

Regioselective C–H Trifluoromethylation of Aromatic Compounds by Inclusion in Cyclodextrins

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ABSTRACT: A regioselective radical C–H trifluoromethylation of aromatic compounds was developed using cyclodextrins (CDs) as additives. The C–H trifluoromethylation proceeded with high regioselectivity to afford the product in good yield, even on the gram scale. In the presence of CDs, some substrates underwent a single trifluoromethylation selectively, whereas mixtures of single- and double-trifluoromethylated products were formed in the absence of the CD. ¹H NMR experiments indicated that the regioselectivity was controlled by the inclusion of a substrate inside the CD cavity.



 \mathbf{F} luorinated functional groups, including the trifluoromethyl (CF_3) group, are among the most important functional groups in drugs, agrochemicals, and organic functional materials. The introduction of the CF_3 group(s) results in a dramatic improvement in the molecular properties of the compound, such as lipophilicity, metabolic stability, and bioavailability.¹ The ideal method for introducing the CF₃ group is direct C-H trifluoromethylation. Radical C-H trifluoromethylation of five-membered heteroaromatic compounds proceeds regioselectively to afford only single products.² On the other hand, radical C-H trifluoromethylation of six-membered heteroaromatic compounds proceeds at almost all possible reaction sites, and mixtures of regioisomers are formed.^{2c,d} We succeeded in the regioselective C-H trifluoromethylation and related reactions of six-membered heteroaromatic compounds using CF₃ and related anion sources.^{3,4} However, regioselective C-H trifluoromethylation of aromatic compounds is more difficult than that of heteroaromatic substrates.

The CF₃ radical has generally been used in the C–H trifluoromethylation of aromatic compounds. Trifluoromethylation proceeds at various reaction sites to give mixtures of regioisomers (Figure 1a).^{2a,n,5} Although there have been several reports on *ortho*-selective C–H trifluoromethylation of aromatic substrates using a directing group to control the regioselectivity, there are some drawbacks: (1) the reaction site is limited to the *ortho*-position of the substrates, and (2) it is difficult to remove the directing groups from the products after the reaction (Figure 1b).⁶

We hypothesized that regioselective C–H trifluoromethylation of aromatic compounds could be realized by protecting several reaction sites using a cyclic molecule as an additive (Figure 1c). In this reaction system, aromatic molecules are included inside the cavity of the cyclic molecule, which protects some potential reaction sites.⁷ Herein, we report the regioselective C–H trifluoromethylation of multisubstituted





mixtures of regioisomers

(b) *ortho*-Selective C-H trifluoromethylation using a directing group



(c) **This work:** Regioselective C-H trifluoromethylation using cyclodextrin as an additive



Figure 1. Several examples of C–H trifluoromethylation of aromatic compounds.

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Table 1. Investigation of Cyclodextrins and Several Transition Metal Salts^a

| MeO ₂ C — — 1a OMe | | (1) additive (1.2 equiv) H ₂ O, 25 ^o C, 8 h | |
|--|-------------|--|------------------|
| | | (2) metal salt (20 mol%) NaO ₂ SCF ₃ (2 , 5.0 equiv) ^t BuOOH (7.0 equiv) 25 °C, 16 h | |
| MeO ₂ C 3a OMe MeO ₂ C CF ₃ OMe MeO ₂ C CF ₃ OMe CF ₃ OMe | | | |
| entry | additive | metal salt | yield/% (3a/3a') |
| 1 | none | none | 56 (2.2) |
| 2 | α-CD | none | 55 (1.6) |
| 3 | β -CD | none | 61 (5.1) |
| 4 | γ-CD | none | 48 (4.4) |
| 5 | β -CD | $MnCl_2$ | 38 (6.0) |
| 6 | β -CD | FeCl ₃ | 99 (19) |
| 7 | β -CD | $Fe(NO_3)_3$ | 91 (10) |
| 8 | β -CD | $CoCl_2$ | 46 (4.8) |
| 9 | β -CD | NiCl ₂ ·6H ₂ O | 77 (4.2) |
| 10 | β -CD | CuCl ₂ | 92 (8.1) |
| 11 | β -CD | $Cu(OTf)_2$ | 93 (6.7) |

