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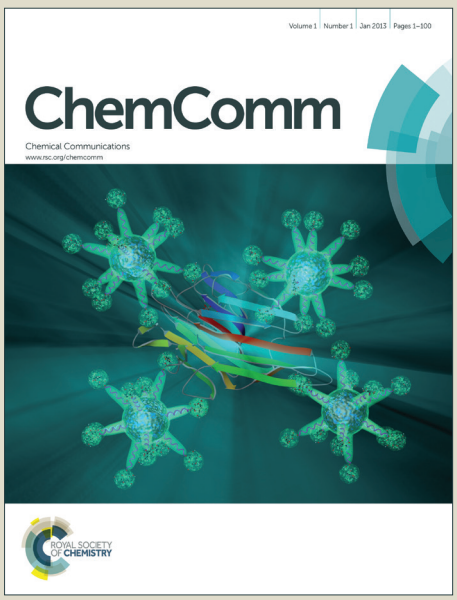

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Transition Metal-free Aroylation of *NH*-Sulfoximines with Methyl Arenes

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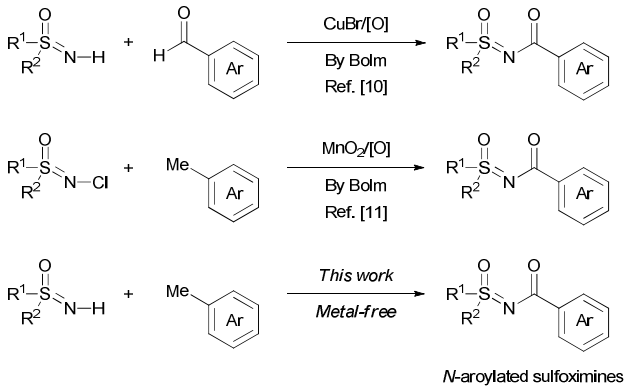
A novel protocol towards *N*-aroylated sulfoximines from *NH*-sulfoximines and methyl arenes was herein demonstrated. The reaction took place in the presence of elemental iodine, requiring for no external organic solvents, transition metal-catalysts or ligands. The aroylated products were obtained from the oxidative transformation in moderate to excellent yields (up to 94% yields) with a broad substrate scope (up to 35 examples) through a radical pathway.

Recently, sulfoximine chemistry has attracted more and more attention due to the extensive utilizations in the pharmaceutical and agricultural applications,[1] as well as for being chiral precursors or ligands in asymmetric synthesis.[2] What's more, sulfoximines also served as pivotal intermediates for the construction of other heterocyclic compounds.[3] *NH*-sulfoximines undertook various transformations such as arylation,[4] alkylation,[5] vinylation,[6] alkynylation[7] *etc al*.[8] easily due to the fickleness of the *NH* group. Amongst, aroylation of *NH*-sulfoximines has been well-established with benzoyl chlorides, aromatic carboxylic acids.[9] However, the traditional methods for the *N*-aroylated sulfoximines still suffer from the limitations like toxic reagents, harsh conditions and low conversions. To solve the above-mentioned issues, great attempt has been devoted over the topic. For example, Bolm has disclosed a copper(I)-catalyzed *N*-aroylation method from *NH*-sulfoximines and benzaldehydes under the oxidative conditions through a dual C-H/N-H activations pathway.[10] Then, another aroylation protocol of *N*-chloro sulfoximines with methyl arenes was described from the same group, using MnO_2 as the catalyst.[11] Meanwhile, it is noteworthy that methyl arenes have been applied successfully for the formation of carbon-heteroatom bonds through the C-H activation and successive oxidative functionalization pathway.[12] The metallic catalysts like Pd, Cu and Mn salts were proved necessary to the transformations.[12] However, to rule out the transition metal-catalysts, contributions have been made to seek the possibilities for utilization of methyl arenes as aroylation coupling partners towards *N*-aroylated sulfoximines in the presence of non-metal-catalysts. Thus, we wish to demonstrate a novel protocol for the combination of the two nucleophilic reagents catalysed by elemental iodine howbeit the inertness of the benzylic C(sp^3)-H bonds on methyl arenes.[13]

