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Cu-Catalyzed Hydrophosphorylative Ring Opening of Propargyl Epoxides: Highly Selective Access to 4-Phosphoryl 2,3-Allenols

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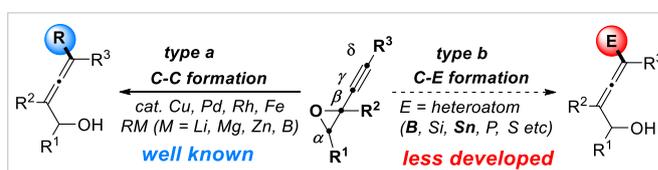
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A novel CuI-catalyzed cross-couplings of propargyl epoxides with P(O)H compounds is disclosed. The reaction proceeded efficiently under mild conditions to give 4-phosphoryl 2,3-allenols in good to high yields with excellent selectivity. The utility of the products was demonstrated and a plausible mechanism is also proposed.

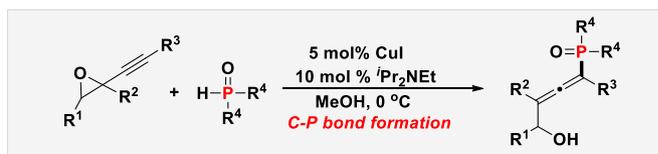
2,3-Allenols are highly desired building blocks in advanced organic synthesis¹ as they offer expeditious routes to a wide range of useful compounds such as conjugated dienes,² 1,3-enynes,³ vinyl epoxides,⁴ dihydrofurans,⁵ furanones⁶ and other heterocycles.⁷ Among the various synthetic methods, the transition metal catalyzed ring openings (SN2'-type) of propargyl epoxides with organometallic reagents such as Grignard, organolithium, organozinc and organoboron reagents represent one useful and reliable protocol (Scheme 1i, type a).⁸⁻¹³ Metals including Cu,⁹ Pd,¹⁰ Rh¹¹ and Fe¹² have been found capable of promoting the transformation with efficient C-C bond formation and selectively opening the epoxide ring to give *anti*- or *syn*-configured 2,3-allenols with high selectivity. Furthermore, optically active allenols are also accessible by using chiral propargyl epoxides as substrates^{10b, 11, 12} or applying a chiral catalyst^{9e} with this strategy.

While this methodology has met with considerable success to offer access to a variety of 2,3-allenols via the formation of C-C bonds based on the use of carbon-nucleophiles (Scheme 1i, Type a), very few examples are known on similar catalytic reactions with heteroatomic counterparts although such a type of transformations is very promising as synthetic methods to afford various 4-functionalized 2,3-allenols via the formation of C-heteroatom bonds (Scheme 1i, type b).^{14, 15} A relevant example, to our knowledge, was first described by Szabó in a detailed study on the palladium-catalyzed substitutions of propargyl substrates with dimetallic reagents in 2005, in which

(i) SN2' reactions of propargyl epoxides featuring C-C or C-E bond formation



(ii) this work: Cu-catalyzed coupling of propargyl epoxides with >P(O)H



Scheme 1 TM-catalyzed SN2'-type reaction of propargyl epoxides to produce allenols.

several 4-stannyl 2,3-allenols were obtained.^{14a} Recently the same group also investigated the Cu/Pd-catalyzed borylation of propargyl epoxides and related compounds with B₂pin₂,^{14b, 14c} and a selective production of 4-borylated 2,3-allenol is achieved using CuI-P(1-nap)₃ as the catalyst.^{14b} We are currently engaged in a joint project geared towards efficient synthesis of useful organophosphorus compounds via new catalytic transformations of the easily available P(O)H compounds.¹⁶ Recently we have developed an efficient Cu-catalyzed coupling of propargyl acetates with P(O)H compounds proceeding via a unique nucleophilic interception of Cu-allenylidene intermediates by phosphorus nucleophiles to afford allenylphosphoryl compounds in high yields under mild conditions.^{16a} In this paper we wish to communicate a new highly selective and atom-economic ring-opening of propargyl epoxides by P(O)H compounds catalyzed by a simple copper salt.¹⁷ This reaction ultimately leads to a novel class of useful 4-phosphoryl 2,3-allenol derivatives in high yields (Scheme 1ii).

