

Practical Approach to Structurally Diverse Monoimine Salts and Nonsymmetrical Metallosalphen Complexes

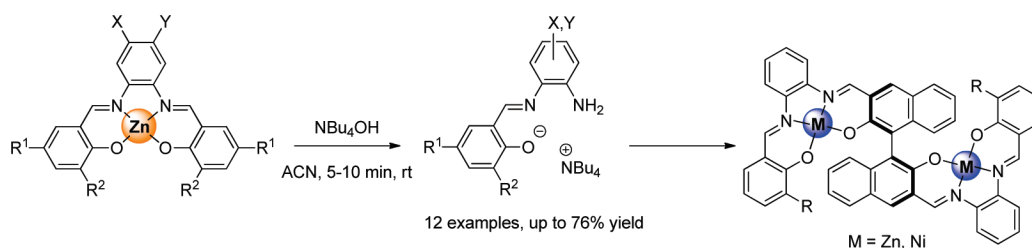
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Received August 12, 2010

ABSTRACT



A practical approach toward the synthesis of monoimine NBu_4 salts derived from $\text{Zn}(\text{salphen})$ complexes is described. The method involves nucleophilic addition of the hydroxide anion to the imine bond followed by hydrolysis. These monoimines provide accessible and useful reagents for the synthesis of (chiral) metallosalens with fine-tunable properties.

Salen complexes are widely applied as versatile catalyst systems¹ and components of materials with interesting supramolecular and photophysical properties.² These properties may be altered by changing the substitution pattern on the aromatic rings of the (symmetrical) salen ligand, thereby creating options to fine tune electronic and steric effects.³ Another less utilized route departs from desymmetrization

of the salen structure by introduction of different groups on both salicylideneimine fragments.⁴ This latter strategy is complicated by the difficulty to induce high selectivity when the diamine reagent is treated with two separate salicylaldehydes and usually gives a mixture of products that need to be separated by chromatographic methods.⁵ In the past decade, various methods have been reported that focus on the selective formation of nonsymmetrical salen ligands/complexes.⁶ One of these methods involves monoimine formation from diamine reagents by choosing appropriate

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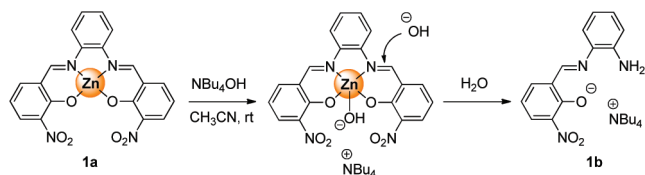
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reaction stoichiometries and conditions to allow selective crystallization of the monoimine product from solution.⁷ These monoimines can, in a second metal-templated condensation step, give easy access to nonsymmetrical complexes without scrambling of the imine bonds.⁸ However, monoimine reagents with electron-withdrawing substituents are still difficult to prepare since the corresponding bis-Schiff base products cocrystallize with the desired monoimine, making isolation a tedious process. We recently set out to explore the synthesis of these electron-poor imines and report here a general method that allows easy formation of these reagents under very mild conditions. These compounds create new and extended possibilities for the electronic and steric fine-tuning of new push–pull systems,⁹ salen complexes with predesigned electronic features to accommodate or improve catalytic conversions,¹⁰ and new, conjugated macromolecular salen compounds.¹¹

Our initial focus was on Zn(salphen) complex **1a** (Scheme 1, salphen = *N,N'*-bis[salicylideneimine]-1,2-phenylenedi-

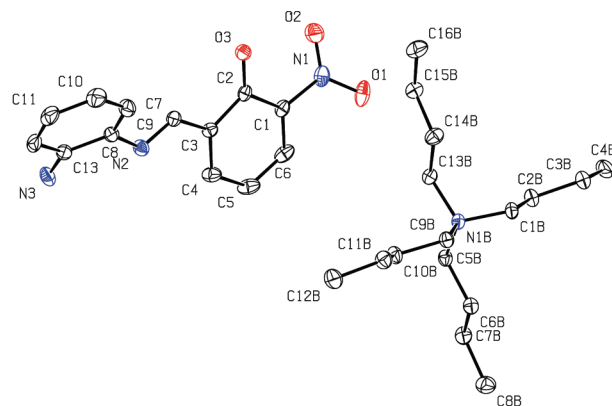
Scheme 1. Nucleophilic Addition of NBu₄OH to Zn(salphen) **1a** Giving Monoimine NBu₄ Salt **1b**



