C–H Activation

Synthesis of Strained γ-Lactams by Palladium(0)-Catalyzed C(sp³)–H Alkenylation and Application to Alkaloid Synthesis

Philipp M. Holstein⁺, *David Dailler*⁺, *Julien Vantourout*⁺, *Janah Shaya, Anthony Millet, and Olivier Baudoin*^{*}

Abstract: A variety of strained α -alkylidene- γ -lactams were synthesized by palladium(0)-catalyzed intramolecular $C(sp^3)$ -H alkenylation from easily accessible acyclic and monocyclic bromoalkene precursors. These lactams are valuable intermediates for accessing various classes of mono- and bicylic alkaloids containing a pyrrolidine ring, as illustrated with the synthesis of an advanced model of the marine natural product plakoridine A and of the indolizidine alkaloid δ -coniceine.

he intramolecular palladium(0)-catalyzed activation of non-acidic C(sp³)-H bonds is a powerful tool for accessing a vast array of bicyclic and polycyclic systems.^[1-3] Recent efforts in this field have focused on the use of non-aromatic halogenated substrates, and allows synthesis of C(sp3)-rich nitrogen heterocycles, which are of high interest for the synthesis of active ingredients and natural products. In particular, our group reported the construction of hexahydroindoles by intramolecular C(sp³)-H alkenylation (Scheme 1 a),^[4a] and its application to the total synthesis of aeruginosins.^[4b,c] While the current work was in progress, Cramer and co-workers disclosed the asymmetric synthesis of β -lactams^[5a] and cyclopropane-fused γ -lactams (Scheme 1 b)^[5b] from α -chloroamides by intramolecular alkylation of benzylic and cyclopropyl C(sp³)-H bonds, respectively, in the presence of a chiral ligand. Herein, we report a unique example of an intramolecular alkenylation of unactivated primary $C(sp^3)$ -H bonds using acyclic bromoalkenes, thus giving rise to mono- and bicyclic α -alkylidene- γ -lactams (Scheme 1 c). This new method is relevant to the synthesis of five-membered nitrogen heterocycles, which are present as substructures in numerous bioactive natural products such as pyrrolidine,^[6a] pyrrolizidine,^[6b] indolizidine,^[6c] and Stemona^[6d] alkaloids.

We set out to optimize the cyclization of the SEMprotected bromoamide **1a**, which was readily synthesized in



Scheme 1. Palladium(0)-catalyzed intramolecular $C(sp^3)$ -H alkenylation and alkylation to synthesize bicyclic and monocyclic N-heterocycles.

three steps from 3,3-dimethylacrylic acid (Table 1). The main problem was the formation of significant quantities of the protodebrominated compound 3a, which is diagnostic of the high ring strain created in such reactions.^[2c,e,4a] The first interesting results were obtained with PPh₂Et as the ligand, by using reaction conditions similar to those initially developed by Fagnou and co-workers (entry 1).^[3f] Among the various palladium sources tested, the allylpalladium(II) chloride dimer turned out to be the best choice (entries 2 and 3). Then, a number of trialkylphosphines and diphenylmonoalkylphosphines were screened (entries 4-9), and triphenylphosphine emerged as the optimal ligand (entry 7). In addition, cesium carbonate (1.5 equiv, optimized quantity) was found to be the optimal stoichiometric base in combination with pivalic acid (entries 10 and 11). Furthermore, a high reaction temperature of 160°C was found to be necessary, since lower temperatures gave higher amounts of 3a (entry 12). This result further illustrates the high activation energy required to form the strained α -alkylidene- γ -lactam **2a**. Finally, the catalyst loading could be reduced to 5 mol% palladium and 10 mol% ligand (entry 13), but the yield of 2a

^[*] Dr. P. M. Holstein,^[+] D. Dailler,^[+] J. Vantourout,^[+] J. Shaya, Dr. A. Millet, Prof. Dr. O. Baudoin Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1, CNRS UMR 5246, Institut de Chimie et Biochimie Moléculaires et Supramoléculaires, CPE Lyon 43 Boulevard du 11 Novembre 1918, 69622 Villeurbanne (France) D. Dailler,^[+] Prof. Dr. O. Baudoin Current address: University of Basel, Department of Chemistry St. Johanns-Ring 19, 4056 Basel (Switzerland) E-mail: olivier.baudoin@unibas.ch
[*] These authors contributed equally to this work.

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Communications

 Table 1:
 Optimization of reaction conditions.



