



Phosphorus, Sulfur, and Silicon and the Related Elements

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Available online: 27 Oct 2010

To cite this article: Abdol R. Hajipour & Arnold E. Ruoho (2003): Oxidation of Thiols to the Corresponding Symmetric Disulfides with Benzyltriphenylphosphonium Peroxodisulfate (BTPPD) Under Nonaqueous Conditions, *Phosphorus, Sulfur, and Silicon and the Related Elements*, 178:6, 1277-1281

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10426500307894>

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OXIDATION OF THIOLS TO THE CORRESPONDING SYMMETRIC DISULFIDES WITH BENZYLTRIPHENYLPHOSPHONIUM PEROXODISULFATE (BTPPD) UNDER NONAQUEOUS CONDITIONS

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(Received October 29, 2002; accepted November 18, 2002)

This article describes the preparation of benzyltriphenylphosphonium peroxodisulfate (BTPPD), an efficient and mild reagent for oxidation of a variety of aromatic and aliphatic thiols to the corresponding disulfides in refluxing acetonitrile. The experimental procedure is simple and the products are easily isolated in excellent yields.

Keywords: Disulfides; oxidation; peroxodisulfate; thiols

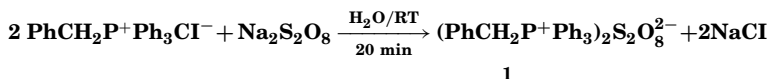
Selective oxidative coupling of thiols to disulfides is of interest from both a biological and a synthetic point of view.^{1–3} Since thiols are among functional groups, which can be over oxidized, extensive research has been performed to control their oxidation.^{4–9} Most of the existing methods involve the use of metal catalysts or reagents like halogens and always suffer from metal ions and solvents that are toxic in nature. The oxidation of thiols **2** to disulfides **3** is a characteristic reaction, and further oxidation to disulfide S-oxides (thiosulfinates), 1,1-dioxides (thiosulfonates), and sulfonic acids are possible. Weak S–S bonds in these compounds impart high reactivity¹⁰ and in natural products these moieties and related cyclic analogues are associated with interesting biological activity and DNA-cleaving properties.^{11–12}

We gratefully acknowledge the funding support received for this project from the Isfahan University of Technology (IUT), IR Iran (A.R.H.) and Grant GM 33138 (A.E.R.) from the National Institutes of Health, USA.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In connection with our ongoing program to introduce new reagents for oxidation of organic compounds under mild conditions,¹³⁻¹⁴ we report on the preparation of benzyltriphenylphosphonium peroxodisulfate **1** and the application of this inexpensive and mild reagent for oxidative coupling of a variety of aliphatic and aromatic thiols and aliphatic dithiols to their corresponding acyclic and cyclic disulfides. This reagent is prepared readily by the dropwise addition of Na₂S₂O₈ to an aqueous solution of benzyltriphenylphosphonium chloride at room temperature. Filtration and drying of the precipitate produced a white powder which could be stored for months without losing its oxidizing ability. This reagent is quite soluble in methylene chloride, chloroform, acetone, THF, DMF, DMSO, and acetonitrile and insoluble in non-polar solvents, such as carbon tetrachloride, n-hexane, and diethyl ether (Scheme 1).



SCHEME 1

This method is a remarkably effective methodology for oxidizing aliphatic and aromatic thiols to disulfides. This reagent also exhibits a synthetically valuable method for producing cyclic disulfides from dithiols. The oxidation of dithiols results in the formation of cyclic and/or polymers disulfides. The polymers result from intermolecular oxidation, while the cyclic disulfides arise from intramolecular oxidative coupling of dithiols. For example, oxidative coupling of 1,4-benzenedimethanethiol gives only polymeric product (Table I), while 1,3-dithiol gives 70% cyclic disulfides and 30% polymeric products. The butane 1,4-dithiol gives only cyclic disulfides in 98% yields. It was found that further oxidation producing disulfide to S-oxides, 1,1-dioxides, and sulfonic acid did not occur. A series of thiols was oxidized to disulfides rapidly by this reagent (Table I). Primary alcohol, amine, carboxylic acid, ester, and methoxy functional groups were unaffected during the oxidation of the thiols. The dithiols were oxidizing to the corresponding cyclic disulfides in good yields (Scheme 2 and Table I).