^{*a*}Yield was determined by ¹⁹F NMR using 2,2,2-trifluoroethanol as an internal standard. The ratio between trifluoromethylated product **3a** and its regioisomer **3a'** (**3a/3a'**) is described in parentheses.

aromatic compounds using cyclodextrins (CDs) as the cyclic molecules, even on the gram scale. Single trifluoromethylation of the substrates proceeded selectively in the presence of the CD, whereas both single and double trifluoromethylation occurred in the absence of the CD. ¹H NMR experiments suggested the inclusion of aromatic substrates inside the CD cavity.

The difficulty in promoting regioselective radical C-H trifluoromethylation of aromatic compounds stems from the high reactivity of the CF₃ radical and the occurrence of the reaction at various sites. Treatment of aromatic substrate 1a with NaO_2SCF_3 (2) and ^tBuOOH in the presence of $Cu(OTf)_2$ as a catalyst in H₂O afforded a mixture of trifluoromethylated product 3a and its regioisomer 3a' in 56% combined yield (3a/3a' = 2.2) (Table 1, entry 1).⁸ We considered the use of cyclic compounds as additives to protect some potential reaction sites of 1a sterically and thus promote regioselective C-H trifluoromethylation. Although several cyclic compounds such as calixarenes and pillararenes could be considered as candidates, C-H trifluoromethylation may also occur at the aromatic rings of these compounds. Therefore, we selected CDs because they are inexpensive and highly water-soluble and do not contain any aromatic rings. We screened α -, β -, and γ -CDs (Table 1, entries 2–4) and achieved the best results with β -CD; that is, the ratio of trifluoromethylated product (3a/3a') was improved to 5.1 (Table 1, entry 3). These results clearly showed that the size of the cyclic compound is important for controlling the regioselectivity. Next, several first-row transition metal salts were screened (Table 1, entries 5-11). In several entries, the yield of (3a + 3a') and the ratio (3a/3a') were improved, and the best result was obtained when using a catalytic amount of Scheme 1. Substrate Scope: Control of Regioselectivity^a



^{*a*}Yield was determined by ¹⁹F NMR using 2,2,2-trifluoroethanol as an internal standard. The ratio between trifluoromethylated product **3a** and its regioisomer(s) **3a'** (**3a/3a'**) is described in parentheses. mix = complex mixture. ^{*b*}Solvent: H₂O:MeCN (5/1). ^{*c*}With α -cyclodextrin. ^{*d*}With β -cyclodextrin. ^{*c*}With γ -cyclodextrin. ^{*f*}Without cyclodextrin. ^{*g*}Catalyst: Cu(OTf)₂ instead of FeCl₃. Solvent: aqueous urea (0.10 M).¹⁰ ^{*h*}Catalyst: Cu(OTf)₂ instead of FeCl₃. ^{*i*}Catalyst: Cu(OTf)₂ instead of FeCl₃. *i*Catalyst: Cu(OTf)₂ instead of FeCl₃. *i*Catalyst: Cu(OTf)₂ instead of FeCl₃.



^{*a*}Yield was determined by ¹⁹F NMR using 2,2,2-trifluoroethanol as an internal standard. The ratio between single trifluoromethylated product **3** and double trifluoromethylated product(s) **4** (3/4) is described in parentheses. ^{*b*}With β -cyclodextrin. ^{*d*}Without β -cyclodextrin. ^{*d*}Catalyst: Cu(OTf)₂ instead of FeCl₃. Solvent: H₂O:MeCN (5/1).

Scheme 3. Gram-Scale Synthesis of 3a



^aThe ratio between trifluoromethylated product 3a and its regioisomer 3a' (3a/3a') is described in parentheses.

 $FeCl_3$ (Table 1, entry 6). Therefore, we performed the subsequent experiments using $FeCl_3$ as the catalyst.

