Synthesis of *o*-Aryloxy Triarylsulfonium Salts via Aryne Insertion into Diaryl Sulfoxides

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S *Supporting Information*

ABSTRACT: The aryne insertion into "S═O" bond has been validated recently. This technology is elusively applied to the synthesis of thioethers. In contrast to the reported cases, the reaction described furnished *o*-aryloxy triarylsulfonium salts, in lieu of thioethers, in good to excellent yields. The reaction is also featured by its exquisite regioselectivity, broad substrate scope, and mild conditions (25 °C). Preliminary mechanistic studies suggest that the reaction probably proceeds in a sequential [2 + 2] cycloaddtion/*O*-arylation/protonation pathway.
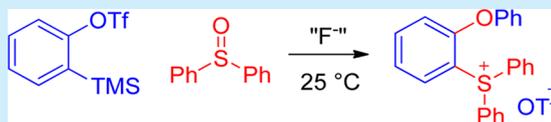
Arynes are a prominent class of transient electrophilic species. The high strain and low-lying LUMO enable them to interact with a wide array of charged or neutral nucleophiles.[1] As a consequence, arynes have been widely employed in the synthesis of natural products and bioactive compounds.[2] Among numerous aryne transformations, the insertion of aryne into σ bonds or π bonds has received considerable attention from the synthetic community since this reaction mode can directly enhance the complexity of arenes by producing multisubstituted arenes in a single transformation.[3−5] In particular, the splitting of heteroatom−heteroatom bonds such as "S═O", "N═O", "S═N", "P═N", "P−N", "P−O", etc. by arynes has also been validated and significantly advanced in recent years.[6] For example, Xiao and Chen disclosed the first case of aryne insertion into the "S═O" bond of sulfoxide (DMSO) (Scheme 1, eq 1).[6a] In their study, a series of 1,2-O,S-disubstituted arenes were assembled from three components including arynes, DMSO, and α-bromo carbonyl compounds. Most recently, Li and co-workers creatively merged the aryne insertion technology and Claisen rearrangement process and developed a mechanistic novel aryne 1,2,3-trifunctionalization reaction (Scheme 1, eq 2).[6b] In addition, Wang and co-workers found that the reaction between arynes and sulfoxides could also take place in absence of α-bromo carbonyl compounds to produce *o*-aryloxy diaryl sulfides (Scheme 1, eq 3).[6c] Their further studies successfully applied the released alkyl group for the epoxidation of carbonyl compounds.[6d] Interestingly, all of these transformations experienced a dealkylation process, thus delivering thioethers as the sole products. This is probably due to the vulnerability of the S−C(alkyl) bond in the in situ generated aryl alkyl sulfonium intermediate.[7]

In addition, triarylsulfonium salts are a unique class of S(IV) compounds. Their well-known capability of delivering protons under UV conditions has allowed them to be superior photoinitiators in polymerization reactions[8] and lithographic processes.[9,10] In addition, they can also be harnessed as aryl sources in versatile organic transformations.[11] Therefore, the

Scheme 1. Reactions of Aryne with Sulfoxides
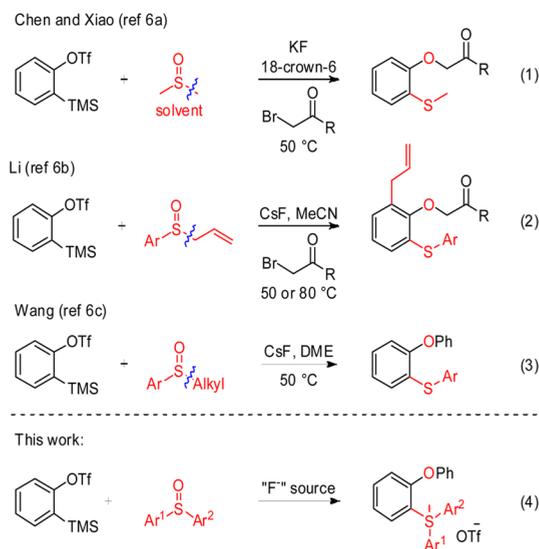
mild and selective synthesis of triarylsulfonium salts is highly desirable.[12]

