

# Triflic Anhydride Mediated Synthesis of Imidazo[1,5-*a*]azines

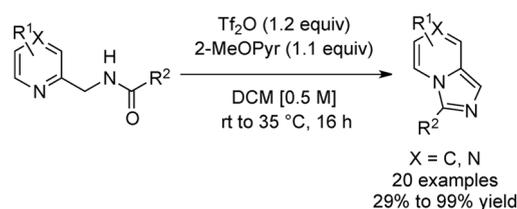
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Received March 29, 2013

## ABSTRACT



Imidazo[1,5-*a*]azines are synthesized in moderate to excellent yields using a mild cyclodehydration/aromatization reaction triggered by the use of triflic anhydride (Tf<sub>2</sub>O) and 2-methoxypyridine (2-MeOPyr). Various substitution patterns and functional groups were found to be compatible under the optimized conditions. In addition, a 5-bromo-3-aryl derivative was also shown to be active in a Sonogashira cross-coupling and direct arylation reactions. A tertiary amide was compatible as a substrate leading to the synthesis of an imidazo[1,5-*a*]pyridinium triflate.

The imidazo[1,5-*a*]pyridine motif is a heterocyclic fused bicyclic system<sup>1</sup> applicable in materials chemistry<sup>2</sup> as well as potent pharmacophores.<sup>3</sup> Recently, derivatives of this heterocyclic system were embedded in the structure of many biologically active molecules tested for the treatment of inflammation,<sup>3a,b</sup> cancer,<sup>3a,c</sup> cardiovascular diseases,<sup>3a</sup> fertility disorders,<sup>3d</sup> and HIV.<sup>3e</sup> Moreover, Pettit et al. reported in 2003 a unique example of a naturally occurring imidazo[1,5-*a*]isoquinolinedione in the tricyclic structure of cribostratin **6**, a highly active antimicrobial and anti-neoplastic agent (Figure 1).<sup>4</sup>

(1) For the numbering of these heterocycles, see: Davey, D. D. *J. Org. Chem.* **1987**, *52*, 1863.

(2) For selected recent applications, see: (a) Shibahara, F.; Dohke, Y.; Murai, T. *J. Org. Chem.* **2012**, *77*, 5381. (b) Yamaguchi, E.; Shibahara, F.; Murai, T. *J. Org. Chem.* **2011**, *76*, 6146 and references cited therein.

(3) For selected recent applications, see: (a) Alcouffe, C.; Kirsch, R.; Herbert, C.; Lassale, G. 2012004732 A1, 2012. (b) Trotter, B. W.; et al. *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* **2011**, *21*, 2354. (c) Kamalaa, A.; Ramakrishna, G.; Raju, P.; Subba Rhao, A. V.; Viswanath, A.; Lakshma Nayak, V.; Ramakrishna, S. *Eur. J. Med. Chem.* **2011**, *46*, 2427. (d) Loozen, H. J. J.; Timmer, C. M. WO 2010136438, 2010. (e) Anthony, N. J.; Gomez, R.; Jolly, S. M.; Su, D.-S.; Lim, J. WO 2008076225 A2, 2008.

(4) (a) Pettit, G. R.; Collins, J. C.; Knight, J. C.; Herald, D. L.; Nieman, R. A.; Williams, M. D.; Pettit, R. K. *J. Nat. Prod.* **2003**, *66*, 544. For recent total syntheses of cribostratin **6**, see: (b) Mubina, M.; Gonçalves, T. P.; Whitby, R. J.; Sneddon, H. F.; Harrowven, D. C. *Chem.—Eur. J.* **2011**, *17*, 13698. (c) Knueppel, D.; Martin, S. F. *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.* **2009**, *48*, 2569. (d) Markey, M. D.; Kelly, T. R. *J. Org. Chem.* **2008**, *73*, 7441.