We then investigated the substrate scope of the aromatic compounds (Scheme 1). The suitable size of cyclodextrins existed depending on the size of substrates. The general trend was as follows: monosubstituted substrates, α -CD; disubstituted substrates, α - or β -CD; and trisubstituted substrates, β - or γ -CD. In all cases, the selectivity of the major products was improved dramatically when using CDs, and regioselective trifluoromethylation proceeded with good functional group tolerance. The yields of the trifluoromethylated products increased in several cases, probably owing to the improved solubility of the substrates.

The regioselectivity of trifluoromethylated anisole **3b** was improved by the addition of α -CD, and *ortho*-trifluoromethylated product **3b** was obtained as the major product.⁹ In the case of 1,2- and 1,4-disubstituted aromatic compounds, C–H trifluoromethylation proceeded regioselectively when using α - or β -CD, and the corresponding trifluoromethylated aromatic



Figure 2. Partial ¹H NMR spectrum of (a) 4-chlorophenol (0.010 mmol/mL in D_2O) and (b) 4-chlorophenol and α -CD (0.010 mmol/mL in D_2O).



Figure 3. Partial ¹H NMR spectrum of (a) α -CD (0.010 mmol/mL in D₂O) and (b) α -CD and 4-chlorophenol (0.010 mmol/mL in D₂O).

compounds 3c-3h were obtained in moderate to excellent yields with high regioselectivity. C–H trifluoromethylation of 1,3,5- and 1,2,4-trisubstituted aromatic compounds also proceeded regioselectively in the presence of β - or γ -CD, and trifluoromethylated compounds 3i-3r were obtained in moderate to excellent yields. The regioselectivity was not improved under the reaction conditions using pyridin-3-yl isobutyrate, 2-acetylfuran, and 2-formylpyrrole as substrates.

Several substrates afforded a mixture of mono- and ditrifluoromethylated products 3 and 4 in the absence of CDs (Scheme 2). On the other hand, the ratio of monotrifluoromethylated products 3s-3u increased dramatically when β -CD was used, and good product yields (63%–94%) and high monoselectivity were achieved. These results indicated that the CD protected the second reaction site by inclusion of the substrates.

Trifluoromethylation proceeded in excellent yield with high regioselectivity, even on the gram scale (Scheme 3). Treatment of a mixture of 1.00 g of 1a and β -CD in H₂O with 2, ^tBuOOH, and a catalytic amount of FeCl₃ at 25 °C gave 1.21 g of trifluoromethylated product 3a in 90% yield (3a/3a' = 16).

To confirm the inclusion of aromatic substrates inside the cavity of the CD in water, ¹H NMR experiments were conducted in D₂O at the same concentration as the reaction mixture (Figures 2 and 3). Proton signals of the aromatic region of 4-chlorophenol (1e) were downfield-shifted by the addition of α -CD (Figure 2).¹¹ In addition, a change in the chemical shifts of the proton signals of α -CD was observed upon the addition of 1e (Figure 3).¹¹ These results clearly suggested that 1e was included inside the cavity of α -CD in water.

In summary, we have successfully developed a regioselective C-H trifluoromethylation of aromatic compounds using CDs as additives. The selectivity of the major products was improved dramatically in the presence of the CDs, and regioselective trifluoromethylation proceeded with good functional group tolerance, even on the gram scale. The general trend for the suitability of the CDs was as follows: monosubstituted substrates, α -CD; disubstituted substrates, α - or β -CD; and trisubstituted substrates, β - or γ -CD. Monotrifluoromethylated products were obtained selectively in the presence of the CD, whereas several aromatic substrates gave mixtures of mono- and ditrifluoromethylated products. The results of the ¹H NMR experiments indicated that the aromatic substrate was present inside the cavity of the CD in water. The investigation of more detailed mechanistic studies is underway in our group. The use of cyclic compounds such as CDs is expected to be a useful and efficient strategy to control the regioselectivity in C-H transformations.¹²

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.orglett.1c01259.

General experimental procedure and characterization data for products (PDF)

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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