Inspired by the recent progress in the aryne insertion reactions (eq 1−3), we envisioned that the triarylsulfonium salts, instead of reported thioethers, might be achieved by simply treating diaryl sulfoxides with arynes (eq 4). It can be expected that the established stability[11,12] of triarylsulfonium salts may impede their further conversion to thioethers. To verify this hypothesis, we commenced the study by use of Kobayashi precursor **1a** and diphenyl sulfoxide **2a** under ambient temperature (25 °C) (Table 1, entry 1). To our delight, the expected triarylsulfonium **3aa** was directly attained in a good yield (74% NMR yield) in our first trial. The structure of **3aa** was also confirmed unambiguously

Table 1. Optimization of Reaction Conditions
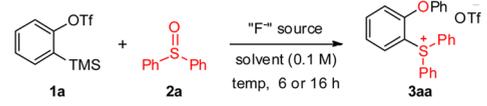
entry	"F⁻" source	solvent	temp (°C)	yield[b] (%)
1	CsF	MeCN	25	74
2	KF/18-crown-6	THF	25	33
3	CsF	DME	25	16
4	CsF	THF	25	14
5	CsF	1,4-dioxane	25	0[c]
6	CsF	MeCN	0	23
7	CsF	MeCN	50	68
8	CsF	MeCN	25	87[d]

[a]Unless otherwise noted, reactions were perfomed with **1a** (0.3 mmol), diphenyl sulfoxide **2a** (0.3 mmol), and "F⁻" source (0.6 mmol) for 6 h. [b]NMR yield (mesitylene as the internal standard). [c]**1a** mostly deteriorated. [d]Reaction time was 16 h.
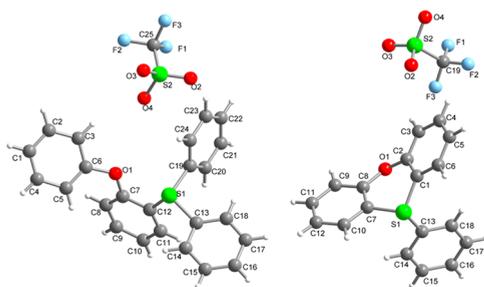
Figure 1. X-ray structure of products **3aa** (left) and **4** (right).

by single-crystal X-ray diffraction (Figure 1, left). As anticipated, triarylsulfonium **3aa** remained intact from the reaction and usual workup process (silica chromatography). After thoroughly varying the reaction conditions ("F⁻" sources, solvents, temperatures, and reaction times) (entries 2−8), we found that simply prolonging the reaction time from 6 to 16 h achieved the best yield (87% NMR yield) (entry 8).[13,14]

With the optimized conditions in hand, we then investigated the scope of diaryl sulfoxides **2**. As depicted in Scheme 2, a wide range of diaryl sulfoxides are compatible in this transformation. The desired *o*-aryloxy triarylsulfonium salts (**3aa−an**) were obtained generally in synthetic useful yields. It is worthy of note that the reaction is highly sensitive to the electronic nature of diaryl sulfoxides. It appears that electron-donating groups (−OMe, Me) (**2b** and **2c**) surpassed the electron-withdrawing groups (−Ph and −Cl) (**2d** and **2f**). The desired *o*-triarylsulfonium salts **3ab** and **3ac** were obtained in excellent yields (96%). In contrast, **2d** and **2f** exhibited less reactivity and afforded much lower yields of **3ad** and **3af** (39% and 13%, respectively). Notably, benzyne precursor **1a** decomposed after the reactions. Similar to **2d** and **2f**, diaryl sulfoxide **2g** bearing an electron-withdrawing ester group also proved unsuitable for the reaction as no desired **3ag** could be obtained. Substrates with electron-donating groups, regardless of the substitution positions (*o*-, *m*-, *p*-), gave rise to the *o*-aryloxy triarylsulfonium salts **3ah−ak** in good to excellent yields (82−97% yields). Remarkably, stereohindered diaryl sulfoxide **2k** still achieved **3ak** in nearly quantitative yield (97%). The high efficiency in producing **3ai**, **3aj**, and **3ak** demonstrated that steric hindrance did not exert any appreciable influence upon the reaction. Besides the diphenyl sulfoxides, naphthyl sulfoxides (**2l** and **2m**) were also proven