**Figure 1.** Imidazo[1,5-*a*]isoquinolinedione highlighted in the structure of cribostratin **6**.

Early synthetic methods targeting various imidazo[1,5-*a*]azine derivatives were inspired from variants of either Wallach's imidazole synthesis<sup>5</sup> or a Vilsmeier-type cyclization.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, various reagents (POCl<sub>3</sub>,<sup>3b,c,4c–7a</sup>

(5) (a) Benincori, T.; Brenna, E.; Sannicò, F. *J. Chem. Soc., Perkin Trans. 1* **1993**, 675. (b) Wallach, O. *Justus Liebigs Ann. Chem.* **1877**, *184*, 1.

(6) For a seminal report, see: Bower, J. D.; Ramage, C. R. *J. Chem. Soc.* **1955**, 2834.

(7) For selected examples, see: (a) Satyanarayana, V. A.; Guangwu, C.; Kosarev, S.; Meifen, E. T.; Deijan, X.; Yet, L. *Tetrahedron Lett.* **2010**, *51*, 284. (b) Tachikawa, R.; Tanaka, S.; Terada, A. *Heterocycles* **1981**, *15*, 369. (c) Crawforth, J. M.; Paoletti, M. *Tetrahedron Lett.* **2009**, *50*, 4916. (d) Wamhoff, H.; Zahran, M. *Synthesis* **1987**, 876. (e) Li, J. J.; Li, J. J.; Li, J.; Trehan, A. K.; Wong, H. S.; Krishnananthan, S.; Kennedy, L. J.; Gao, Q.; Ng, A.; Robl, J. A.; Balasubramanian, B.; Chen, B.-C. *Org. Lett.* **2008**, *10*, 2897. (f) Kim, D.; et al. *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* **2005**, *15*, 2129.

PCl<sub>5</sub>,<sup>7b</sup> 1-propanephosphoric anhydride (T3P),<sup>7c</sup> Ph<sub>3</sub>PCl<sub>2</sub>,<sup>7d</sup> Burgess' reagent,<sup>7e</sup> and polyphosphoric acid (PPA)<sup>7f</sup>) were reported to trigger the latter intramolecular cyclodehydration/aromatization sequence from a secondary *N*-(2-pyridinylmethyl)amide. The respective secondary thioamides could also be cyclized by treatment with an oxidant.<sup>8</sup> However, the most commonly disclosed procedures imply the use of a large excess of activating reagent, have a narrow scope, and/or are performed at elevated temperatures. Alternatively, these heterocycles can be accessed through a Rh-catalyzed transannulation of pyridotriazoles,<sup>9</sup> via nucleophilic addition of 2-aminomethylpyridine onto 1,1-*gem*-dibromoalkenes,<sup>10</sup> or from oxidative cyclization between a 2-pyridicarboxaldehyde and an amino acid equivalent.<sup>11</sup> While these methods are milder than the previous electrophilic activations, there is still a need for general procedures suited for the synthesis of imidazo[1,5-*a*]azines at ambient temperatures. To address this issue, we decided to elaborate a triflic anhydride (Tf<sub>2</sub>O) mediated cyclodehydration/aromatization strategy under operationally simple and mild conditions applicable to a wide variety of substitution patterns.

Recently, various electrophilic activations using amides and Tf<sub>2</sub>O have found broad application in the synthesis of various building blocks.<sup>12</sup> We reported in 2009 an intramolecular activation/dearomatization strategy toward the synthesis of polysubstituted indolizidine and quinolizidine alkaloids (Scheme 1).<sup>13</sup> In these studies we determined that the use of 2-chloropyridine (2-CIPyr) as a slightly basic additive was required to obtain smooth conversion to the target product. Inspired by these results, we thought to optimize a generally applicable cyclization/aromatization route for the synthesis of aromatic imidazo[1,5-*a*]azines (**2**) from *N*-(2-pyridinylmethyl)benzamide (**1**) while adding minimal amounts of Tf<sub>2</sub>O at ambient temperatures.<sup>14,15</sup> We first probed conditions that were operative in secondary amide reductions using 2-fluoropyridine (2-FPyr) as a base additive which gave a reasonable 66% yield (Table 1, entry 1).<sup>12e,16</sup>

(8) (a) Shibahara, F.; Kitagawa, A.; Yamaguchi, E.; Murai, T. *Org. Lett.* **2006**, *8*, 5621. (b) Moulin, A.; Garcia, S.; Martinez, J.; Fehrentz, J.-A. *Synthesis* **2007**, 2667. (c) Shibahara, F.; Sugiura, R.; Yamaguchi, E.; Kitagawa, A.; Murai, T. *J. Org. Chem.* **2009**, *74*, 3566 and references cited therein.