The reactions are relatively clean with no tar formation and no over oxidation to the corresponding disulfide S-oxides, 1,1-dioxides, and sulfonic acids was observed and isolation of products are straightforward.

In conclusion, in this study we have introduced a new and mild reagent for oxidation of thiols to the corresponding disulfide. The stability, ease of preparation of reagent, straightforward work-up, mild

TABLE I Oxidation of Thiols 2 with Reagent 1 to Disulfides 3 in Refluxing Acetonitrile^{a,b,c}

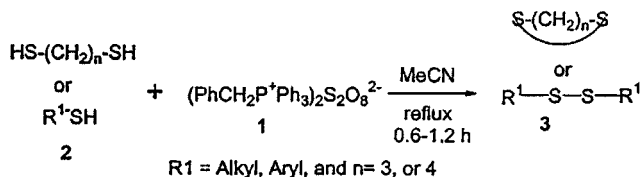
Thiols (2)	Product (3)	Reaction time (h)	Yield ^c (%)	m. p. or b. p./mmHg °C (Lit.)
C ₆ H ₅ SH	C ₆ H ₅ SSC ₆ H ₅	0.5	92	56–60 (59–60) ⁵
4-MeC ₆ H ₄ SH	4-MeC ₆ H ₄ SSC ₆ H ₄ Me-4	0.8	98	47–48 (46–48) ⁵
4-MeOC ₆ H ₄ SH	4-MeOC ₆ H ₄ SSC ₆ H ₄ OMe-4	0.9	93	44–45 (43.8) ¹⁵
4-NH ₂ C ₆ H ₄ SH	4-NH ₂ C ₆ H ₄ SSC ₆ H ₄ NH ₂ -4	1.1	95	75–77 (76–77) ²⁰
3-MeC ₆ H ₄ SH	3-MeC ₆ H ₄ SSC ₆ H ₄ Me-3	0.8	98	–21 (–21) ⁵
4-ClC ₆ H ₄ SH	4-ClC ₆ H ₄ SSC ₆ H ₄ Cl-4	0.9	98	72–73 (72–73) ¹⁸
2-MeOCC ₆ H ₄ SH	2-MeOCC ₆ H ₄ SSC ₆ H ₄ COOMe-2	0.8	96	198–191 (193) ¹⁸
C ₆ H ₅ CH ₂ SH	C ₆ H ₅ CH ₂ SSCH ₂ C ₆ H ₅	1.1	95	69–70 (69–70) ⁵
4-NO ₂ C ₆ H ₄ SH	4-NO ₂ C ₆ H ₄ SSC ₆ H ₄ NO ₂ -4	0.75	88	182–184 (182) ⁵
2-PyridylSH	2-PyridylSS-Pyridyl-2	0.8	92	52–53 (52–53) ⁵
4-PyridylSH	4-PyridylSS-Pyridyl-4	1.1	91	76–77 (76–77) ²⁰
CyclopentylSH	CyclopentylSSCyclopentyl	1.0	93	105–106 (107–108)
CyclohexylSH	CyclohexylSSCyclohexyl	1.2	87	124–129 (125–130) ¹⁵
HO-CH ₂ CH ₂ SH	HO-CH ₂ CH ₂ SSCH ₂ CH ₂ OH	1.2	80	156–148/2 (158–163/3.5) ¹⁷
HOOCCH ₂ CH ₂ SH	HOOCCH ₂ CH ₂ SSCH ₂ CH ₂ COOH	1.0	86	157–159 (1157–159) ¹⁷
HOOCCH ₂ SH	HOOCCH ₂ SSCH ₂ COOH	1.1	91	138–139 (140) ¹⁸
CH ₃ (CH ₂) ₃ SH	CH ₃ (CH ₂) ₃ SS(CH ₂) ₃ CH ₃	1.2	92	94–96/6 (86/3.5) ¹⁶
CH ₃ (CH ₂) ₄ SH	CH ₃ (CH ₂) ₄ SS(CH ₂) ₄ CH ₃	1.1	87	117–119/6 (90–92/1) ¹⁶
CH ₃ (CH ₂) ₆ SH	CH ₃ (CH ₂) ₆ SS(CH ₂) ₆ CH ₃	1.2	90	152–154/6 (143–147/5) ¹⁶
CH ₃ (CH ₂) ₇ SH	CH ₃ (CH ₂) ₇ SS(CH ₂) ₇ CH ₃	1.0	96	152–154/6 (143–147/5) ¹⁶
1-HSCH ₂ C ₆ H ₄ CH ₂ SH-4	Linear polymer ^d	1.2	98	—
SH(CH ₂) ₃ SH	1,5-Cyclopentanedisulfide	2.0	70	45–47/6 (–) ¹⁹
	+ (–S(CH ₂) ₃ S–) ^e _n		(30 polymer)	65–70 (71–73) ¹⁹
SH(CH ₂) ₄ SH	1,6-Cyclohexanedisulfide	1.2	98	30–32 (32–33) ¹⁹