Scheme 1 *N*-Aroylation of Sulfoximines



With this in mind, reactions were embarked for the optimal conditions with toluene (**1a**) and *NH*-sulfoximine (**2a**) as model substrates (Table 1). In the presence of a catalytic amount of I_2 (20 mol%) and *tert*-butyl hydroperoxide (TBHP), *N*-benzoyl sulfoximine **3aa** was obtained in moderate yield (58% for entry 1). Disappointingly, other oxidants like DTBP (Di-*tert*-butyl peroxide), oxone, $K_2S_2O_8$ and H_2O_2 were proved totally ineffective to the transformation for no product was detected after 6 h (entries 2 - 5). However, the participation of the oxidant TBHP was significant to the reaction. The yield decreased dramatically to 28% when the reaction took place in the absence of TBHP (entry 6). Surprisingly, the addition of Na_2CO_3 (50 mol%) improved the yield greatly up to 91% under the air atmosphere, and **3aa** was obtained in 89% yield when the reaction was conducted under the nitrogen atmosphere (entry 7). However, no reaction was detected by replacement of Na_2CO_3 with triethyl amine (TEA) (entry 8). Other iodine sources,

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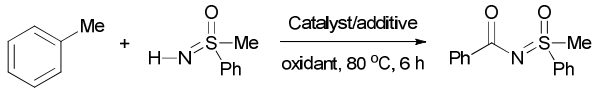
which were able to offer elemental iodine when combined with external oxidant,[13] were also checked. Pleasingly, KI, *t*Bu_4NI and NIS afforded the desired product **3aa** successfully, but in lower yields, from 38% to 68% (entries 9 – 11).

Table 1 Selected results for optimization of conditions[a]



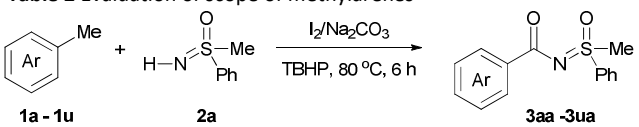
1a **2a** **3aa**

Entry	catalysts	additives	oxidants	Yields (%)[b]
1	I_2	--	TBHP	58
2	I_2	--	DTBP	n.d.[c]
3	I_2	--	oxone	n.d.
4	I_2	--	$K_2S_2O_8$	n.d.
5	I_2	--	H_2O_2	n.d.
6	I_2	--	--	28[d]
7	I_2	Na_2CO_3	TBHP	91 (89[e])
8	I_2	Et_3N	TBHP	n.d.
9	KI	Na_2CO_3	TBHP	42
10	*n*Bu_4NI	Na_2CO_3	TBHP	n.d. (38[f])
11	NIS	Na_2CO_3	TBHP	68

[a] Reaction conditions: **1a** (6 mmol, 20 equiv.), **2a** (0.3 mmol), catalyst (0.06 mmol, 20 mol%), additive (0.15 mmol, 50 mol%), oxidant (1.2 mmol, 4.0 equiv.) at 80 °C for 6 h. [b] Isolated yields. [c] n.d. for not detected. [d] I_2 (0.3 mmol) was used instead of I_2 (0.06 mmol)/TBHP (0.6 mmol). [e] N_2 (1 atm) atmosphere was used instead of air (1 atm). [f] The yield was obtained in the absence of Na_2CO_3.

