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Cp*Rh(III)-Catalyzed Directed C-H Methylation and Arylation of Quinoline *N*-Oxides at the C-8 Position

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Abstract. Herein, we report a Cp*Rh(III)-catalyzed directed C-H methylation of quinoline N-oxides at the C-8 position using commercially available organotrifluoroborates as reagents. This method features perfect regioselectivity, relatively mild reaction conditions, and diverse functional group tolerance with good to excellent yields. Additionally, direct C-8 arylated quinoline N-oxides products could also be obtained under the same conditions. Preliminary mechanistic experiments were conducted and a possible mechanism was proposed.

Keywords: Quinoline *N*-Oxides; C–H Methylation; Rhodium

Quinoline is an important structural motif in drug discovery^[1-4] and materials science.^[5] Notably, 8methylquinoline derivatives are found in many drugs and biologically active molecules (Scheme 1).[6-8] Accordingly, the development of efficient methods to produce substituted quinoline is important. Over the past few decades, transition-metal-catalyzed C-H functionalization has emerged as a powerful strategy to synthesize complex molecules.^[9-12] Recently, rhodium(III)-catalyzed C-H activation leading to C-C and C-X (X= O, and N) bond formation has attracted much attention due to the high efficiency.^{[13-} ¹⁷] Nevertheless, how to control the regioselectivity if the substrates have more than one reacting C-H bond remains a challenge. Therefore, chelation-assisted transformation has become a common and powerful method for the regioselective functionalization of C-H bonds.[18, 19]



Scheme 1. Selected examples of biologically active compounds containing 8-methylquinoline core.

Recently, much effort has been made in the area of C-H functionalization of quinoline at different positions.^[20, 21] N-Oxide as a directing group has attracted significant attention, which has been used to achieve the desired regioselective control. A significant number of methods exist for transition-metal-catalyzed functionalization at the C2 position of quinoline N-oxides, such as olefination,^[22] sulfonylation,^[23] alkylation,^[24] acetoxylation, ^[25] phosphonation, arylation,^[26, 27] and amination.^[28, 29] By contrast, only a few examples have been reported for the selective C-8 functionalization of quinoline Noxides.^[30-39] In 2014, Chang and co-workers developed two catalytic procedures to 8-iodinated and 8-aminated quinolines using rhodium and iridium catalytic systems.^[35] Rh- and Co-catalyzed C-C coupling with alkynes at the C8 position of quinoline *N*-oxides was disclosed by Li's,^[36] Chang's,^[37] and Sundararaju's groups.^[38] In addition, Larionov developed the palladium-catalyzed C8 arylation and selective homocoupling of quinoline N-oxides.^[34, 39] Recently, organoboron reagents, especially alkyl boron reagents, have been used extensively in C–H functionalization.^[40-44] However, related alkylation at the C8 position of quinoline N-oxides with

organoboron reagents remains unexplored.^[45-49] Inspired by the previous work by $\text{Li}^{[50]}$ and our groups,^[51] we disclose a Rh(III)-catalyzed C8 functionalization of quinoline *N*-oxides with organoboron reagents (Scheme 2).

Initially, our studies focused on the rhodiumcatalyzed cross coupling between 4-methylquinoline 1-oxide **1a** and readily available potassium methyltrifluoroborate **2a** (Table 1). In the presence of 5 mol% [RhCp*Cl₂]₂, 20 mol% AgSbF₆, and 1.5 equivalents of Ag₂O under argon at 65 °C, an 18% yield of product **3a** was detected by ¹H NMR analysis (entry 1). After a series of oxidants were screened, AgOAc was found to be the most effective, giving **3a** at 36% yield (entry 3); Ag₂CO₃ and AgF





Scheme 2. C8-Selective Functionalization of quinoline *N*-oxides.