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(12) For recent examples, see: (a) Valerio, V.; Petkova, D.; Madelaine, C.; Maulide, N. *Chem.—Eur. J.* **2013**, *19*, 2606. (b) Xiao, K.-J.; Wang, A.-E.; Huang, P.-Q. *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.* **2012**, *124*, 8439. (c) Bechara, W. S.; Pelletier, G.; Charette, A. B. *Nat. Chem.* **2012**, *4*, 228. (d) Medley, J. M.; Movassaghi, M. *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.* **2012**, *51*, 4572. (e) Pelletier, G.; Bechara, W. S.; Charette, A. B. *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* **2010**, *132*, 12817.

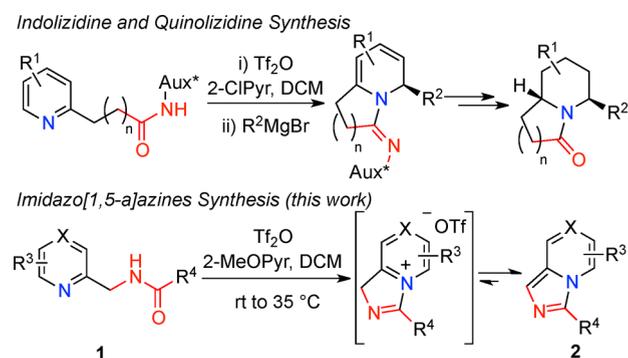
(13) Barbe, G.; Pelletier, G.; Charette, A. B. *Org. Lett.* **2009**, *11*, 3398.

(14) We recently reported the synthesis of pyrazolo[1,5-*a*]pyridines via a divergent approach: Mousseau, J. J.; Bull, J. A.; Ladd, C. L.; Fortier, A.; Sustac Roman, D.; Charette, A. B. *J. Org. Chem.* **2011**, *76*, 8243.

(15) For application in the synthesis of the kedarcidin chromophore, see: Yoshimura, F.; Lear, M. J.; Ohashi, I.; Koyama, Y.; Hiram, M. *Chem. Commun.* **2007**, 3057.

(16) See Supporting Information for more details.

### Scheme 1. Synthesis of Indolizidine and Quinolizidines and Its Transposition Towards the Synthesis of Imidazo[1,5-*a*]azines (**2**)