With the optimal conditions in hand, the limitations and scope of the substrates were evaluated (Table 2). Firstly, the functional groups on the *para*- position of the methyl arenes were tested. Both electron-donating and electron-withdrawing functional groups were well-tolerated in the system. For example, 4-methyl- (**1b**), 4-*n*-butyl- (**1c**) and 4-methoxy- (**1d**) toluenes exhibited negative effect to the reaction for the desired products **3ba** – **3da** were obtained in lower yields, 79%, 81% and 82%, respectively (entries 2 – 4). While 4-fluoro- (**1e**), 4-chloro- (**1f**), 4-bromo- (**1g**) and 4-iodo- (**1h**) toluenes reacted with **2a** smoothly, furnishing the desired products **3ea** – **3ha** in yields ranging from 68% to 94% (entries 5 – 8). Other electron-withdrawing groups as ester (**1i**), cyano (**1j**), trifluoromethyl (**1k**) and nitro (**1l**) on the *para*- positions of the substrates were surprisingly compatible in the transformation, producing the expected compounds **3ia** – **3la** in 58% to 89% yields (entries 9 – 12). In a similar manner, various functional groups on the *meta*- position of toluenes were also checked in the protocol. *N*-(3-methylbenzoyl) sulfoximine (**3ma**), *N*-(3-fluorobenzoyl) sulfoximine (**3na**), *N*-(3-chlorobenzoyl) sulfoximine (**3oa**), *N*-(3-bromobenzoyl) sulfoximine (**3pa**), *N*-(3-iodobenzoyl) sulfoximine (**3qa**) and *N*-(3-nitrobenzoyl) sulfoximine (**3ra**) were successfully obtained, however, generally in lower yields, ranging from 59% to 80% (entries 13 -18). But *N*-(3,5-dimethylbenzoyl) sulfoximine (**3sa**) was smoothly produced in good yield (91% for entry 19). When 1,2-dimethylbenzene (**1t**) reacted with *NH*-sulfoximine (**2a**), offering the *N*-(2-methylbenzoyl) sulfoximine **3ta** in a moderate yield probably due to the steric hindrance (entry 20). It is noteworthy that 2-methyl naphthalene (**1u**) reacted with *NH*-sulfoximine (**2a**) towards the corresponding product **3ua** in 85% yield (entry 21). Howbeit, methyl-(hetero)arenes **1v** – **1x** failed to react with *NH*-sulfoximine **2a** (entries 22 – 24) for unclarified reasons.

Table 2 Evaluation of scope of methylarenes[a]



1a - 1u **2a** **3aa -3ua**

Entry	Ar	3	Yield (%)[b]
1	Ph	**3aa**	91
2	4-$CH_3C_6H_4$	**3ba**	79
3	4-*t*BuC_6H_4	**3ca**	81
4	4-$MeOC_6H_4$	**3da**	82
5	4-FC_6H_4	**3ea**	74
6	4-ClC_6H_4	**3fa**	94
7	4-BrC_6H_4	**3ga**	88
8	4-IC_6H_4	**3ha**	68
9	4-MeO(O)CC_6H_4	**3ia**	86
10	4-NCC_6H_4	**3ja**	87
11	4-$CF_3C_6H_4$	**3ka**	58
12	4-$NO_2C_6H_4$	**3la**	69
13	3-MeC_6H_4	**3ma**	80
14	3-FC_6H_4	**3na**	63
15	3-ClC_6H_4	**3oa**	68
16	3-BrC_6H_4	**3pa**	68
17	3-IC_6H_4	**3qa**	60
18	3-$NO_2C_6H_4$	**3ra**	59
19	3,5-$Me_2C_6H_3$	**3sa**	91
20	2-MeC_6H_4	**3ta**	58
21	2-Naphthyl	**3ua**	85
22	2-Furyl	**3va**	n.d.[c]
23	2-Thienyl	**3wa**	n.d.[c]
24	2-Pyridinyl	**3xa**	n.d.[c]

Note: [a] Reaction conditions: **1** (10 mmol, 20 equiv.), **2a** (0.5 mmol), I_2 (0.1 mmol), Na_2CO_3 (0.25 mmol), TBHP (2.0 mmol) at 80 °C for 6 h. [b] Isolated yields. [c] n.d. for not detected.

In the same manner, the limitations and scope of the substrates on *NH*-sulfoximines were checked in the reaction (Table 3). *S*-methyl-*S*-(4-methylphenyl)- (**2b**) and *S*-methyl-*S*-(4-methoxyphenyl)- (**2c**) *NH*-sulfoximines underwent the aroylation reaction with toluene (**1a**) smoothly, furnishing the corresponding products **3ab** and **3ac** in 85% and 89% yields, respectively (entries 1 and 2). Gratifyingly, *S*-methyl-*S*-halophenyl *NH*-sulfoximines such as *S*-methyl-*S*-(4-fluorophenyl)- (**2d**), *S*-methyl-*S*-(4-chlorophenyl)- (**2e**), *S*-methyl-*S*-(4-bromophenyl)- (**2f**) *NH*-sulfoximines reacted with toluene (**1a**) successfully, offering the desired products **3ad** – **3af** in moderate to good yields, from 67% to 82% (entries 3 - 5). Meantime, the activities of *S*-(3-substituted phenyl) or *S*-(2-substituted phenyl) like *S*-methyl-*S*-(3-methylphenyl)- (**2g**), *S*-methyl-*S*-(2-methylphenyl)- (**2h**) and *S*-methyl-*S*-(2-chlorophenyl)- (**2i**) *NH*-sulfoximines were transformed into the corresponding compounds **3ag** – **3ai** in yields ranging from 69% to 84% (entries 6 – 8). In contrast, hetero-