We began our study by examining the reaction of 2-ethynyl-2-phenyloxirane (**1a**) and dimethyl phosphonate (**2a**) with the treatment of a catalytic amount of Cu(I) species (Table 1). While the possible competition reactions, e.g., the potential direct attacks of the nucleophile to the epoxide ring, were firstly concerned, we were pleased to observe that the reaction gave

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Table 1 Optimization data on reaction conditions^a

entry	[Cu]	ligand	solvent	yield (%) ^b
1	CuI	TMEDA	MeOH	79 ^c
2	CuI	2,2'-bpy	MeOH	74 ^c
3	CuI	1,10-Phen	MeOH	90
4	CuI	dppe	MeOH	92
5	CuI	-^d	MeOH	92
6	CuCl	- ^d	MeOH	89
7	CuBr	- ^d	MeOH	83
8	Cu(OAc) ₂	- ^d	MeOH	83
9	- ^e	- ^d	MeOH	0
10	CuI	- ^d	MeOH	0 ^f
11	CuI	- ^d	THF	40
12	CuI	- ^d	MeCN	48
13	CuI	- ^d	DCM	24
14	CuI	- ^d	DMF	0
15	CuI	- ^d	Toluene	trace

^aConditions: 1 (0.36 mmol), 2 (0.3 mmol), copper salt (5 mol%), Ligand (6 mol%) if added, ⁱPr₂NEt (10 mol%) in a solvent (2 mL), 0 °C, 2 h. ^bIsolated yields. ^cUnidentified byproducts were obtained (weight < 10 mg). ^dNo ligand. ^eNo catalyst. ^fⁱPr₂NEt was not added.

3a in 79% yield with an excellent regioselectivity in the presence of 5 mol% of CuI and 6 mol% of TMEDA with 10 mol% of ⁱPr₂NEt at a first attempt (entry 1). A small amount of unidentified byproducts were also obtained, yet we reasoned that these identities should result from the transformations of **1a** only, but not the epoxide-opening of **1a** by possible attack of the nucleophile **2a**, as the ³¹P NMR spectroscopy of the crude mixture clearly show only one peak at ca. 17.5 ppm assigned to be **3a**. The formation of the possible byproducts **3a'** or **3a''** was totally not observed. Subsequent screening of the ligands shows that the use of 1,10-Phen or dppe gave improved yields (90-92%, entries 3 and 4). Surprisingly, a blank experiment reveals that CuI alone also catalyzed the reaction, and cleanly gave the product in high yield without loss of the reaction efficiency (entry 5). Similar unidentified byproducts were undetected by TLC. The reaction could also be catalyzed by other copper salts. Thus, CuCl gave **3a** in 89% yield, while CuBr and Cu(OAc)₂ both gave **3a** in 83% yield (entries 6-8). However, no reaction took place in the absence of a copper salt or the amine base (entries 9 and 10). Finally it is worth noting that the reaction is critically dependent on the solvent and MeOH is the best. THF, DCM and MeCN all gave **3a** in low yields (entries 11-13). **3a** was not formed in DMF and only a trace amount was detected in toluene (entries 14 and 15).

With the optimal conditions, the scope of the reaction was briefly explored. As shown in Table 2, a series of propargyl epoxides bearing substituted phenyl groups reacted smoothly with **2a** affording the corresponding products in high yields.

Chloro, bromo, trifluoromethyl and phenyl substituents are tolerated (entries 2-5). The reaction was also successfully performed with **1g** bearing a steric hindering *tert*-butyl, giving **3f** in 95% yield with no variation of reaction efficiency (entry 6). In addition to **2a**, diethyl phosphonate **2b** also reacted with **1a** to give **3g** in good yield (entry 7). Probably due to the steric effect, the reaction of dibutyl phosphonate **2c** produced the corresponding product **3i** in a lower yield while the reaction of diisopropyl phosphonate **2d** did not give the desired product (entries 8 and 9). On the other hand, diphenylphosphine oxide **2e** is a suitable substrate for the reaction. As exemplified in entries 10-12, the reactions of **2e** with **1a**, **1c** or **1g** produced the corresponding products **3j-3l** in good to high yields. To obtain some information on the stereochemistry of the reaction, propargyl epoxide **1h** was prepared. It was observed that the reaction of **1h** with **2a** produced **3m** in 77% yield with a *dr* value of 56/44 (entry 13). The reaction of **1h** with **2e** demonstrated a slightly good diastereoselectivity, affording **3n** with a *dr* value of 75/25 (entry 14). The disubstituted propargyl epoxide **1i** also gave a mixture of stereoisomers (entry 15). Finally, the substrate **1j** bearing a free hydroxyl group is also examined, which afforded the expected product **3p** in a modest yield (entry 16).