**Table 1.** Optimization for the Cyclodehydration/Aromatization

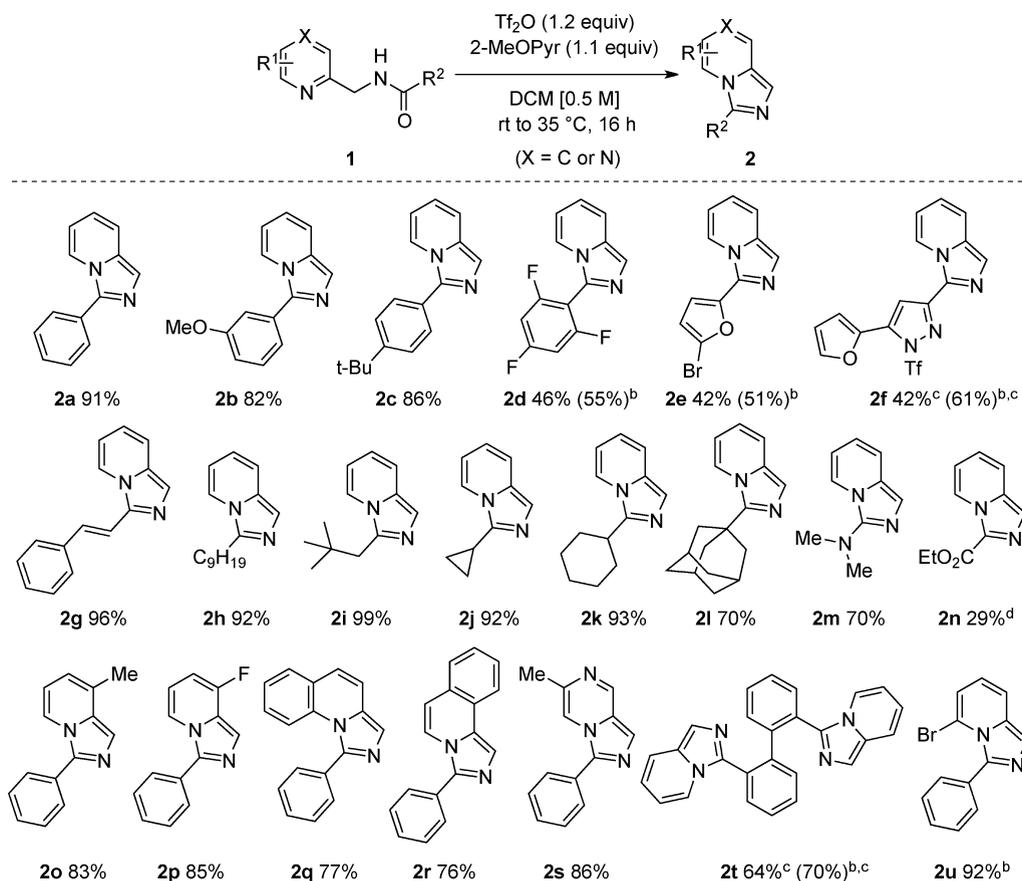
entry	base additive	temp (°C)	time (h)	Tf <sub>2</sub> O (equiv)	yield <b>2a</b> (%) <sup>a</sup>
1	2-FPyr	−78 °C to rt	4	1.1	66 <sup>b</sup>
2	2-FPyr	−78 °C to rt	4	1.1	69
3	2-FPyr	rt	4	1.1	70
4	2-FPyr	rt	4	1.0	63
4	2-FPyr	rt	4	1.2	75
5	2-MeOPyr	rt	4	1.2	80
6	none	rt	4	1.2	48
7	2-MeOPyr	rt	6	1.2	89
8	2-MeOPyr	rt to 35 °C	16	1.2	94

<sup>a</sup> Yields determined on the crude reaction mixture by <sup>1</sup>H NMR analysis using Ph<sub>3</sub>CH as an internal standard. <sup>b</sup> Concentration of amide in DCM of 0.05 M instead of 0.5 M.

We subsequently determined that the reaction can be performed in concentrated DCM media (0.5 M, 69%, entry 2) while adding Tf<sub>2</sub>O at room temperature (70%, entry 3). These conditions are in contrast to those obtained in the indolizidine/quinolizidine synthesis where Tf<sub>2</sub>O was added to a diluted DCM solution of **1a** (0.05 M) at −78 °C.<sup>13</sup> A screening of basic additives proved the importance of having a non-nucleophilic base present, as a much lower yield was obtained without it (48%, entry 6). Performing the reaction in the presence of 2-methoxypyridine (2-MeOPyr) for 16 h from 25 to 35 °C gave optimal conversions and yields for the desired product **2a** (94%, entry 8).<sup>17</sup>

(17) We think that 2-methoxypyridine provides an ideal basicity and nucleophilicity needed for this transformation versus other pyridine derivatives. For a discussion on the basicity of 2-MeOPyr and derivatives, see: Murphy, R. A.; Sarpong, R. *Org. Lett.* **2012**, *14*, 632–635 and references cited therein.

**Scheme 2.** Synthesis of Imidazo[1,5-*a*]azines Using Optimized Cyclodehydration/Aromatization Conditions<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Reaction performed on 1.0 mmol scale. Isolated yield. <sup>b</sup> Reaction was performed at 50 °C instead of 35 °C. <sup>c</sup> Reaction was performed in presence of 2.4 equiv of  $\text{Tf}_2\text{O}$  and 2.2 equiv of 2-MeOPyr instead of 1.2 equiv and 1.1 equiv. <sup>d</sup> Reaction was performed in DCE [0.5 M] at 65 °C for 16 h instead of DCM [0.5 M] at 35 °C for 16 h.