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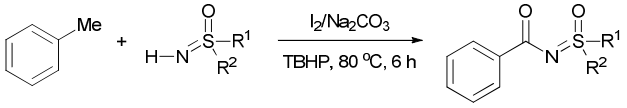
aromatic bearing *NH*-sulfoximine such as *S*-pyridinyl-*S*-methyl *NH*-sulfoximine (**2j**) furnished the corresponding *N*-benzoyl-*S*-pyridinyl-*S*-methyl sulfoximine (**3aj**) in a medium yield under the optimal conditions (62% for entry 9). Moreover, *S*-ethyl-*S*-phenyl (**2k**), *S*-isopropyl-*S*-phenyl (**2l**), *S*,*S*-diphenyl (**2m**) *NH*-sulfoximines exhibited good compatibility in the approach, affording the *N*-aroylated products **3ak** – **3am** in 78% to 92% yields (entries 10 - 12). Similarly, *N*-benzoyl-*S*,*S*-dimethyl sulfoximine (**3an**) and *N*-benzoyl-*S*,*S*-tetramethylene sulfoximine (**3ao**) were successfully produced in 78% and 80% yields, respectively (entries 13 and 14).

Table 3 Evaluation of scope of *NH*-sulfoximines[a]



1a **2b - 2o** **3ab - 3ao**

Entry	R^1	R^2	**3**	Yield (%)[b]
1	4-$CH_3C_6H_4$	Me	**3ab**	85
2	4-$CH_3OC_6H_4$	Me	**3ac**	89
3	4-FC_6H_4	Me	**3ad**	67
4	4-ClC_6H_4	Me	**3ae**	78
5	4-BrC_6H_4	Me	**3af**	82
6	3-$CH_3C_6H_4$	Me	**3ag**	84
7	2-$CH_3C_6H_4$	Me	**3ah**	79
8	2-ClC_6H_4	Me	**3ai**	69
9	Pyridinyl	Me	**3aj**	62
10	Ph	Et	**3ak**	78
11	Ph	*i*-Pr	**3al**	88
12	Ph	Ph	**3am**	92
13	Me	Me	**3an**	78
14	—$(CH_2)_4$—	(R^1R^2)	**3ao**	80

Note: [a] Reaction conditions: **1a** (10 mmol, 20 equiv.), **2** (0.5 mmol), I_2 (0.1 mmol), Na_2CO_3 (0.25 mmol), TBHP (2.0 mmol) at 80 °C for 6 h. [b] Isolated yields.

Nevertheless, the mechanism of the newly developed aroylation protocol remained blurry. According to the report from Bolm[10], it was considered the reaction might take place *via* the acyl-radical intermediate. Therefore, control reactions were conducted for clarification (Figure 1). When benzaldehyde was applied as the aroylation reagent, **3aa** was obtained in 62% yield from the iodine-catalysed protocol.

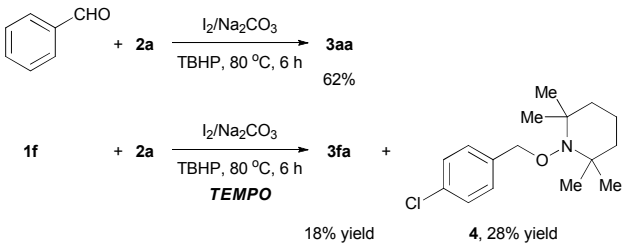


Figure 1 Control reactions with benzaldehyde and addition of TEMPO

However, with the addition of the radical scavenger TEMPO (2,2,6,6-tetramethylpiperidinooxy) into the reaction between **1f** and **2a**, the yield of **3fa** decreased sharply to 18%, and benzyl-TEMPO adduct **4** other than the acyl-TEMPO adduct was successfully isolated in 28% yield.[14] The result proved that the reaction likely took place *via* a benzyl radical intermediate.

