## Hydrous zinc halide-catalyzed aminosulfonation of hydrocarbons†

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Received (in College Park, MD, USA) 8th April 2008, Accepted 16th June 2008 First published as an Advance Article on the web 5th August 2008 DOI: 10.1039/b805783d

Benzylic and allylic hydrocarbons are selectively converted to the corresponding sulfonamides by a  $ZnBr_2-H_2O$ -catalyzed reaction with PhI=NTs; saturated adamantane is aminosulfonated at the tertiary C–H bond.

The direct N-functionalization of hydrocarbons by the activation of C-H and C=C bonds is a challenging and important goal because of the value of the derived amines and the abundance of the hydrocarbon substrates. The most well-developed of these reactions are the transition metal-catalyzed hydroamination,<sup>1</sup> aziridination<sup>2</sup> and allylic amination<sup>3</sup> of alkenes. Reactions that effect direct benzylic C-H amination are receiving increasing attention, employing imido-iodinanes (TsN=IAr), chloramine-T (TsNNaCl) or tosyl azide as aminating agents in combination with various transition metal catalysts, including rhodium-carboxylates,4 ruthenium- and cobaltporphyrins,<sup>5,6</sup> manganese–Schiff base complexes,<sup>7</sup> silverphenanthrolines,<sup>8</sup> gold(III) salts,<sup>9</sup> and copper-pyrazolylborates<sup>10</sup> and -salts.<sup>11</sup> The efficiency and scope of these reactions vary widely, hence there is a need for improved and general reactions of this type. Moreover, the reactive aminating species involved in these processes are unknown, but often are presumed to be "metalnitrenoids" formed via redox transformations of the transition metal complexes with the N-reagent. Herein, we report what appear to be the first hydrocarbon C-H aminations catalyzed by non-transition metal (redox-inactive) salts.

Following our recent development of Cu<sup>1</sup>-catalyzed aminosulfonation of benzylic hydrocarbons and ethers employing anhydrous chloramine-T,<sup>11*b*</sup> we investigated the possibility of catalyzing such reactions with isoelectronic, but presumably redox-inactive, Zn<sup>II</sup> salts. To our surprise and satisfaction, the reaction between chloramine-T and ethylbenzene (1.2 : 1) in the presence of 15 mol% ZnBr<sub>2</sub><sup>12</sup> (CH<sub>3</sub>CN, 70 °C, 12 h) produced the benzylic sulfonamide (X = H, 25% yield) accompanied by TsNH<sub>2</sub> (eqn (1)).



Economic and toxicity considerations caused us to optimize and explore the scope of the Zn-catalyzed reactions. Using 4ethyl anisole (eqn (1), X = OMe) as a test substrate, a survey of N-reagents, Zn<sup>II</sup> salts, solvents, temperature and stoichiometry (see ESI<sup>†</sup>) found the best conversion and yield with 2-3 equivalents of PhI=NTs,<sup>13</sup> 15 mol% ZnBr<sub>2</sub> with oven dried (110 °C) 4 Å molecular sieves in benzene at rt (24–30 h) or 50 °C (12 h), providing the amidation product in 71% isolated yield.<sup>‡</sup> A survey of the reactions with other benzylic substrates under these conditions was conducted, with the results being summarized in Table 1 (entries 1-8). It can be seen that the reaction is moderately effective and highly regioselective with a variety of secondary benzylic reactants (entries 1-6). Substrates with *p*-electron-releasing substituents (e.g. entries 1, 3) react faster and give higher conversions and yields than those with electron-withdrawing groups (entries 4, 5); the amount of the TsNH<sub>2</sub> by-product increased in the latter cases. Small amounts (<10%) of ArCH(OH)Me or ArC(O)Me were detected as well. Substrates with tertiary benzylic C-H bonds are also aminated with moderate efficiency (entries 7, 8).

The scope of the Zn-catalyzed aminosulfonation goes beyond benzylic substrates. Thus, representative allylic substrates such as 1,3-diphenylpropene and cyclohexene undergo primarily allylic amination (entries 9, 10) rather than addition to the double bond (to form aziridines), often a major pathway with transition metal-catalyzed reactions. A minor addition product, *cis*-1-bromo-2-sulfonamidocyclohexane, was isolated from the reaction with cyclohexene. Finally, and perhaps most remarkably, the imido-iodinane–ZnBr<sub>2</sub> system is even capable of aminating the  $3^{\circ}$  C–H bonds of saturated hydrocarbons as illustrated by the reaction with adamantane, which produced 1-tosylaminoadamantane in modest yield (entry 11). However, under similar conditions, neither cyclohexane nor benzene, both with stronger C–H bonds, were amidated.

Although the chemo- and regioselectivity for the Zn-catalyzed amination reactions are similar to the Cu<sup>I</sup>-catalyzed counterparts,<sup>11</sup> some significant differences are evident. For

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<sup>†</sup> Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: Detailed experimental procedures and characterization data, including product NMR spectra. See DOI: 10.1039/b805783d

Entry	Substrate	Product	Temp- erature/°C	Yield <sup>a</sup> (conversion) <sup>b</sup>
1	MeO	MeO	RT	71 (81)
2		NHTs	RT 50	40 48 (75)
3	$\hat{\mathbf{D}}$	NHTs	50	52 (75)
4		NHTs	50	42 (50)
5	O <sub>2</sub> N	NHTs	50	10
6		NHTs	50	41
7		NHTs	50	38
8	C)-CH	C-NHTs	50	38
9	$\bigcirc$	NHTs	50	28
10	$\bigcirc$	NHTs + C	50	50 (40, 10)
11	Ð	NHTs	50	22

