Organocatalysis "on water". Regioselective [3 + 2]-cycloaddition of nitrones and allenolates[†]

David González-Cruz,^{ab} David Tejedor,^{ab} Pedro de Armas,^{*ab} Ezequiel Q. Morales^a and Fernando García-Tellado^{*ab}

Received (in Cambridge, UK) 28th April 2006, Accepted 11th May 2006 First published as an Advance Article on the web 26th May 2006 DOI: 10.1039/b606096j

The first example of a regioselective and organocatalyzed 1,3dipolar cycloaddition reaction between conjugated alkynoates and nitrones "on water" is described.

A plethora of organic reactions are now efficiently performed in water displaying, in some cases, impressive rate accelerations, selectivity, new reactivity and high yields.^{1,2} Despite the considerable progress accumulated, the number of organocatalyzed reactions in pure water remains small³ and therefore there is a clear demand for new, direct and efficient applications.

We⁴ and others⁵ have shown that the chemical reactivity associated with β -phosphonium or ammonium allenolates I is instrumental in dictating the outcome of many interesting chemical processes. In general, these reactive functionalities are generated in an organic medium by the addition of catalytic amounts of tertiary phosphines (X = P) or amines (X = N) to conjugated alkynoates and they display a chemical reactivity profile governed by the nature of the heteroatom located at the β -position (Scheme 1).

Although some examples of generation and reactivity of these allenolates in water were reported early in the seventies,⁶ little attention has since been paid to the design and development of efficient aqueous-processed allenolate-driven reactions. In this communication, we report on the first example of the productive utilization of β -phosphonium (or ammonium) allenolates I as reactive dipolarophiles in aqueous-processed 1,3-dipolar cyclo-additions (1,3-DCRs) (Huisgen reactions).⁷



Scheme 1 Reactivity profile of zwitterionic allenolates generated by addition of tertiary amines or phosphines to conjugated alkynoates.

We initiated our studies by examining the ability of triphenylphosphine to catalyze the reaction of the scarcely reactive phenyl N-benzylnitrone (1a) and methyl 2-octynoate (2a) in water. After some experimental work, we found that 2.3-dihydroisoxazole **3aa** \ddagger^8 could be obtained in a modest 10% yield when an aqueous suspension⁹ of nitrone, alkynoate and catalyst was vigorously stirred at 40 °C for 48 h. Importantly, product 3aa was obtained as the sole regioisomer (Table 1, entry 1). Addition of LiCl¹⁰ increased the reaction yield up to a significant 68% (Table 1, entry 3). Once a suitable reaction medium was established, we next performed several experiments to meet the best reaction conditions and the best catalyst (Table 1). It was found that: (1) at least two equivalents of the alkynoate were needed to complete the reaction; (2) both tertiary amines and tertiary phosphines catalyzed the reaction, although with different efficiencies (entries 3-9); (3) no reaction took place in the absence of catalyst (entry 2); (4) addition of LiCl increased the catalytic efficiency (entries 1 and 3); (5) the amount of water was not important as long as enough water was present to fuse the solid nitrone and bring all of the reactants in close contact; (6) the intermediate β -phosphonium allenolates I did not rearrange to the corresponding dienoates III (Scheme 1);⁵ (7) vigorous mixing and a rigorous order of addition of reactants and catalyst were crucial to achieve good results, and finally, (8) no reaction was observed under the same conditions in organic solvents (entries 10-11).

Table 11,3-DCR between nitrone 1a and alkynoate $2a^a$

¯ O Ph	→ Bn CC	D ₂ Me <u>R₃P [10r</u> H ₂ O	nol%] ► C₅l	Ph H ₁₁	Bn N, O CO₂Me
	1a 2a			3aa	
Entry	Solvent	Catalyst	$T/^{\circ}\mathrm{C}$	Time	Yield ^b
1 2 3 4	H ₂ O H ₂ O–LiCl ^c	Ph ₃ P No catalyst Ph ₃ P Et ₃ N	40	48 h	10% NR ^d 68% 59%
5 6 7 8 9	Toluene	Quinine Quinuclidine DABCO DMAP Isoquinoline PhoP		24 h	57% 56% 38% 36% 51% NR ^d
11	CH ₂ Cl ₂	Ph ₃ P		27 11	NR ^d

^{*a*} Nitrone (0.5 mmol), alkynoate (1 mmol), catalyst (0.05 mmol), solvent (1 ml). ^{*b*} Yield of isolated, analytically pure product. ^{*c*} 3 M solution of LiCl in water. ^{*d*} No reaction.