showed comparable efficiency (entries 2 and 7), while other oxidants gave no product (entries 4-6). On the other hand, no product was formed with $[IrCp*Cl_2]_2$ or $[RuCl_2(p-Cymene)]_2$ (entries 8 and 9). The efficiency of this catalytic C-H methylation was dependent on the solvents employed. Dimethoxyethane (DME) was the most effective solvent among those examined (entries 10-14). Encouraged by these results, a survey of the amount of 2a was conducted, and with the use of 2 equivalents of 2a, the reaction proceeded more smoothly to afford 89% yield of $\hat{\mathbf{3a}}$ upon isolation (entry 15). By contrast, the reaction gave poor conversion when AgSbF6 was absent (entry 16). Therefore, the standard conditions for the Rhcatalyzed C-H functionalization reaction are: 5 mol% [RhCp*Cl₂]₂, 20 mol% AgSbF₆, 2 equiv of AgOAc, and 2 equiv of MeBF₃K in DME at 65 °C for 18 h under argon.

Having identified the optimal reaction conditions, we first turned our attention to examining the scope and limitation of quinoline N-oxide derivatives, as illustrated in Table 2. It was found that this reaction

could tolerate various substrates with both electrondonating and electron-withdrawing substituents (such as Me, phenyl, Cl, Br, and CN) and other functional groups in the quinoline system, and provided the corresponding methylated products at good to excellent yields (**3a-q**). Generally, quinoline *N*-oxides with electron-donating substituents gave higher yields compared with electron-withdrawing substituents (compare compounds **3a-d** with **3h**, **3j** and **3l**). In particular, the 4-phenyl substituted substrate 3f showed the best reactivity under the standard reaction conditions. The efficiency of quinoline *N*-oxide methylation was affected significantly by steric hindrance. For instance, compound **3d** with 7-methyl substituents gave only a moderate yield relative to the

Table 1. Optimization of reaction condition.^[a,b]

able 1. Optimization of reaction condition.						
		cat	alyst/additive oxidant			
$\left(\begin{array}{c} \\ \end{array}\right) + \operatorname{MeBF}_{3}K \longrightarrow \left(\begin{array}{c} \\ \end{array}\right) + \\ \left(\begin{array}{c} \\ \end{array}\right)$					+	
\sim \tilde{N} solvent, 65°C, 18h						
5						
	1a 2a		3a			
en	Catalyst	Additive	Oxidant	Solve	3a	
try	(mol %)	(mol %)	(equiv)	nt	Y teld $(\%)^b$	
1	[RhCn*Cl2]2	AgSbF6	Ag2O	DCE	18	
	(5)	(20)	(1.5)			
2	[RhCp*Cl ₂] ₂	AgSbF ₆	Ag ₂ CO ₃	DCE	35	
	(5)	(20)	(1.5)			
3	[RhCp*Cl ₂] ₂	AgSbF ₆	AgOAc	DCE	36	
	(5)	(20)	(1.5)			
4	[RhCp*Cl ₂] ₂	AgSbF ₆	$AgBF_4$	DCE	ND	
	(5)	(20)	(1.5)			
5	[RhCp*Cl ₂] ₂	AgSbF ₆	AgTFA	DCE	ND	
6	(5)	(20)	(1.5)	DCE	ND	
	$[\text{RnCp}^{\text{Cl}_2]_2}$	AgSDF6 (20)	AgOII			
7	(3) [RhCn*Clala	(20) AgShF ₆	(1.5) AoF	DCE	25	
	(5)	(20)	(1.5)			
8	[IrCp*Cl ₂] ₂	AgSbF ₆	AgOAc	DCE	ND	
	(5)	(20)	(1.5)			
9	[RuCl ₂ (p-	AgSbF ₆	AgOAc	DCE	ND	
	Cymene)] $_2(5)$	(20)	(1.5)			
10	[RhCp*Cl ₂] ₂	$AgSbF_6$	AgOAc	ne	65	
	(3) [PhCp*Clala	(20)	(1.5)			
11	(5)	(20)	(1.5)	MeCN	55	
12	[RhCp*Cl2]2	AgSbF6	AgOAc	DMF	58	
	(5)	(20)	(1.5)			
13	[RhCp*Cl ₂] ₂	AgSbF ₆	AgOAc	DME	78	
	(5)	(20)	(1.5)			
14	[RhCp*Cl ₂] ₂	AgSbF ₆	AgOAc	THF	74	
	(5)	(20)	(1.5)			
15	[KhCp*Cl ₂] ₂	AgSbF6 (20)	AgUAc	DME	95(89)	
	(S)	(20)				
16	(5)		(2)	DME	16	