 Table 1
 Zn-catalyzed aminosulfonation of representative hydrocarbons

<sup>a</sup> % Isolated yield. <sup>b</sup> % Conversion of hydrocarbon substrate.

example, the Zn<sup>II</sup>-promoted reaction with *p*-ethyltoluene (entry 3) is completely selective for the 2° C–H bond, whereas the [Cu(CH<sub>3</sub>CN)<sub>4</sub>]PF<sub>6</sub>-catalyzed reaction gives a 3 : 1 ratio of 2° : 1° amination products.<sup>14</sup> Cumene (entry 7) is aminated completely selectively by the Zn catalyst, whereas the Cu<sup>I</sup>-promoted reaction also produces some of the corresponding allyl amine from dehydrogenation.<sup>11b</sup> Additionally, although the saturated adamantane is aminated by the Zn-catalyst (entry 11), it is unreactive towards chloramine-T–[Cu(CH<sub>3</sub>CN)<sub>4</sub>]-PF<sub>6</sub>.<sup>14</sup>

With an eye to determining the origin of the  $T_{s}NH_{2}$  by-product, enhancing the reaction's efficiency, and gaining mechanistic insights, we briefly examined the role of the metal ion, water,

and the counter anion. An initial survey of other group 12 salts revealed that ZnCl<sub>2</sub>, ZnI<sub>2</sub>, CdCl<sub>2</sub>, and HgCl<sub>2</sub> also promote the amidation of ethylbenzene under similar conditions; the yield increased in the order  $ZnCl_2 < ZnBr_2 < ZnI_2$ . In contrast,  $Zn(OTf)_2$  and neutral bromide ion sources, e.g.  $Bu_4N^+Br^-$ , NaBr, are ineffective. When rigorously dry conditions were employed for the reaction of PhINTs with ethylbenzene promoted by ZnBr<sub>2</sub>,<sup>15</sup> the yields of the amination product (*ca.* 3%) and TsNH<sub>2</sub> were greatly reduced, while inclusion of a controlled amount of water (0.1-1.0 equiv.), together with ZnBr<sub>2</sub>, provided the product in 20-40% yield. The more economical use of PhINTs (1 : 10 iodinane-hydrocarbon) was enabled by employing 0.15 equivalents of ZnBr<sub>2</sub> and 1.0 equivalents of H<sub>2</sub>O (50 °C, 12 h, benzene) to afford moderate yields of the amination products derived from ethylbenzene (45%), ethylanisole (54%) and adamantane (32%). Since Zn<sup>II</sup>-H<sub>2</sub>O-containing systems can be acidic,<sup>16</sup> we tested and confirmed that HBr-H2O and HBr-HOAc also promote the amidation of ethylbenzene (10-20% yield), apparently the first example of a protic acid-catalyzed C-H amination. Finally, pmethoxyphenol was found to strongly inhibit the hydrous ZnBr<sub>2</sub>-PhINTs amidation of ethylbenzene, suggestive of a radical process,<sup>17</sup> consistent with the observed anion effects. The viability of a Zn-amido intermediate, e.g. XZn-NBrTs, and its potential for C–H insertion is supported by: (1) the isolable  $(ArSO_2NCl)_2Zn$ ;<sup>18</sup> (2) the formation of  $T_sNHC_6H_{11}$  from  $T_sNCl_2 + Zn$  in cyclohexane;<sup>19</sup> and (3) the  $ZnI_2$ -promoted conversion of dienyl azides to pyrroles.20

Although the nature of the active aminating species in these reactions is as yet uncertain, our initial experiments suggest that a free nitrene is not involved. Since TsN: itself is known to undergo C–H insertion and addition reactions with benzene,<sup>21</sup> we examined the reaction of ZnBr<sub>2</sub> with PhI==NTs in benzene at 20–50 °C in the absence of a benzylic substrate (eqn (2)). The only organic products detected were PhI, TsNH<sub>2</sub> and TsN==NTs. Neither of the established nitrene-trapping products, PhNHTs or the azepine, was found, providing evidence against the intervention of the free nitrene.



In conclusion, we have found that benzylic, allylic and tertiary aliphatic C–H bonds can be amino-functionalized by PhI==NTs and zinc halide salts. That such transformations are not the exclusive domain of transition metal catalysts may presage the development of more efficient and uniquely selective reactions for the preparation of diverse organonitrogen compounds from abundant, yet typically unreactive hydrocarbons.

We are grateful for financial support provided by the US National Science Foundation.

## Notes and references

 $\ddagger$  Caution: the dry solids TsN—IPh and ZnBr<sub>2</sub> should not be mixed together as a strongly exothermic process has been observed upon

combining the two compounds in mmol quantities. Representative procedure: to an oven-dried Schlenk tube (or a test tube) under N<sub>2</sub> was transferred anhydrous ZnBr<sub>2</sub> (15 mol% of the substrate) and 2 mL of dry benzene. To this was added TsN==IPh (1.0 mmol), oven dried (110 °C) 4 Å molecular sieves or 1.0 mmol H<sub>2</sub>O, 4-ethyl anisole (0.50 mmol), and another 3 mL of dry benzene by syringe. The suspension was stirred at room temperature (or at 50 °C, Table 1) under N<sub>2</sub>. Another 0.5 mmol of TsN==IPh was added to the reaction mixture after 5–6 h and stirring was continued for the specified time. When TLC analysis indicated no further conversion, the reaction mixture was filtered, the solid collected, washed with CHCl<sub>3</sub> (~15–20 mL), and the filtrate concentrated by rotary evaporation. The residue was purified by flash chromatography or preparative TLC on silica gel eluting with 1 : 10 ethyl acetate-petroleum ether. Characterization data for isolated products are provided in the ESI.†

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