^aInstituto de Productos Naturales y Agrobiología, CSIC, Astrofísico Francisco Sánchez 3, 38206 La Laguna, Tenerife, Islas Canarias, Spain. E-mail: fgarcia@ipna.csic.es; parmas@ipna.csic.es; Fax: +34922-260135; Tel: +34922-256847

^bInstituto Canario de Investigación del Cáncer.www.icic.es

[†] Dedicated to Professor Yoshito Kishi on the occasion of his 70th birthday.

 Table 2
 Organocatalyzed 1,3-DCR of nitrones 1a-e and alkynoates

 2a-d "on water"^a



Entry	Nitrone	Alkyne	$L_1Cl(\pm)$	Catalyst	$T/^{\circ}C$	Yield
1	1a	2a	+	Ph_3P^c	40	68%
2	1a	2b	_	Ph ₃ P	RT	99%
3	1a	2c	_	Ph ₃ P	RT	35%
			+	Quinuclidine ^d	40	49%
4	1a	2d	_	Ph ₃ P	RT	61%
5	1a	2e	+	Ph ₃ P	40	71%
6	1b	2a	_	Ph ₃ P	RT	81%
7	1b	2b	_	Ph ₃ P	RT	95%
8	1b	2c	_	Et ₃ N	RT	44%
			_	Quinuclidine	RT	26%
9	1b	2d	_	Ph ₃ P	RT	94%
			_	Quinuclidine	40	81%
10	1b	2e	_	Ph ₃ P	RT	70%
11	1c	2a	+	Ph ₃ P	40	43%
			+	Quinuclidine	40	75%
12	1d	2a	+	Ph ₃ P	40	37%
			+	Quinuclidine	40	79%
13	1e	2a	+	Ph ₃ P	40	54%
			+	Quinuclidine	40	75%

^{*a*} Reaction conditions: an aqueous (or 3 M LiCl) suspension of nitrone (0.5 mmol in 1 ml) was stirred until the nitrone was completely fused. Alkynoate (0.1 mmol) was added dropwise to the suspension and then the catalyst (10 mol%; 0.05 mmol) was carefully added. The resulting aqueous suspension is vigorously stirred for 12 h at room temperature or 40 °C. Dichloromethane extraction followed by flash chromatography afforded the analytically pure product. ^{*b*} Yield of isolated, analytically pure product. ^{*c*} 48 h. ^{*d*} 20 mol%.

Table 2 shows the scope of this novel aqueous 1,3-DCR with regard to the nitrone and alkynoate. Nitrone 1a, the most reluctant dipole of the series, reacted with alkynoates 2b and 2d at room temperature, in pure water and in the presence of triphenylphosphine to give the cycloadducts 3ab and 3ad in good yields (entries 2 and 4). Less reactive alkynoates 2a and 2e required the aid of LiCl and heating (entries 1 and 5). Nitrone 1b, the most reactive dipole of the selected set of nitrones, performed an efficient triphenylphosphine-catalyzed cycloaddition with alkynoates 2a, 2b and 2d to give the corresponding cycloadducts 3ba, 3bb and 3bd in excellent yields (entries 6, 7 and 9). Quinuclidine also proved to be a good catalyst for the reaction of this nitrone with alkynoate 2d, although heating was required and the efficiency was slightly lower (entry 9). While triphenylphosphine was the best catalyst for reactions involving aromatic nitrone 1a, quinuclidine displayed a better catalyst activity for the reactions involving aliphatic nitrones 1c-e (entries 11-13). Alkynoate 2c exhibited the worst reactivity of all of the assayed alkynoates. Only tertiary amines¹¹ were able to catalyze, with some efficiency, the 1,3-DCRs involving this alkynoate (entries 3 and 8). In general, the data from Table 2



Scheme 2 Organocatalyzed 1,3-DCR between nitrones 1 and alkynoates 2 "on water".

shows a good tolerance of this 1,3-DCR with regard to the nitrone, alkynoate and catalyst nature.

Three features of this aqueous 1,3-DCR are remarkable. Firstly, reagents do not need to be water-soluble; furthermore, they react when suspended in water ("on water").⁹ Secondly, a catalytic amount of allenolate I (dipolarophile) forms in water, at 40 °C, with sufficient half-life to react with the nitrone (dipole). Thirdly, the 2,3,4,5-tetrasubstituted 2,3-dihydroisoxazoles **3** are obtained as the sole cycloadducts (complete regioselectivity).¹²

Scheme 2 outlines a plausible catalytic mechanism accounting for the observed results. The catalytic cycle is triggered by the addition of the catalyst (Nu) to an alkynoate to generate the zwitterionic allenolate I. Regioselective 1,3-DCR of this dipolarophile intermediate and nitrone affords the zwitterionic cycloadduct intermediate 4, which incorporates a molecule of each one of the three educts: nitrone, alkynoate and catalyst. Elimination of a molecule of catalyst generates the 2,3-dihydroisoxazole ring 3, reinitiating the cycle. Remarkably, in spite of the marked electronic and structural differences between tertiary phosphines and amines, they perform the same catalytic task: generation of the reactive dipolarophile allenolate I.¹³ Preliminary theoretical calculations support the proposed catalytic model with the zwitterionic allenolates I acting as the reactive dipolarophiles. The experimentally observed regiochemical outcome is theoretically predicted by the energetically favored nitrone-LUMO controlled 1,3-DCR operating in this cycle.