Scheme 2. Substrate Scope of Aryl Sulfoxides

R¹ = R² = H, **3aa**: 78%
R¹ = R² = OMe, **3ab**: 96%
R¹ = R² = Me, **3ac**: 96%
R¹ = R² = Ph, **3ad**: 39%[b,c]
R¹ = Cl, R² = Me, **3ae**: 59%
R¹ = R² = Cl, **3af**: 13%[c,d]
R¹ = R² = COOMe, **3ag**: 0%[c,e]

R¹ = R² = 3,4-Me₂, **3ah**: 96%
R¹ = R² = 2,4-Me₂, **3ai**: 94%
R¹ = R² = 2,5-Me₂, **3aj**: 82%
R¹ = R² = 2,4,6-Me₃, **3ak**: 97%

3al, 62%   **3am**, 38%[c]   **3an**, 71%
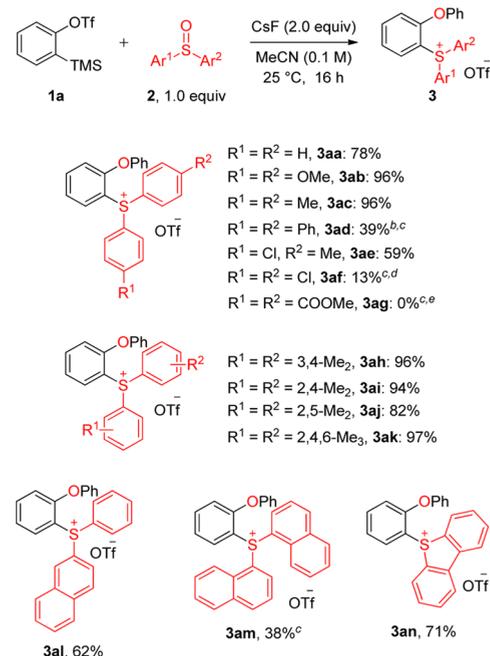
[a]Reactions were performed on 0.3 mmol scale. [b]51% of **2d** was recovered. [c]**1a** decomposed after the reaction. [d]57% of **2f** was recovered. [e]85% of **2g** was recovered.

suitable for the reaction, albeit furnishing the corresponding triarylsulfonium salts **3al** and **3am** in modest yields (62% and 38% yields, respectively). Gratifyingly, the reaction could also be applied to the biaryl sulfoxide **2n**. The corresponding triarylsulfonium **3an** was produced in a synthetic useful yield (71%).

Inspired by the results in hand, we moved to the aryl/heteroaryl sulfoxides **2o** and **2p** (Scheme 3). Surprisingly, in

Scheme 3. Reactions of 2n and 2o with 1a under Optimal Conditions

place of the expected **3ao** and **3ap**, triarylsulfonium **4** was obtained in modest yields (52% and 62%, respectively). The structure of **4** was also confirmed by single-crystal X-ray diffraction (Figure 1, right). This result might be rationalized by an intramolecular nucleophilic substitution of a thiophene group by a phenyl group, simultaneously releasing the thiophene moiety in **2o** or **2p**.[15]