Under these optimized conditions, we tested variously substituted secondary amides toward their cyclization to the corresponding bicyclic heterocycles (Scheme 2). We rapidly identified that electron-rich benzamides underwent clean and high-yielding conversions while electron-poor substrates furnished moderate yields and conversions to the desired imidazo[1,5-*a*]pyridines (compare **2a–2c** and **2d**). With the latter 2,4,6-trifluorophenyl substrate **2d**, the reaction was found to be more productive when heated to 50 °C. With alkyl substituted substrates, the cyclodehydration/aromatization sequence gave very high yields and complete conversions at 35 °C (>92%; see **2h–2k**). The reaction is sluggish only with a very bulky *N*-(1-adamantyl) amide substituent (70%, **2l**). Moreover, a sharp contrast in reactivity was observed where a *N,N'*-dialkyl urea **1m** could be readily activated by  $\text{Tf}_2\text{O}$  while the electron-poor ethyl oxalate derivative **1n** was heated to 65 °C to achieve a reasonable conversion. Variation of the substituents on the pyridine moiety was well tolerated (**2o–2r**), and imidazo[1,5-*a*]pyrazine could also be synthesized without seeing overtriflation on the pyrazine moiety (**2s**). A *N,N'*-bis(2-pyridinylmethyl)benzamide (**1t**) was also found to be efficiently doubly activated/cyclized using 2.4 equiv of  $\text{Tf}_2\text{O}$ .

To further explore the applicability of the developed method, we envisioned that the synthesis of 5-bromo-3-aryl imidazo[1,5-*a*]pyridine derivative **2u** could be possible (Scheme 3). Recently, some 5-substituted imidazo[1,5-*a*]pyridines (pyridinium) have found interesting applications in the treatment of cancer,<sup>18a,b</sup> as CCR1 receptor antagonists,<sup>18c</sup> and as efficient *N*-heterocyclic carbene precursors.<sup>18d</sup>

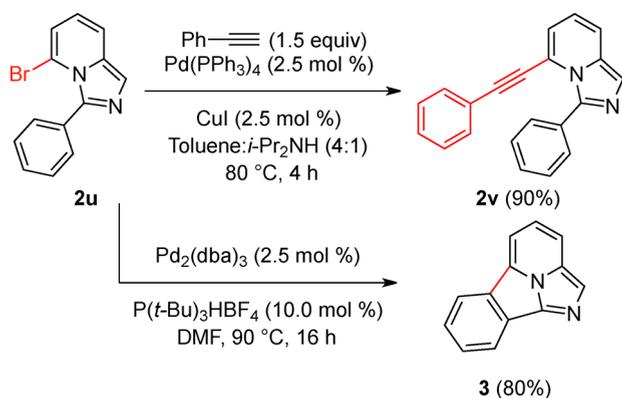
First, benzamide **1u** underwent clean conversion to the corresponding heterocycle **2u** under the optimized conditions at 50 °C (92%; see Scheme 2). The product was then treated under unoptimized Sonogashira cross-coupling conditions, and the 5-alkynyl derivative **2v** was isolated in high yield (90%).<sup>19</sup> However, when **2u** underwent Suzuki–Miyaura cross-coupling with 4-methoxyphenylboronic acid,<sup>20</sup> an inseparable mixture of the desired

(18) (a) Adams, N. D.; Aquino, C. J.; Chaudhari, A. M.; Ghergurovitch, J. M.; Kiesow, T. J.; Parrish, C. A.; Reif, A. J.; Wiggall, K. WO 2011103546 A1, 2011. (b) Price, S.; Heald, R.; Lee, W.; Zak, M. E.; Hewitt, J. F. M. WO 2009085983 A1, 2009. (c) Cook, B. N.; Kuzmich, D. WO 2011056440 A1, 2011. (d) Burstein, C.; Lehmann, C. W.; Glorius, F. *Tetrahedron* **2005**, *26*, 6207.