Table 2 Cu-catalyzed synthesis of 4-phosphoryl 2,3-allenols^a

entry	1 (R ¹)	2 (R ²)	3, yield (%) ^b
1	1a (Ph)	2a (R ² = OMe)	3a , 92 (90) ^c
2	1b (<i>p</i> -ClC ₆ H ₄)	2a	3b , 99
3	1c (<i>p</i> -BrC ₆ H ₄)	2a	3c , 94
4	1d (<i>p</i> -CF ₃ C ₆ H ₄)	2a	3d , 84
5	1f (<i>p</i> -PhC ₆ H ₄)	2a	3e , 91
6	1g (<i>t</i> Bu)	2a	3f , 95
7	1a	2b (R ² = OEt)	3g , 89 ^d
8	1a	2c (R ² = O ⁿ Bu)	3h , 66 ^e
9	1a	2d (R ² = O ⁱ Pr)	3i , 0
10	1a	2e (R ² = Ph)	3j , 89 ^f
11	1c	2e	3k , 88 ^f
12	1g	2e	3l , 68

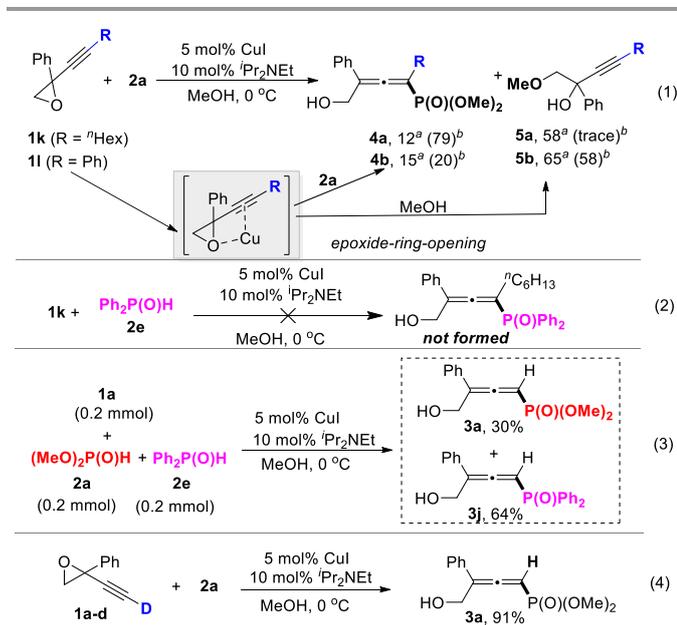
13	1h	2a	3m , 77 ^g
14	1h	2e	3n , 72 ^h

15	1i	2a	3o , 56 ⁱ

16	1j	2a	3p , 64

^aConditions: 1 (0.36 mmol), 2 (0.3 mmol), CuI (5 mol%), ⁱPr₂NEt (0.03 mmol) in MeOH (2 mL). ^bIsolated Yield. ^cThe reaction was conducted on 1 mmol scale based on **2a**. ^dEtOH as a solvent. ^e6 mol% of dppe was added. ^fReactions were performed on 0.6 mmol scale based on **2e**. ^g*dr*: 56/44. ^h*dr*: 75/25, determined from its esterified derivative with HOAc (see ESI). ⁱ*dr*: 55/45.

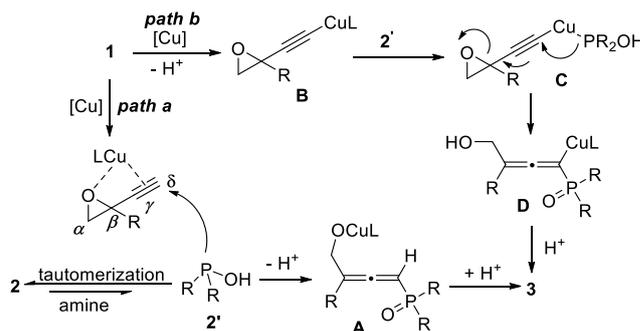
At the current stage, internal propargyl epoxides are not well applicable in the reaction. However, experimental results on these substrates are informative for a mechanism consideration (Scheme 2). As shown in eq. 1, the reaction of **1k** with **2a** catalyzed by CuI gave **4a** only in 12% yield. The major product is 1-methoxy-2-phenyldec-3-yn-2-ol (**5a**), arising from an epoxide-ring opening reaction by MeOH probably due to the dual activation of both the epoxide ring and the triple bonds by a Cu(I) species. A similar result was also obtained from **1l** bearing a phenyl group at the terminal of the alkyne. Interestingly, the yield of **4a** could be improved to 79% by adding dppe as a ligand and with a molar ratio of **2a/1k** to 2/1, yet **1l** failed to give a better result under identical conditions. These results suggest that the two competitive pathways (SN₂' by P(O)H vs SN₂ by MeOH) are very sensitive to the electronic property of the alkynyl moiety for nonterminal substrates. On the other hand, the P(O)H partner also appears crucial for a successful transformation of internal propargyl epoxides into allenols as the reaction of **2e** with **1k** did not give the desired product (eq. 2). In contrast, a control experiment by performing the reaction of **2a**, **2e** and **1a** with equivalent molar ratio gave **3a** and **3j** in 30% and 64% yield, indicating that **2e** is however more reactive than **2a** in reactions of terminal propargyl epoxides (eq. 3). These results indicate that different mechanisms may operate in the SN₂' reactions of terminal and nonterminal substrates. Finally, almost no deuterium incorporation was observed at the C1 position in the hydrophosphorylative ring-opening product of **1a-d** (eq. 4).¹⁸ The H/D exchange may indicate the involvement of a Cu-alkynide intermediate in the reaction.¹⁹



