29) was observed for the β -ketoester 2u with a sevenmembered ring. The heterocyclo-ketoesters 2v and 2w were also tolerated, providing 3v in 72% yield with 88:12 C/O regioselectivity and 3w in 69% yield with 90:10 C/O regioselectivity. The current process was scalable, as demonstrated by the gram-scale synthesis of 3a (69% isolated yield) and **3h** (78% isolated yield). The less reactive acyclic aryl β ketoesters 2x and 2y were not compatible, affording the corresponding C-selective monofluoromethylated products 3x and 3y in <10% yield. When changing the solvent from diglyme to DMF, 3y was obtained in 31% yield with unsatisfactory C/O regioselectivity. Further applications of fluoromethyl iodide in the C-monofluoromethylation of malonates were also evaluated. 3z and 3aa were obtained in high yield with >99:1 C/O regioselectivities when using Cs_2CO_3 as the base and DMF as the solvent.

Mechanistically, the carbon-selective monofluoro-methylation of β -ketoester usually proceeds via a direct electrophilic substitution pathway. To gain more support for the high C/O regioselectivity, we studied the reaction of β -ketoester with fluoromethyl iodide by density functional theory calculations.¹⁹ As shown in Figure 2, the relative free energy of the intermediate structure **In**-**C** for the electrophilic attack of the carbon atom is energetically lower by 11.8 kcal/mol than



Figure 2. Energy profile (ΔG in kcal/mol) computed at the M06-2X/ 6-311G* level of theory for the formation of C- and O-monofluoromethylated products

that of In-O for the electrophilic attack of the oxygen atom. The corresponding monofluoromethylated product 3a is energetically lower by 24.0 kcal/mol than 4a, leading to the ratio of C/O regioselectivity of 90:10.

Further synthetic applications of the $C-CH_2F$ products were investigated. As is shown in Scheme 3, compound 5 was

Scheme 3. Synthetic Applications of C-CH₂F Products



obtained via Et_3SiH/TFA reduction in 74% yield from **3h**, and compound **6** was obtained via $LiAlH_4$ reduction in 79% yield from **3i**. In addition, with the product **3r** in hand, a Pd-catalyzed Tsuji decarboxylative asymmetric allylic alkylation (DAAA)²⁰ was also surveyed, but no desired product 7 was obtained (Scheme 3c; for more details, see Table S2). Therefore, the synthesis of chiral monofluoromethylated compounds remains challenging.

In conclusion, we have developed the first protocol for highly carbon-selective monofluoromethylation of β -ketoesters with fluoromethyl iodide under mild conditions. A broad scope of β -ketoesters were converted into the corresponding Cselective CH₂F-products in good yield with high regioselectivities. The effect of the lithium ion had a great influence on the results. On the basis of the construction of chiral carbon, the development of the asymmetric monofluoromethylation is expected to make progress.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

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Experimental procedures, characterization data, and ¹H NMR, ¹³C NMR, and ¹⁹F NMR for products (PDF)

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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