In summary, we have established the first example of a regioselective and organocatalyzed 1,3-DCR between conjugated alkynoates and nitrones "on water". The scenario described introduces a new catalytic system based on the *in situ* generation of reactive β -phosphonium (or ammonium) allenolates I and constitutes a powerful synthetic manifold for the construction of 2,3,4,5-tetrasubstituted 2,3-dihydroisoxazoles 3. Importantly, these reactive zwitterionic dipolarophile intermediates incorporate a molecule of catalyst directly attached to the reactive double bond and it is expected that this property can be fully exploited by chiral organocatalysts to exercise a measurable effect on the stereo-selective course of these 1,3-DCRs. The study of this issue and its application to other related chemical processes are in progress in our lab.

This research was supported by the Spanish Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia and the European Regional Development Fund (CTQ2005-09074-C02-02) and the Instituto Canario de

Investigación del Cáncer (ISCiii, RTICCC ICI-GI-N^a10/200). D. T. thanks CSIC for an I3P postdoctoral position. D. G.-C. thanks MEC for an FPI grant. The authors thank Prof. Julio Delgado Martín for his helpful comments.

Notes and references

^{‡ 1}H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz): δ 0.92 (t, 3H, J = 7 Hz), 1.37 (m, 4H), 1.66 (q, 2H, J = 7.5 Hz), 2.72 (dt, 1H, J = 7.5 and 13.8 Hz), 2.80 (dt, 1H, J = 7.5 and 13.8 Hz), 3.62 (s, 3H), 4.05 (d, 1H, J = 12.8 Hz), 4.33 (d, 1H, J = 12.8 Hz), 5.10 (s, 1H), 7.19 (m, 2H), 7.30 (m, 8H), 7.57 (d, 1H, J = 12.0 Hz). ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 100 MHz): δ 13.9, 22.3, 26.1, 26.7, 31.4, 50.9, 63.6, 72.3, 102.9, 127.2 (2C), 127.6, 127.8, 128.3 (2C), 128.4 (2C), 129.5 (2C), 135.6, 141.6, 165.1, 168.5. IR (CHCl₃, cm⁻¹) 1645.9, 1693.3. Anal. Calcd for C₂₃H₂₇NO₃: C, 75.59; H, 7.45; N, 3.83. Found: C, 75.80; H, 7.33; N, 3.91%. MS, *mlz* (relative intensities) 365 (M+, 3.3), 288 (17.3), 274 (11.8), 211 (12.4), 193 (6), 189 (5), 176 (5.4), 149 (8.5), 131 (5.9), 116 (4.4), 105 (37.2), 91 (100), 77 (13.6).

- (a) Organic Synthesis in Water, ed. P. A. Grieco, Blackie Academic and Professional, London, UK, 1998; (b) R. Breslow, Water as a solvent for chemical reactions, in Green Chemistry: Frontiers in Benign Chemical Syntheses and Processes, ed. P. T. Anastas and T. C. Williamson, Oxford University Press, New York, 1998, ch. 13.
- (a) C.-J. Li, *Chem. Rev.*, 2005, **105**, 3095–3166; (b) U. M. Lindström, *Chem. Rev.*, 2002, **102**, 2751–2772; (c) for excellent discussions on the acceleration of organic reactions through aqueous solvent effects, see: M. C. Pirrung, *Chem.–Eur. J.*, 2005, **12**, 1312–1317; (d) S. Otto and J. B. F. N. Engerberts, *Org. Biomol. Chem.*, 2003, 2809–2820.
- 3 (a) N. Mase, Y. Nakai, N. Ohara, H. Yoda, K. Takabe, F. Tanaka and C. F. Barbas, III, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 2006, 128, 734–735; (b) Y. Hayashi, T. Sumiya, J. Takahashi, H. Gotoh, T. Urushima and M. Shoji, Angew. Chem., Int. Ed., 2006, 45, 958–961; (c) Y.-S. Wu, J. Cai, Z.-Y. Hu and G.-X. Lin, Tetrahedron Lett., 2004, 45, 8949–8952; (d) A. Cordova and C. F. Barbas, III, Tetrahedron Lett., 2003, 44, 1923–1926; (e) A. Cordova, W. Notz and C. F. Barbas, III, Chem. Commun., 2002, 3024–3025; (f) T. Dickerson and K. D. Janda, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 2002, 124, 3220–3221; (g) D. B. Ramachary, N. S. Chowdari and C. F. Barbas, III, Tetrahedron Lett., 2002, 43, 6743–6746; (h) A. B. Northrup and D. W. C. MacMillan, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 2002, 124, 2458–2460; (i) V. K. Aggarwal, D. K. Dean, A. Mereu and R. Williams, J. Org. Chem., 2002, 67, 510–514.
- 4 (a) For a concept article, see: D. Tejedor, D. González-Cruz, A. Santos-Expósito, J. J. Marrero-Tellado, P. de Armas and F. García-Tellado,