Scheme 2 Reactivity of internal vs terminal propargyl epoxides. ^aConditions: 1i or 1j (0.36 mmol), 2a (0.3 mmol), CuI (5 mol%), ^tPr₂NEt (0.03 mmol) in MeOH (2 mL). ^bConditions: 1i or 1j (0.3 mmol), 2a (0.6 mmol), CuI (5 mol%), dppe (6 mol%), ^tPr₂NEt (0.03 mmol) in MeOH (2 mL).

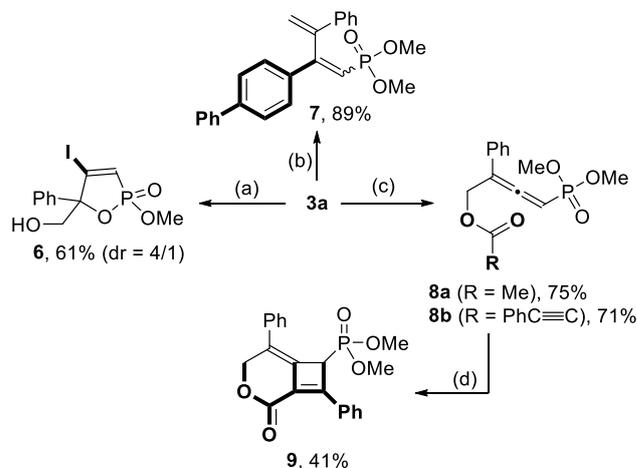
A plausible mechanism is proposed in Scheme 3. Dual coordination of Cu(I) complex to both the alkyne and epoxide

in **1** may induce the nucleophilic attack of **2'** (tautomer form of **2**) to the δ-position of the propargyl epoxide to form a Cu-alkoxide intermediate **A**. Protonation of **A** then gives the product (path a). Considering the facility of the reactions for terminal propargyl epoxides, another mechanism may also operate, and probably as a major path (path b). The terminal substrate **1** first reacts with Cu(I) salt to form a Cu-acetylide intermediate **B**. The coordination of **2'** to the Cu center via ligand exchange results in the formation of intermediate **C**. An epoxide-ring opening and C-P bond formation sequence then takes place to give Cu-allenyl intermediate **D**, protodemetalation of which gives the product and regenerates the catalyst.



Scheme 3 A plausible mechanism

Notably, the resulted products are very attractive synthetic building blocks due to the versatile reactivity of the dense functionalities. Some representative transformations of **3a** are presented in Scheme 4. Thus, the electrophilic cyclization of **3a** with I₂ gave the phosphorus cycle **6** in 61% yield. **3a** also successfully coupled with 4-biphenylboronic acid upon a Pd catalyst to afford the phosphoryl 1,3-dienes **7** in 89% yield with excellent stereoselectivity.²⁰ In addition, **3a** also readily reacts with carboxylic acids to give the esterified products **8**. Particularly, the reaction of **3a** with 3-phenylpropionic acid afforded the ester-tethered alkyne-allene product **8b**, a valuable precursor for complex ring synthesis via cyclization reaction²¹ as exemplified by compound **9**.



Scheme 4 Synthetic transformations of **3a** (Conditions: (a) I₂ (2.0 equiv), CH₂Cl₂, rt, overnight. (b) 4-biphenylboronic acid (2.0 equiv), 5 mol% PdCl₂(Ph₃P)₂, H₂O, reflux, 3 h. (c) RCO₂H (1.1 equiv), DCC (1.1 equiv), DMAP (5 mol%), CH₂Cl₂, 0 °C. (d) Tol, 110 °C, 48 h)

Conclusions

In summary, we have disclosed an efficient Cu-catalyzed atom-economic ring-opening of propargyl epoxides with P(O)H compounds to afford a new class of 4-phosphoryl 2,3-allenols. The reactions proceed under mild conditions and give the products highly selectively in good to high yields. Further investigations into the reaction scope, stereochemistry and target-oriented synthesis of phosphorus compounds via the transformations of the densely functionalized products are underway and will be reported in due course. Financial support from the National Natural Science Foundation of China (21302095), Research Fund for the Doctoral Program of Higher Education of China (20133221120003) and Jiangsu Provincial NSFC (BK20130924) is acknowledged.

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