[a] Determined by GCMS analysis of the crude reaction mixture.
 [b] Determined by GCMS analysis using tetradecane as an internal standard. Yield of isolated product 2a is given within parentheses.
 SEM = [2-(trimethylsilyl)ethoxy]methyl, Piv = pivaloyl.

decreased with lower catalyst loadings (entry 14). Under the optimized reaction conditions, **2a** was obtained in 83% yield upon isolation, and the amount of **3a** was less than 10% of the mass balance (entry 13).

The scope and limitations of this intramolecular $C(sp^3)$ -H alkenylation reaction are shown in Scheme 2. First, the nitrogen substituent was varied (Scheme 2 a), and the reaction was found to tolerate an aminal (**2a,b**) and trimethoxybenzyl (**2c**) group,^[5b] in addition to an alkyl (**2e**) group. Other amide-protecting groups could either not be introduced or were found to be unstable (for example, the Boc group; Boc = *tert*-butyloxycarbonyl) to the current reaction conditions. Importantly, the TMB group in **2c** could be cleaved under acidic conditions to provide the NH-lactam **2d**.^[7]

The nature of the alkyl group (\mathbb{R}^2) undergoing C–H activation was varied (Scheme 2b) with $\mathbb{R}^1 = \text{SEM.}^{[8]}$ First, the compound **1 f**, containing a N-ethyl group ($\mathbb{R}^2 = H$) provided only small amounts of the γ -lactam **2 f** along with the corresponding protodebrominated product **3 f** (**2 f/3 f** 14:86), thereby demonstrating poor reactivity of linear alkyl groups. In contrast, the reaction of the compound **1 g**, bearing a *tert*-butyl substituent, was highly favored and gave rise to the γ -lactam **2 g** in 92 % yield. The reactivity trend **1 f** < **1 a** < **1 g** is consistent with previous observations, and can be attributed to Thorpe–Ingold effects, which have an important impact in this class of reactions.^[24] Other substrates successfully underwent selective activation/cyclization at primary (**1h**-**j**) and cyclopropyl (**1 k**) C–H bonds to give the corresponding monocyclic (**2 h**-**j**) and spirocyclic (**2 k**) γ -lactams in the



Scheme 2. Scope, limitations, and selectivity pattern of the intramolecular $C(sp^3)$ -H alkenylation reaction. [a] Reaction conditions: CF₃CO₂H, anisole, 20 °C. [b] Obtained from enantiomerically pure substrates. EOM = ethoxymethyl, TMB = 2,4,6-trimethoxybenzyl.

presence of less reactive methylene and methine C–H bonds. Indeed, the activation/cyclization of secondary C–H bonds was unsuccessful, even in the absence of primary C–H bonds (**2m**), except for more activated cyclopropyl C–H bonds (**2l**).^[9] The reaction of bromoalkenes bearing a trisubstituted double bond was also analyzed (Scheme 2c). Gratifyingly, phenyl- (**1n**) and methyl-substituted (**1p**) Z-configured bromoalkenes furnished the corresponding γ -lactams with similar efficiency. In contrast, the *E* isomer of **1n** (**1o**) was found to undergo rapid base-promoted elimination to give the corresponding alkyne even in the absence of palladium catalyst, thereby precluding the C–H alkenylation process.

The remarkable site-selectivity observed in the above examples was further demonstrated with the reaction of the compound **1q** (Scheme 3), which provided the γ -lactam **2q** in 70% yield on a multigram scale. Among all potentially reactive C–H bonds in **1q**, the primary C–H bonds highlighted in Scheme 3 underwent cyclization selectively. The lactam **2q** can be viewed as an advanced intermediate for the synthesis of the marine natural product plakoridine A,^[10] which is currently under study.

We next examined the selectivity of the activation of nonequivalent primary C–H bonds on the reactants 1r-u, which may either give rise to the γ -lactams 2r-u, or possibly to the





Scheme 3. Gram-scale access to an advanced intermediate for the synthesis of the marine product plakoridine A. TIPS = triisopropylsilyl.

more strained β -lactams **4r–u** (Table 2). The compound **1r**, bearing N-methyl and N-*tert*-butyl substituents, underwent selective reaction at the *tert*-butyl group to give **2r** in high

Table 2: Selectivity of the activation of primary C-H bonds.



[a] Yield of isolated product is given within parentheses. [b] Determined by GCMS analysis of the crude reaction mixture. [c] The corresponding protodebrominated products **3 s**-**u** were also formed in the following ratios (GC): **2 s**/4 **s**/3 **s** 53:22:25; **2** t/4 t/3 **t** 5:63:32; **4 u**/3 **u** 48:52.

yield (entry 1). Replacing the *tert*-butyl group with an isopropyl group (1s) generated a separable mixture of both lactam products (entry 2). In contrast, the substrate 1t, derived from (–)-ephedrine and containing one methyl group less than 1s, underwent selective reaction to form the β -lactam 4t in moderate yield, and was accompanied by significant amounts of the protodebrominated product 3t (entry 3).