amine) which was treated with a methanolic solution of NBu₄OH (1 M) in CH₃CN at room temperature; we hypothesized that nucleophilic attack of the OH anion on the imine bond should allow for imine hydrolysis. It should be noted that complex **1a**, as for most of the Zn(salphen) complexes in this work, is virtually insoluble in CH₃CN as a result of strong self-dimerization and π – π stacking interactions.¹² We recently reported that the axial position in the Zn(salphen) complex can be coordinated by various anions giving rise to stable assembled structures.¹³ In the present case, addition of NBu₄OH to a suspension of **1a** in

CH₃CN immediately provoked full dissolution of the solid material, and concomitantly a strong color change from orange to deep red was observed. After simple workup of the crude mixture (see Supporting Information), a crystalline red solid was isolated.

These crystals were first analyzed by ¹H NMR (DMSO-*d*₆) and revealed the presence of a product with a characteristic peak at 4.95 ppm (NH₂ group) and four distinct resonances that can be ascribed to a NBU fragment. X-ray diffraction then unambiguously determined the nature of this product, and the result is reported in Figure 1.¹⁴ The structure

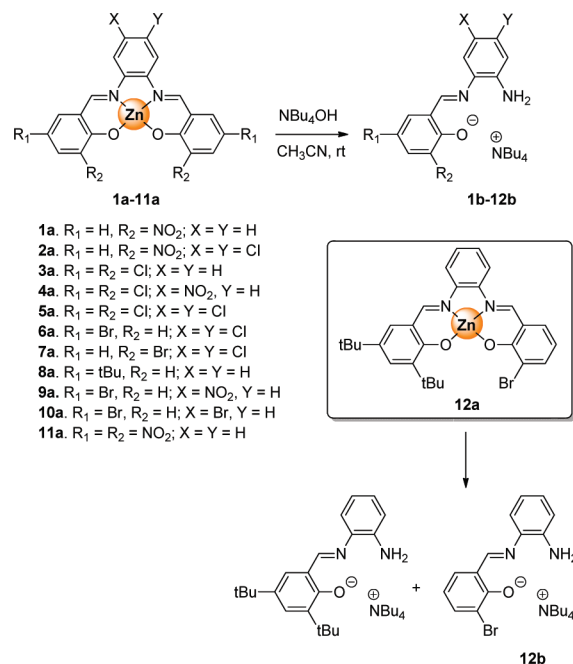


plays a dominant role in this conversion, complex **1a** was also treated under similar conditions with NaOH in a separate reaction. Although a heterogeneous mixture was retained, a clear color change from orange to red (as in the reaction with NBu_4OH) was observed for the reaction mixture. Analysis of the solid material by ^1H NMR revealed the presence of both the monoimine product (presumably as the sodium salt) as well as the liberated salicylaldehyde. Hence, the use of NBu_4OH is clearly advantageous as it gives rise to a homogeneous mixture and facilitates product isolation by means of crystallization (Supporting Information).

The scope of this new protocol was then tested with a series of $\text{Zn}(\text{salphen})$ complexes having various (electron-withdrawing) peripheral groups (i.e., **1a–12a**, Scheme 1). We were delighted to find that monoimine salts **1b–12b** could be readily obtained. In all cases, the monoimine NBu_4 salts were produced in moderate to good yields (Table 1); the ionic nature was easily revealed by $\text{ESI}(-)\text{-MS}$; and the structures of **2b** and **10b** were also supported by X-ray diffraction studies (Supporting Information). Notably, compounds **1b–12b** were produced under very mild conditions (rt, CH_3CN as medium) and very short reaction times ($\leq 5\text{--}10$ min). Although the reaction works very efficiently with those Zn complexes having electron-withdrawing groups, we found that $\text{Zn}(\text{salphen})$ s having donating groups (Table 1, entry 8) can also be converted into the monoimine salt. Interestingly, when nonsymmetrical $\text{Zn}(\text{salphen})$ s were utilized (Table 1, entries 4, 9, and 10), high selectivity was observed for breaking of only one of the two imine bonds.¹⁷ While for compounds **4b** and **9b** the isolated materials showed virtually a single compound in the ^1H NMR spectra, for **10b** two isomeric structures were observed in an approximate 7:3 ratio (Supporting Information). We also probed complex **12a** since it constitutes two imine bonds with potentially different reactivity. Under the conditions used for the preparation of **1b–11b**, we found that no genuine selectivity could be observed for scission of only one of the imine bonds. A small amount of pure **12b** (8%) was isolated, but subsequent fractions of product that were collected contained both possible monoimine derivatives. Apparently, complex **12a** is hydrolyzed at both imine bonds under these experimental conditions, and cocrystallization prevents isolation of either product in high yield.

