

Palladium-Catalyzed Allenamide Carbopalladation/Allylation with Active Methine Compounds

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Various indoles and isoquinolinones bearing a quaternary carbon center were achieved with good efficiency, a broad substrate scope and good functional group tolerance. This reaction underwent cascade oxidative addition, carbopalladation, and allylic alkylation, and two new C–C bonds were formed in one pot.



A ll-carbon quaternary centers are widely distributed in natural products and pharmaceuticals, which can greatly increase the three-dimensionality of molecules and significantly improve the target selectivity, metabolic stability, and other pharmacy-related properties.¹ The construction of quaternary carbon skeleton has always been an important research topic in organic synthetic chemistry,² and it is also a challenging task. Over the past several decades, the alkylation,³ arylation,⁴ and allylic alkylation⁵ of active methine compounds have been well explored, which has provided efficient routes to access quaternary carbon frameworks. However, benzylation, in particular, the heterobenzylation reaction, has rarely been reported, and the benzylic reagents are mainly confined to activated benzyl bromides,⁶ benzyl alcohols,⁷ and their derivatives⁸ (Scheme 1a).

Indoles and isoquinolinones are two kinds of important heterocyclic skeletons that are frequently found in bioactive substances exhibiting broad biological and pharmacological effects such as antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antihypertensive activities.⁹ Given the importance of quaternary carbon skeletons and heterocycles to the pharmaceutical properties,

Scheme 1. Benzylation of Active Methine Compounds

a. Previous works: benzylation of active methine compounds



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LG = Br, OH, OAc, OPO(OEt)<sub>2</sub>
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b. This work: palladium-catalyzed allenamide carbopalladation/allylation with active methine compounds



Table 1. Optimization of Reaction Conditions^{*a,b*}



^aStandard conditions: **1** (0.2 mmol), **2** (0.4 mmol), Pd(PPh₃)₄ (10.0 mol %), **A1** (30.0 mol %), *t*-BuONa (0.2 mmol), THF (1.0 mL), 50 °C (oil bath temperature), under an Ar atmosphere for 8 h, sealed tube. ^bIsolated yields. ^cNR, no reaction.

Received: April 20, 2021 **Published:** May 28, 2021





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Scheme 2. Substrate Scope for the Synthesis of Indoles^{*a,b*}

^{*a*}Reaction conditions: allenamide (0.2 mmol), aldehyde (0.4 mmol), Pd(PPh₃)₄ (10.0 mol %), A1 (30.0 mol %), *t*-BuONa (0.2 mmol), THF (1.0 mL), 50 °C (oil bath temperature), under an Ar atmosphere for 8 h. ^{*b*}Isolated yields.

herein we describe a palladium-catalyzed carbopalladation/ allylation of allenamides¹⁰ with active methine compounds for the first time. Many indoles and isoquinolinones bearing a quaternary carbon center were achieved with good efficiency (Scheme 1b). This reaction underwent cascade oxidative addition, carbopalladation, and allylic alkylation, and two new C–C bonds were formed in one pot.

We commenced our study with N-(o-iodophenyl)allenamide 1 and 2-phenylpropanal 2 as the model substrates. After systematic screening of the reaction conditions (see the Supporting Information (SI) for details), the desired product 3 could be obtained in 92% yield by employing 10.0 mol % $Pd(PPh_3)_4$ and 30.0 mol % diphenylmethanamine A1 as the catalysts and t-BuONa as the base in THF at 50 °C for 8 h (Table 1, entry 1). When $Pd(P^tBu_3)_2$ was used, the reaction proceeded in 38% yield, and Pd₂(dba)₃ retarded the transformation (Table 1, entries 2 and 3). Proline A2 and pyrrolidine A3 finished the reaction with low efficiency (Table 1, entries 4 and 5). Other bases, such as Cs_2CO_3 and K₃PO₄, offered 3 in diminished yields (Table 1, entries 6 and 7), and organic base such as Et₃N failed in facilitating the reaction (Table 1, entry 8). When the reaction was carried out in toluene, acetonitrile, or DMSO, product 3 was isolated in 23-45% yield (Table1, entries 9-11). Control experiments showed that the palladium catalyst was essential to this reaction (Table 1, entry 12). A low yield of 3 was detected in the absence of A1 (Table 1, entry 13). We also employed

Scheme 3. Substrate Scope for the Synthesis of Isoquinolinones a,b



^{*a*}Reaction conditions: allenamide (0.2 mmol), aldehyde (0.4 mmol), Pd(PPh₃)₄ (10.0 mol %), A1 (30.0 mol %), *t*-BuONa (0.2 mmol), THF (1.0 mL), 50 °C (oil bath temperature), under an Ar atmosphere for 8 h. ^{*b*}Isolated yields.