These results can be rationalized by considering the opposing conformational and strain effects in the current system (Scheme 4). The most stable conformation of the



Scheme 4. Contradictory effects on reaction selectivity. Bottom: DFToptimized structures (M06/6-31G**), H atoms omitted for clarity. With these substituents, **A** was computed to be more stable than **B** by 4.8 kcal mol⁻¹ and **2r** more stable than **4r** by 19.5 kcal mol⁻¹.

palladium intermediate undergoing C-H activation^[2c,3f,h] is A, where the smallest N-methyl substituent turns toward the palladium center [see the computed model structure with X = Pd(PMe₃)OAc]. However, C-H activation at this methyl group and/or C-C reductive elimination to form the β-lactam 4 should be disfavored because of the generation of ring strain. In contrast, the formation of the less strained y-lactam 2 should be easier, but has to occur from the higher-energy conformer **B**. Increasing the number of methyl groups at \mathbb{R}^1 , \mathbf{R}^2 should increase the population of this reactive conformer **B** and should thus favor the γ -lactam product (Table 2, entries 3-1). Finally, the reactant 1u, bearing N-methyl and N-cyclohexyl groups provided a separable mixture of **4u** and 3u, together with traces of 2u, as expected from the lack of reactivity of secondary C-H bonds under the current reaction conditions (Table 2, entry 4; also see 2m in Scheme 2). These results show that the formation of highly strained α -alkylidene-\beta-lactams is also feasible upon careful choice of amide substituents, but with reduced efficiency compared to γ-lactams.^[11]

The asymmetric C–H alkenylation of **1a** in the presence of a chiral ligand instead of PPh₃ was also studied. In particular, we tested P-arylbinepines, chiral surrogates of PPh₃,^[12b] as they were reported to provide high enantioselectivities in intramolecular $C(sp^3)$ –H arylations leading to (fused) indanes.^[12,13] We found that the ligand **L1**, which was initially introduced by Fu and co-workers,^[14] led to γ -

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Scheme 5. Proof-of-concept enantioselective C(sp³)-H alkenylation.

lactam **2a** with moderate enantioselectivity (Scheme 5). Although there is admittedly room for improvement, this result constitutes a proof of concept for enantioselective γ -lactam synthesis through this C(sp³)–H alkenylation method.

Next, the reactivity of monocyclic precursors, relevant to the synthesis of bicyclic alkaloids, was examined (Scheme 6a).



Scheme 6. Construction of bicyclic γ -lactams and application to the synthesis of δ -coniceine. AIBN = 2,2'-azobis (2-methylpropionitrile).

As expected, the reaction of methyl-rich bromoalkene 1v, derived from 2,2,6,6-tetramethylpiperidine, gave 2v in high yield. More strikingly, a piperidine precursor (1w) containing a single exocyclic methyl group underwent selective C–H alkenylation, to give the fused γ -lactam 2w in 71 % yield on a gram scale. No trace of product arising from activation at the methylene C–H bonds α to the nitrogen atom was observed in the crude reaction mixture, which is consistent with the preceding results. The compound 2w can be employed as a platform for the synthesis of various indolizidine alkaloids.^[6c] For instance, reductive ozonolysis of 2wfurnished a diastereomeric mixture of alcohols (5a,b), which should provide an entry into hydroxylated indolizidine alkaloids such as lentiginosine (Scheme 6b).^[15] Alternatively, **5a,b** underwent deoxybromination and reduction of the C–Br bond under classical conditions (Scheme 6b). Reduction of the resulting saturated lactam with LiAlH₄ and protonation afforded racemic δ -coniceine hydrochloride in good overall yield.^[16]

Finally, fused pyrrolidine 2x and azepane 2y, relevant to the synthesis of pyrrolizidine^[6b] and *Stemona*^[6d] alkaloids, respectively, were obtained in a similar fashion from easily accessible precursors 1x, y by intramolecular C–H alkenylation (Scheme 6a). However, compound 2x was obtained in low yield due to competitive protodebromination (2x/3x 1:1) which likely results from excessive ring strain in the formation of the 5,5 ring system.^[2e]

In conclusion, a variety of α -alkylidene- γ -lactams were obtained by palladium(0)-catalyzed intramolecular C(sp³)–H alkenylation of easily accessible acyclic bromoalkene precursors. These lactams can be employed to access various classes of mono- and bicylic alkaloids containing a pyrrolidine ring.

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