We then used monoimine salts **1b** and **5b** as reagents for metallosalen structures that are not (easily) accessible through the known synthetic routes (Scheme 2). Thus, treatment of **1b/5b** with a (substituted) salicylaldehyde and metal acetate in a one-pot procedure^{7b} gave access to metallosalen structures **13–15**. The synthesis of the $\text{Zn}(\text{salphen})$ complex **14** represents an example of a desymmetrization protocol

Table 1. Synthesis of Monoimine NBu_4 Salts **1b–12b** Using Complexes **1a–12a**^a



entry	product	R ¹	R ²	X	Y	yield (%) ^b
1	1b	H	NO ₂	H	H	51
2	2b	H	NO ₂	Cl	Cl	58
3	3b	Cl	Cl	H	H	40
4	4b	Cl	Cl	NO ₂ ^c	H	49
5	5b	Cl	Cl	Cl	Cl	76
6	6b	Br	H	Cl	Cl	59
7	7b	H	Br	Cl	Cl	67
8	8b	tBu	H	H	H	44
9	9b	Br	H	NO ₂ ^c	H	53
10	10b	Br	H	H	Br ^{c,d}	41
11	11b	NO ₂	NO ₂	H	H	55
12	12b	H	Br	H	H	8

^a All reactions carried out on a 0.24–0.40 mmol scale based on the $\text{Zn}(\text{salphen})$ except for entries 1 (0.61 mmol) and 8 (0.83 mmol). ^b Isolated yield. ^c Structure supported by NMR predictive simulations using gNMR from IvorySoft and ^1H -COSY measurements. ^d Structure of the major isomer supported by X-ray crystallography; see Supporting Information.

where first the symmetrical complex **1a** is converted into monoimine salt **1b** followed by a condensation step that allows for the presence of different ring substituents in the second aldimine fragment. We then also focused on the preparation of chiral metallosalens (**16** and **17**) using a known binaphthyl-based dialdehyde (Supporting Information).¹⁸

These types of bismetallsalen derivatives have recently attracted much attention in the polymerization of epoxides.¹⁹ Compounds **16** and **17** were easily prepared

(15) Similar nucleophilic additions to imine bonds in metallosalen structures have been reported: (a) Cametti, M.; Dalla Cort, A.; Colapietro, M.; Portalone, G.; Russo, L.; Rissanen, K. *Inorg. Chem.* **2007**, *46*, 9057. (b) Wang, Y.; Parkin, S.; Atwood, D. *Inorg. Chem.* **2002**, *41*, 558. (c) Paris, S. I. M.; Laskay, Ü.; Liang, S.; Pavlyuk, O.; Tschirschwitz, S.; Lönnecke, P.; McMills, Ü. C.; Jackson, Ü. P.; Petersen, Ü. L.; Hey-Hawkins, E.; Jensen, Ü. P. *Inorg. Chim. Acta* **2010**, doi: 10.1016/j.ica.2010.06.041.

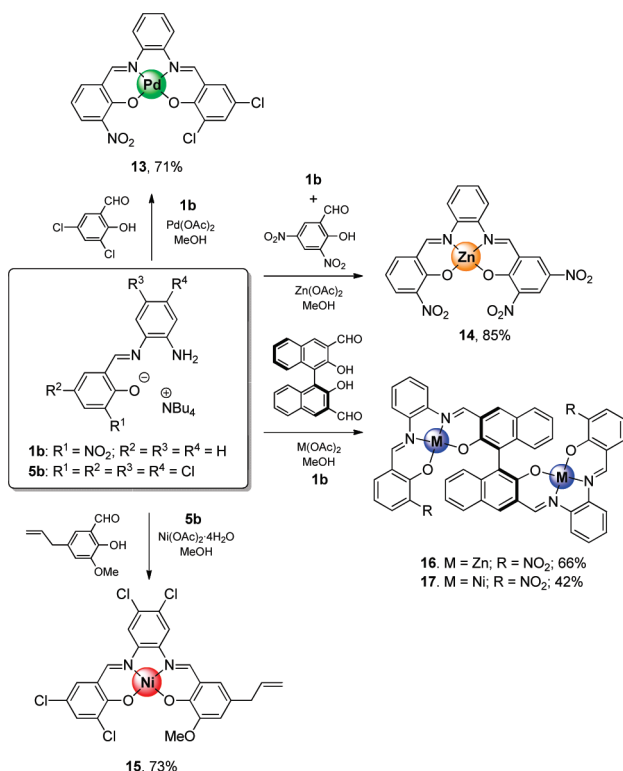
(16) Note that the use of NBu_4X ($\text{X} = \text{Cl}$, I) did not provoke hydrolysis of the imine bond in **1**; in these cases, unreacted **1** was isolated as the only product.