^aConfirmed by comparison with authentic samples (IR, TLC, and NMR).

^bOxidant/thiol (1.0:1.0).

^cYield of isolated pure product after chromatography or distillation.

^dHSCH₂C₆H₄CH₂S(–SCH₂C₆H₄CH₂S–)_nSCH₂C₆H₄CH₂S(–SCH₂C₆H₄CH₂S–)_n(CH₂)₃SH.



SCHEME 2

reaction conditions, high yields of the products, and reaction under non-aqueous conditions make this method a useful one for oxidation of thiols and dithiols to disulfides.

EXPERIMENTAL

General

All yields refer to isolated products. Products were characterized by comparison with authentic samples (IR and ¹H-NMR spectrum, melting and boiling point, TLC).^{5,15-20} All ¹H-NMR spectra were recorded at 300 MHz in CDCl₃ and CCl₄ relative to TMS (0.00 ppm).

Preparation of Benzyltriphenylphosphonium Peroxodisulfate (BTPPD) 1

A solution of benzyltriphenylphosphonium chloride (8.63 g, 22 mmol) in 75 mL of water was prepared, and then Na₂S₂O₈ (3 g, 11 mmol) H₂O (50 mL) was added dropwise to the above solution and the mixture stirred for 20 min at room temperature. The resulting white precipitate was removed by filtration and washed with cooled distilled water (2 × 50 mL), and dried in a desiccator under vacuum over calcium chloride to afford a white powder (9.5 g, 96% yield), which decomposed at 180–182°C to a dark-brown material. ¹H-NMR (CD₃CN) δ 6.80-7.90 (m, 20 H), 4.7 (d, J = 25.6 Hz, 2 H, CH₂-P), ¹³C δ 134.5, 133.5, 130.2, 129.6, 129.4, 128.1, 127.7, 127.2, 117.3 (d, J = 85.7 Hz, 2 H, P-CH₂). Anal calcd for C₅₀H₄₄O₈P₂S₂: C, 66.70; H, 4.90; S, 7.35%. Found: C, 66.80; H, 4.90; S, 7.13%.

General Procedure

Oxidation of Thiols with BTPPD 1

The thiol (1 mmol) was added to a stirred solution of BTPPD (0.90 g, 1 mmol) in acetonitrile (5 mL). The reaction mixture was heated at reflux until TLC (eluent: cyclohexane/EtOAc: 8:2) showed complete

disappearance of starting material. The reaction mixture was then cooled to room temperature and the mixture solid separated through a short pad of silica gel and washed with acetonitrile (15 mL). The filtrate was evaporated and the resulting crude material was dissolved in CH_2Cl_2 and washed with 5% NaOH solution. The organic layer was dried (MgSO_4) and then evaporated to dryness. The crude product was purified by column chromatography on silica gel using a mixture of ethyl acetate and hexane as eluent (10:90) to give disulfides in 70–98% yields (Table I).

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