Chem.–Eur. J., 2005, **11**, 3502–3510; (*b*) D. Tejedor, F. García-Tellado, J. J. Marrero-Tellado and P. de Armas, *Chem.–Eur. J.*, 2003, **9**, 3122–3131; (*c*) P. de Armas, F. García-Tellado, J. J. Marrero-Tellado, D. Tejedor, M. A. Maestro and J. González-Platas, *Org. Lett.*, 2001, **3**, 1905–1908.

- 5 (a) S. Ma, Chem. Rev., 2005, 105, 2829–2871; (b) J. L. Methot and W. R. Roush, Adv. Synth. Catal., 2004, 346, 1035–1050; (c) X. Lu, C. Zhang and Z. Xu, Acc. Chem. Res., 2001, 34, 535–544.
- 6 (a) A. W. McCulloch and A. G. McInnes, Can. J. Chem., 1974, 52, 3569–3576; (b) F. E. Heikes and H. E. Simmons, J. Org. Chem., 1973, 38, 2845–2851.
- 7 For selected examples of 1,3-DCRs involving nitrones and allenes, see: (a) T. Aftab, R. Grigg, M. Ladlow, V. Sridharan and M. Thomton-Pett, *Chem. Commun.*, 2002, 1754–1755; (b) M. P. S. Ishar and K. Kumar, *Tetrahedron Lett.*, 1999, 40, 175–176; (c) B. Zhao and S. Eguchi, *Tetrahedron*, 1997, 53, 9575–9584; (d) A. Padwa, M. Meske and Z. Ni, *Tetrahedron*, 1995, 51, 89–106; (e) A. Padwa, W. H. Bullock, D. N. Kline and J. Perumattam, J. Org. Chem., 1989, 54, 2862–2869 and references cited therein; (f) G. A. Schiehser, *Tetrahedron*, 1989, 45, 6631–6644.
- 8 For the synthesis and properties of these heterocycles, see: (a) P. Aschwanden, D. E. Frantz and E. M. Carreira, *Org. Lett.*, 2000, 2, 2331–2333 and references cited therein; (b) J. J. Tufarillio, in *1,3-Dipolar Cycloaddition Chemistry*, ed. A. Padwa, Wiley, New York, 1984, vol. 2; (c) J. P. Freeman, *Chem. Rev.*, 1983, 83, 241–261.
- 9 The term "on water" has been coined to denote the reactions of insoluble reactants suspended on water. S. Narayan, J. Muldoon, M. G. Finn, V. V. Fokin, H. C. Kolb and K. B. Sharpless, *Angew. Chem., Int. Ed.*, 2005, 44, 3275–3279.
- 10 LiCl increases the hydrophobic effect. P. H. von Piel and T. Schleich, Acc. Chem. Res., 1969, 2, 257–265.
- 11 The experimentally observed bad catalytic activity of the Ph₃P could be due to a phosphorus-driven rearrangement of alkynoate **2c** to ethyl 2,3-butadienoate,⁵ a worse dipolarophile and an excellent precursor of phosphorus-containing allylic anions **IV** (Scheme 1).
- 12 (a) The 1,3-DCR of nitrones and conjugated alkynes usually affords mixtures of both regioisomers. For a discussion, see: H. G. Aurich, M. Franzke, H. P. Kesselheim and M. Rohr, *Tetrahedron*, 1992, 48, 669–682; (b) for an interesting density functional study of 1,3-DCR between nitrones and allenes, see: K. Kavitha and P. Venuvanalingam, *J. Chem. Soc., Perkin Trans.* 2, 2002, 2130–2139.
- 13 The electronic differences between both heteroatoms usually determines the chemical reactivity of the allenolates and, as a consequence, the chemical outcome of the catalytic process. For a recent example, see: Y.-L. Shi and M. Shi, *Org. Lett.*, 2005, **7**, 3057–3060. For other examples, see ref. 5.