Afterward, an array of benzyne precursors (**1b−d**) were assessed under the optimized reaction conditions (Scheme 4). Regardless of coupling partners (diaryl sulfoxides), reactions of **1b** and **1c** provided the desired *o*-aryloxy triarylsulfoniums in modest to good yields (from 45% to 81%) as shown in Scheme 4. The stereohindered diaryl sulfoxide **2k** smoothly underwent reactions with **1b** and **1c**, affording **3bk** and **3ck**, respectively, in synthetically useful yields. These results are in line with the aforementioned facile formation of **3ak**, once again indicating that the reaction is not stereosensitive. In view of the significant importance of fluoro-containing compounds,[16] the electron-

Scheme 4. Substrate Scope of Benzyne Precursors

R¹ = R² = 4-H, **3ba**: 74%
R¹ = R² = 4-Me, **3bc**: 81%
R¹ = 4-Cl, R² = 4-Me, **3be**: 64%
R¹ = R² = 3,4-Me₂, **3bh**: 68%
R¹ = R² = 2,4,6-Me₃, **3bk**: 75%

R¹ = R² = 4-H, **3ca**: 45%
R¹ = R² = 4-Me, **3cc**: 71%
R¹ = R² = 3,4-Me₂, **3ch**: 70%
R¹ = R² = 2,4-Me₂, **3ci**: 67%
R¹ = R² = 2,5-Me₂, **3cj**: 65%
R¹ = R² = 2,4,6-Me₃, **3ck**: 58%

R¹ = R² = 4-H, **3da**: 39%
R¹ = R² = 4-OMe, **3db**: 45%
R¹ = R² = 4-Me, **3dc**: 53%
R¹ = R² = 3,4-Me₂, **3dh**: 61%
R¹ = R² = 2,4-Me₂, **3di**: 52%
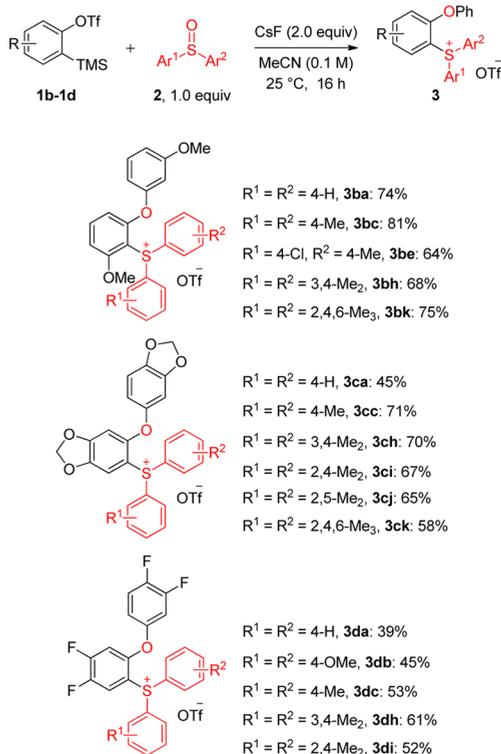
^{a}Reactions were performed on 0.3 mmol scale.

poor 3,4-difluorobenzyne precursor (**1d**) was also examined. Pleasantly, various fluoro-containing triarylsulfonium salts were furnished by this method, albeit in modest yields (from 39% to 61%).

To probe the mechanism of the reaction, the labeling and control experiments were performed (Scheme 5). When the reaction of **1a** with **2a** was conducted in CD₃CN, a mixture of **3aa** and d-**3aa** was obtained in a ratio of 55/45 (**3aa**/d-**3aa**) (Scheme 3, eq 5). The deuterium atom in CD₃CN was introduced to the phenoxyl group of **3aa** in its *ortho* position. The corresponding