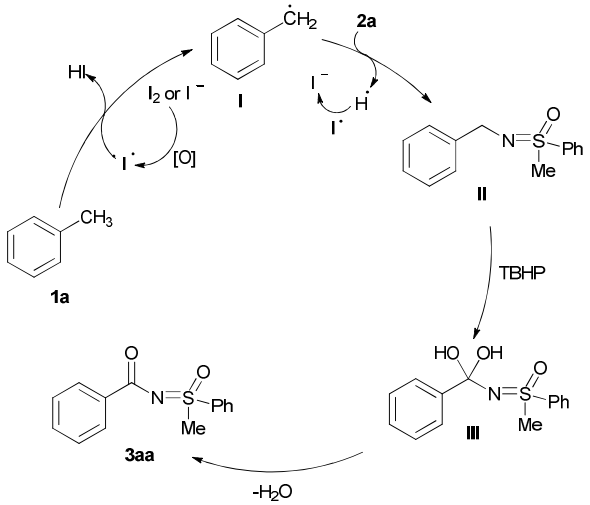
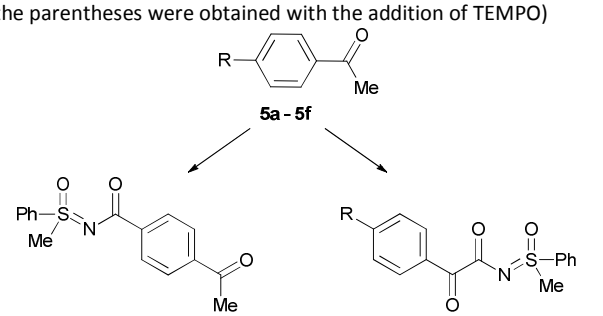


Figure 2 Proposed mechanism

Thus, possible mechanism of the transition metal-free protocol was proposed as shown in Figure 2. Firstly, iodine radical particle was generated from elemental iodine with the assistance of the oxidant TBHP. Then, another key radical intermediate **I** was formed in the presence of *in-situ* generated iodine radical, releasing a molecular of HI. Successively, the newly-formed intermediate **I** coupled with the substrate **2a** with a release of an H radical, forming another key intermediate *N*-benzyl sulfoximine **II**. The H radical was captured by another iodine radical to form a HI, which was easily neutralized with Na_2CO_3. Meanwhile, the newly-generated intermediate **II** underwent another fast oxidation step to furnish a diol intermediate **III** in the presence of TBHP, which afforded the desired product **3aa** after dehydration.

Scheme 2 Reactions between acetopheones **5** and **2a** (The yields in the parentheses were obtained with the addition of TEMPO)



6b: R = H, 43%; **6c**: R = MeO, 46%; **6d**: R = F, 45%; **6e**: R = Cl, 55%; **6f**: R = Br, 52%; **6g**: R = NO_2, 41%.

It is noteworthy that 4-methyl acetopheone (**5a**) reacted with *NH*-sulfoximine **2a** under the metal-free conditions smoothly (scheme

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2). Different products **3ya**, **6a** were isolated successfully, in 38% and 42% yields, respectively. The product **3ya** was formed by the radical procedure, while the compound **6a** was generated through a C-H/N-H dual activations pathway.[15] As expected, with the addition of TEMPO, the yield of **3ya** was depressed significantly and only trace was isolated while the yield of the product **6a** arose to 48% (shown in the parentheses). Furthermore, the compatibilities of the substituents on the acetophenone were checked in the system, and the corresponding *N*-(2-oxo-2-arylacetyl)-sulfoximines **6b** – **6g** were furnished in yields ranging from 41% - 55% as shown in scheme 2.

Conclusions

In summary, a new protocol towards *N*-aroylated sulfoximines from methyl arenes and *NH*-sulfoximines was disclosed. The simple and benign method feathers for free of transition metal -catalysts, and no extra organic solvents are required. The transformation offers a practical and facile synthetic tool for the useful compounds.

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