(17) Note that this is the case for the isolated product.

(18) Belokon, Y. N.; Chusov, D.; Borkin, D. A.; Yashkina, L. V.; Bolotov, P.; Skrupskaya, T.; North, M. *Tetrahedron: Asymmetry* **2008**, *19*, 459.

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Scheme 2. Synthesis of Nonsymmetrical Metallosalen Complexes **13–17** Using Monoimine Salt **1b** and **5b** as Reagents



using monoamine **1b**, and simple variation of the electronic features in these structures through the use of different monoimine reagents can thus provide a new series of (polymerization) catalysts.^{10b,19}

In summary, we described a new, mild, and easy method for the synthesis of a series of monoimine salts derived from Zn-centered salphen complexes. This new methodology is based on a selective imine bond hydrolysis provoked by addition of an OH nucleophile. The nucleophilic addition of the hydroxide anion is likely facilitated by the presence

of a highly Lewis acidic Zn center²⁰ that increases the reactivity of the imine bond.²¹ The reported protocol is advantageous in terms of reaction conditions, isolation, and scope using easily accessible Zn(salphen) complexes as substrates. These monoimine salts are not (easily) accessible via other methods and thus create new potential for the fine-tuning of steric and electronic features of metallosalen structures (cf., Scheme 2) useful in various applications including homogeneous catalysis and as molecular building blocks in supramolecular chemistry.²² Our future plans focus on the application of this new reactivity for the fabrication of larger, multinuclear metallosalen architectures.

Acknowledgment. We thank ICIQ (ECE, MMB, JB, and AWK), ICREA (AWK), the Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación (MICINN, project CTQ-2008-02050/BQU, AWK), Consolider Ingenio 2010 (project CSD2006-0003, AWK), and the COST-D40 action (AWK) for support. Dr. Noemí Cabello and Alba Gonzalez are thanked for the mass spectrometric studies. Daniele Anselmo is thanked for providing the chiral bisaldehyde used for the synthesis of **16** and **17**.

Supporting Information Available: Synthetic and complete analytical data for all new compounds, copies of NMR spectra, and crystallographic data for **1b**, **2b**, and **10b** in CIF format. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

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(20) For recent contributions demonstrating the high Lewis acid character of the Zn ion in these salphen complexes, see: (a) San Felices, L.; Escudero-Adán, E. C.; Benet-Buchholz, J.; Kleij, A. W. *Inorg. Chem.* **2009**, *48*, 846. (b) Martínez Belmonte, M.; Escudero-Adán, E. C.; Benet-Buchholz, J.; Kleij, A. W. *Eur. J. Inorg. Chem.* **2009**, 5307. (c) Escudero-Adán, E. C.; Benet-Buchholz, J.; Kleij, A. W. *Eur. J. Inorg. Chem.* **2009**, 3562.

(21) We also examined the use of the chiral Zn complex based on *N,N'*-bis[3,5-di-*tert*-butylsalicylidene-1,2-diaminocyclohexane] and a nonmetalated salphen ligand as substrates: in the first case, no reaction was observed, while in the latter case, only some hydrolysis was noted in the isolated, impure product. See for details the Supporting Information. The results imply the importance of the presence of a salphen backbone in combination with Zn to have sufficient reactivity/selectivity.

(22) For a recent example: Wezenberg, S. J.; Escudero-Adán, E. C.; Benet-Buchholz, J.; Kleij, A. W. *Inorg. Chem.* **2008**, *47*, 2925.