[a] Reaction conditions: 1a (0.4 mmol), 2a (1.2 mmol), catalyst (5 mol %), additive (20 mol %) and oxidant in solvent (2.0 mL) under argon at 65 °C for 18 h.

^[b] NMR yields using CH₂Br₂ as an internal standard, isolated yields in parentheses.

2-, 3- and 4-methyl-substituted guinoline N-oxides (3d vs 3a-3c). It should be mentioned that the substituents of quinoline N-oxide at different positions of its aromatic ring did not alter the reaction efficiency; the methylated substrates (3a-c) provided the desired products in fair yields. Halogenated quinoline N-oxides could work without difficulty to provide the desired products such as, 4-chloro-8methylquinoline N-oxide, 4-chloro-6,8dimethylquinoline N-oxide. 3-bromo-8methylquinoline N-oxide, and 6-bromo-2,8dimethylquinoline N-oxide at 88% (3h), 78% (3i), 70% (3j), and 91% (3k) yields, respectively. This finding indicated that the products of this reaction transition-metal-catalyzed compatible in were coupling reactions, thus significantly expanding the synthetic utility of this reaction for further transformation. Notably, Various functional groups commonly used in synthetic chemistry, such as cyan (31), silvloxy (3m), esters (3n), carbamate (30), and acetal (3p), were all compatible with the standard reaction conditions to generate the desired products in moderate to good yields, which guaranteed the synthetic application of the current methylation protocol. In addition, the 8-methyl derivative of selective agrochemical fungicide quinoxyfen could be obtained by this directed C-H methylation (3q).

Table 2. Scope of Quinoline *N*-oxide Derivatives.^[a]



^[a] all the reactions were carried out with 0.4 mmol of 1, 1.2 mmol of 2a, 0.02 mmol of [Cp*RhCl₂]₂, 0.08 mmol of AgSbF₆, 0.8 mmol of AgOAc, 2 mL of DME as solvent under argon atmosphere at 65 °C for 16 h. All listed

yields are isolated ones.

Next, in order to expand the utility of this reaction, we investigated variety of potassium а alkyltrifluoroborate derivatives (such as potassium butyltrifluoroborate, potassium cyclopropyltrifluoroborate, potassium allyltrifluoroborate, and potassium benzyltrifluoroborate) as the nucleophilic reagent to obtain the corresponding alkylated products (see Scheme S1 in the supporting information for details). Unfortunately, none of the tested potassium alkyltrifluoroborates provided the desired alkylated products under the optimal reaction conditions and the reactant **1a** can be recovered in 90% amount approximately. GC-MS results show that no selfcoupling products or uncontrolled beta-hydride eliminations products of 2 were formed (see the supporting information for details). However, some of the 8-arylated quinoline N-oxides were produced potassium using the corresponding aryltrifluoroborates, but only in acceptable yields (23%-41%) (scheme 3). This quinoline N-oxide C-8 arylation transformation tolerated either electrondonating or with-drawing substituents in the *para*- or *meta*- positions of the aryltrifluoroborates. In addition, steric hindrance played an important role in the yield transformation. For example, methyl of this substituent at the less sterically hindered paraposition of the trifluoroborate gave a higher yield than the meta-methyl substituted trifluoroborate, while the ortho-methylated trifluoroborate was detrimental (3s-3u), which indicated the influence of the steric hindrance.



To demonstrate the synthetic utility of the current methylation protocol, a reaction of 1a and 2a was performed on a 5 mmol scale of quinoline *N*-oxide (Scheme 4). Gratifyingly, the methylation efficiency was maintained at a high level in this large scale reaction to give the desired product 3a at 82% yield when the reaction time was prolonged to 36 hours.