^{*a*}Reaction conditions: allenamide **1** (0.2 mmol), pronucleophile (0.4 mmol), Pd(PPh₃)₄ (10.0 mol %), Cs₂CO₃ (0.4 mmol), THF (1.0 mL), 50 °C (oil bath temperature), under an Ar atmosphere for 8 h. ^{*b*}Isolated yields. ^{*c*}DBU (0.4 mmol). ^{*d*}LDA (0.4 mmol). ^{*e*}Cs₂CO₃ (1.0 equiv). ^{*f*}Pronucleophile (4.0 equiv). ^{*g*}Allenamide **1** (2.0 equiv). ^{*h*}A1 (30 mol %).

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Scheme 5. Synthetic Transformations

progargylamide 1' as the starting material, which offered 3 in 53% yield (Table 1, entry 14) (see the SI for details). The structure of 3 was confirmed by the single-crystal X-ray diffraction studies (see the SI for details).

With the optimized conditions in hand, we then checked the substrate scope for the synthesis of indole-containing compounds (Scheme 2). The allenamides with various groups on the benzene ring, such as methyl, methoxyl, halogen, and carboxyl groups, performed the reaction well, offering products 4-9 in 78-98% yield. When pyridine-derived allenamide was applied, the corresponding azaindole product 10 could be obtained in 85% yield. The generality of α -branched aldehydes was also examined. 2-Arylpropanals with versatile substituent groups offered the products 11-16 and 18-21 in good to excellent yields. Product 17 was isolated in 67% yield due to the steric hindrance. Product 22 with two indole units was synthesized in 96% yield. The 2-phenylbutanal, 2,2-diphenylacetaldehyde, and 1,2,3,4-tetrahydronaphthalene-1-carbaldehyde were also good participants, affording the products 23-25 in excellent yields. Product 3 (1.02 g) could be achieved in 98% yield on a 2.5 mmol scale under the optimal conditions.

After exploring the generality for the synthesis of indole frameworks, we then extended this protocol to synthesize isoquinolinones, and the corresponding products 26-35 were achieved in 57-98% yield under the standard reaction conditions (Scheme 3).

In addition, we also extended this method to other active methine compounds (Scheme 4), such as β -ketoester, diethyl methylmalonate, 2-nitropropanoate, 2-cyanopropionate, cyanophosphonate, amide, ketone, oxindole, and azlactone, and the corresponding products **36–44** were isolated in 43–93% yield. Notably, this method could also be applied to active methylene nucleophiles. The benzylic product **45** and dibenzylic product **46** could be achieved in 68 and 67% yield by altering the ratio of the substrates and the equivalent of base (see the SI for details). Moreover, the dibenzylic product **47** was obtained in 60% yield when 2-phenylacetaldehyde was used.

To further demonstrate the synthetic utility of the method, synthetic transformations of product **3** and **39** were carried out (Scheme 5). After condensation of **3** with (4-methoxyphenyl)-methanamine followed by reduction with NaBH₃CN, com-

pound **48** was isolated in 54% yield in one pot. Compound **49** could be achieved in 88% yield through the Wittig reaction. The *N*-tosyl protecting group could be expediently removed in the presence of K_2CO_3 to give **50** in 62% yield. Treating compound **39** with NiCl₂·6H₂O and NaBH₄ offered β -amino acid derivative **51** in 63% yield. We also attempted the asymmetric version of this method. After screening a series of chiral ligands and chiral amine catalysts (see the SI for details), product **3** could be achieved in 89% yield with 40% ee.

In conclusion, we have established a palladium-catalyzed sequential oxidative addition, carbopalladation, and allylic alkylation of allenamides with active methine and methylene compounds for the first time. This protocol highlighted a generalizable strategy to construct indoles and isoquinolinones with a quaternary carbon center with good efficiency.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

1 Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.orglett.1c01369.

Experiment procedures, detailed reaction optimization, compound characterization, and NMR spectra (PDF)

Accession Codes

CCDC 2046574 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif, or by emailing data_request@ccdc.cam.ac.uk, or by contacting The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1EZ, UK; fax: +44 1223 336033.

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC22071267), the Foundation of the Open Project of State Key Laboratory of Natural Medicines (SKLNMZZ02023), and the Innovation Team of "the Double-First Class" Disciplines (CPU2018GY35) for the financial support.

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