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**Scheme 3.** Synthesis of 5-Bromo-3-phenylimidazo[1,5-*a*]-pyridine (**2u**) and Subsequent Catalytic Functionalization<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Reaction performed on a 0.5 mmol scale. Isolated yields.

5-(4-methoxy)phenyl heterocycle along with benzo[*a*]-imidazo[2,1,5-*c,d*]indolizine **3** was observed. When the boronic acid was omitted in the reaction conditions, only **3** was isolated in high yield (80%). Interestingly, this represents an unprecedented example of this type of heterocycle synthesized via an intramolecular direct arylation.<sup>21</sup>

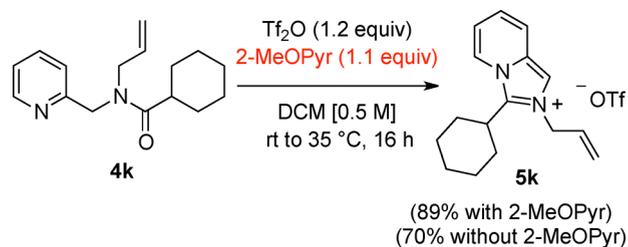
We decided to explore furthermore the electrophilic activations of tertiary amides toward the formation of imidazo[1,5-*a*]pyridinium salts (Scheme 4). In 2005, Glorius<sup>18d</sup> and Lassaletta<sup>22</sup> reported the use of such salts as *C,N*-substituted NHC and their further uses as ligands for Pd, Ag, Rh, Ir, and Se catalysts. As shown in Scheme 4, treatment of **4k** under the optimized conditions lead to the corresponding imidazo[1,5-*a*]pyridinium triflate **5k** in high yield (89%). Since a tertiary amide was used, the synthesis of **5k** could also be effective without the inclusion of 2-MeOPyr as a basic additive (70%).

In conclusion, we successfully developed a mild cyclo-dehydration/aromatization process that is effective at

(21) Recently, benzo[*a*]imidazo[5,1,2-*c,d*]indolizines which are isomers to **3** were synthesized via a tandem [8 + 2] cycloaddition/[2 + 6 + 2] dehydrogenative sequence: Aginagalde, M.; Vara, Y.; Arrieta, A.; Zanagi, R.; Cebolla, V. L.; Delgado-Camón, A.; Cossio, F. P. *J. Org. Chem.* **2010**, *75*, 2776.

(22) Alcarazo, M.; Roseblade, S. J.; Cowley, A. R.; Fernandez, R.; Brown, J. M.; Lassaletta, J. M. *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* **2005**, *127*, 3290.

**Scheme 4.** Synthesis of Imidazo[1,5-*a*]pyridinium Triflate **5k**<sup>a</sup>



<sup>a</sup> Reaction performed on a 1.0 mmol scale. Isolated yields.

relatively low temperatures while using minimal amounts of an activating reagent. These conditions were applied to a large panel of secondary *N*-(2-pyridinylmethyl)amides with various substitution patterns. A 5-bromo-3-aryl imidazo[1,5-*a*]pyridine was shown to be reactive in a Sonogashira reaction and was used as a handle toward the synthesis of more complex benzo[*a*]imidazo[2,1,5-*c,d*]indolizines. Tertiary amides are also suitable partners in such reactions as illustrated by an example of an NHC precursor that was synthesized using the optimized  $\text{Tf}_2\text{O}$  activation conditions.

**Acknowledgment.** This work was supported by the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), the Canada Research Chair Program, the FRQNT Centre in Green Chemistry and Catalysis and Université de Montréal. G.P. is grateful to NSERC, FRQNT and Université de Montréal for postgraduate scholarships. The authors would like to thank Serge Plamondon (IRIC), Dr. Pierre Lavallée (UdeM), and Prof. Stephen Hanessian (UdeM) for supplying chemical samples used in the synthesis of some starting materials.

**Supporting Information Available.** Experimental procedures, NMR spectra, and compound characterization data. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

The authors declare no competing financial interest.