Scheme 4. Gram-scale reaction.

As a versatile structural motif, the diversification of quinoline N-oxide has been investigated actively. We have performed several transformations of the methylated product 3a. As depicted in Scheme 5, selective deoxygenation of 3a was mediated by zinc reagent, leading to the reductive quinoline compound 4 at 54% yield. A 2-Quinolone skeleton was also readily achieved by a rearrangement reaction using trifluoroacetic anhydride (TFAA), gaving a yield of 69%. Furthermore, the N-O moiety was used to incorporate a p-methoxyphenyl group at the C2 position at 73% yield by means of a palladiumcatalyzed direct arylation reaction. Compound 7 was accomplished at 59% yield via a regioselective conversion of the corresponding quinoline N-oxide with thionyl chloride.



Scheme 5. Derivatization of C8-methylated products.

To obtain more insight into the mechanism, a series of control experiments were performed (Scheme 6). First, radical scavenger experiments were conducted in the presence of a typical radical scavenger 2,2,6,6tetramethylpiperidyl-1-oxyl (TEMPO) under standard reaction conditions (Scheme 6a). No significant effect on the performance of the reaction was observed, which suggested the irrelevancy of the organic radical process in this reaction. Next, we synthesized a fivemembered rhodacycle A by treating 1e with [Cp*RhCl₂]₂ and NaOAc (Scheme 6b).^[52] Complex A was submitted to the reaction to replace the rhodium catalyst and successfully catalyzed the reaction of 1e with 2a to afford the desired product 3e at 84% yield (Scheme 6c). These experiments suggested that the five-membered rhodacycle A could be the possible active intermediate species in the catalytic cycle of this reaction.



Scheme 6. Preliminary mechanistic studies.

A plausible mechanism is proposed on the basis of preliminary mechanistic experiments and previous reports.^[28,29] As shown in Scheme 7, the fivemembered rhodacycle **A** intermediate was formed via coordination of the rhodium catalyst with the O atom from the *N*-oxide moiety, and undergoes electrophilic C-H bond cleavage at the C8 position. Next, the complex **A** could convert into intermediate **B** through the transmetalation with the organoboron reagent. Finally, the C-C reductive elimination of intermediate **B** gives rise to the desired product **3a** and the Rh(I) species. The active cationic Cp*Rh(III) species could regenerated by Ag(I)-mediated reoxidization of the Rh(I) species for the next cycle.



Scheme 7. Proposed mechanism.

In summary, we have developed a simple, and highly efficient Rh(III)-catalyzed direct site-selective C8-H-methylation and arylation of quinoline Noxides methylation and arylation using potassium trifluoroborates under mild conditions. This reaction features high regioselectivity at the C8 position of quinolines with broad substrate scopes. This concise protocol and further chemical transformations of the products might have important applications in the synthesis of biologically active compounds. Future exploration of the Rh(III)-catalyzed C8-H activation of quinoline *N*-oxides are underway in our laboratory.

Experimental Section

Typical Procedure

To a 25 mL of Schlenk tube were added quinoline *N*-oxide **1** (0.4 mmol), potassium trifluoroborate **2** (1.2 mmol), [RhCp*Cl₂]₂ (5.0 mol %), AgSbF₆ (20.0 mol %), and AgOAc (2.0 equiv) under air. The mixture was then evacuated and backfilled with Ar (3 times). 1,2-dimethoxyethane (DME, 2.0 mL) were added subsequently. The Schlenck tube was screw capped and stirred at 65 °C for 16 h. After that, the crude product was filtered through a kieselguhr pad and washed with EA/MeOH (10:1, 30 mL). Then, the solvents were removed under vacuo, and the residue was purified by a silica gel column chromatography (EA/MeOH = 10:1) to give the desired products **3**.

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UPDATE

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Adv. Synth. Catal. Year, Volume, Page – Page

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- Mild condition & Moderate to excellent yields
- Good regioselectivity
 Good functional group com
- Good functional group compatability