Scheme 5. Labeling and Control Experiments
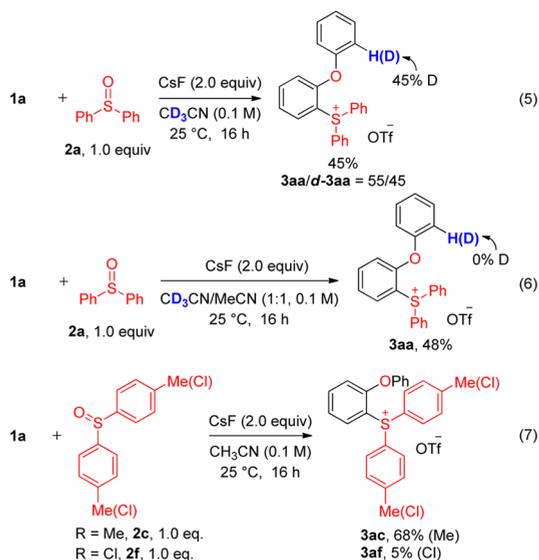
proton from unlabeled-**3aa** might be contributed by the small amount of MeCN (CD₃CN, Isotopic Enrichment, 99.8%) or a trace amount of water. Using a mixture of MeCN/CD₃CN (1/1) as solvent exclusively led to the formation of **3aa** (eq 6). These results suggest that the protonation occurred at the *ortho* position of phenoxyl group should be a rate-determining step in the reaction. Furthermore, a controlled reaction of **1a** with a mixture of **2c** and **2f** (1/1) was performed (eq 7). Consistent with the previous findings (Scheme 2, **3ac** vs **3af**), benzyne preferentially reacts with the electron-rich aryl sulfoxide **2c**.

With the obtained results in hand, we tentatively proposed a mechanism for the transformation (Scheme 6).[6a−d] First,

Scheme 6. Possible Mechanism
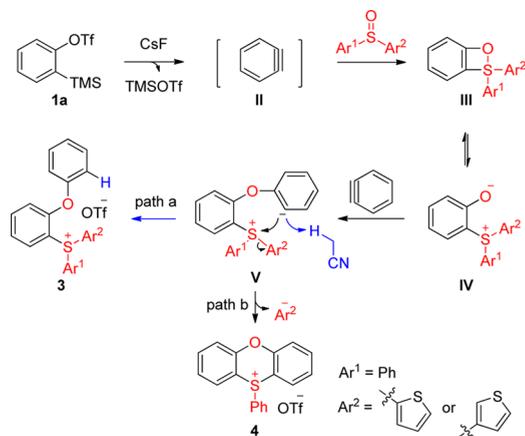
Kobayashi precursor **II** is formed by treating **1a** with CsF. Then a rapid [2 + 2] cycloaddtion of diaryl sulfoxide **2** to benzyne affords the intermediate **III**. The ring strain in the four-membered ring of **III** allows for its ring opening to furnish the 1,4-zwitterionic intermediate **IV**. The oxygen anion of **IV** traps another benzyne to give the sulfonium intermediate **V**. The phenyl anion of **V** is quenched by acetonitrile or other proton sources to produce the final product **3** (path a). Instead of path a, the intermediate **V** from the aryl/heteroaryl sulfoxides **2o** and **2p** may undergo an intramolecular nucleophilic substitution, leading to triarylsulfonium **4** (path b). Path b is also supported by the fact that the released thiophene moiety was determined by GC−MS.[15]

In conclusion, we have developed a facile method for the synthesis of *o*-aryloxy triarylsulfonium salts by simply treating benzyne with diaryl sulfoxides. This reaction can be performed under mild conditions provides a wide range of triarylsulfonium compounds in good to excellent yields. Electron-rich diaryl sulfoxides were found to be more reactive than the electron-poor ones. The bulky aryl sulfoxides **2i** and **2k** are nicely tolerated in the reaction. Preliminary mechanistic studies suggest that a sequential [2 + 2] cycloaddition/*O*-arylation/protonation process might be involved in the reaction. Further applications of the obtained *o*-aryloxy triarylsulfonium salts are ongoing in our group.

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Ⓢ Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website at DOI: 10.1021/acs.orglett.6b03840.

Experimental procedures and characterization data (PDF)
X-ray data for **3aa** (CIF)

X-ray data for **4** (CIF)

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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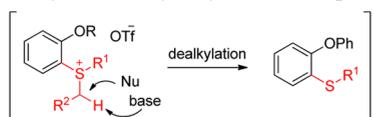
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