Transition Metal-Free N-Arylation of Amino Acid Esters with Diaryliodonium Salts

Gabriella Kervefors, Leonard Kersting, and Berit Olofsson[*]

Abstract: A transition metal-free approach for the N-arylation of amino acid derivatives has been developed. Key to this method is the use of unsymmetric diaryliodonium salts with anisyl ligands, which proved important to obtain high chemoselectivity and yields. The scope includes the transfer of both electron deficient, electron rich and sterically hindered aryl groups with a variety of different functional groups. Furthermore, a cyclic diaryliodonium salt was successfully employed in the arylation. The N-arylated products were obtained with retained enantiomeric excess.

Introduction

Amino acids are important building blocks in organic synthesis as they are a substantial part of the chiral pool. Functionalization of such species is attractive in drug discovery as a means of obtaining novel compounds that can act as an affinity probe for enzyme studies[1] or exhibit bioactivity.[2] N-Arylated amino acids are found as a core structure in biologically active compounds such as the protein kinase C (PKC) activator indolactam-V[3] and its analogue benzolactam-V8,[4] fibrinogen receptor antagonist SB 214857,[5] and NMDA receptor antagonist L689560.[6]

Existing methods to reach N-aryl amino acids are mostly based on transition metal catalysis.[7] Cu-catalyzed Ullman cross couplings have a good scope, although high Cu loading and extended reaction times at high temperatures or excess reagents are often needed.[1c,2a,8] Jain and co-workers recently reported an N-arylation under milder conditions with the use of a diketone ligand in DMF (Scheme 1a).[9] After adjustment of the reaction conditions, also heterocycles could be transferred.[10] Alternatively, Cu-catalyzed couplings with excess arylboronic acid can be performed at room temperature with a limited scope.[11]

Pd-catalyzed Buchwald-Hartwig arylations have been less explored, and early methods suffered from limited scope or partial racemization.[12] Recent reports partly circumvent that problem through the use of advanced catalytic systems.[13]

The development transition metal-free coupling reactions has received increasing attention to overcome drawbacks with transition metals, such as toxicity, cost, need for substrate-dependent designer ligands, reaction sensitivity and the risk of product contamination in the pharmaceutical industry.[14] Transition metal-free syntheses of N-aryl amino acids and their derivatives are, however, much less explored. Reported syntheses of specific targets include reactions with anilines and suitable electrophilic species through S\textsubscript{N} 2 displacement or S\textsubscript{N}Ar.[15] Reactions with enantiomerically enriched trichloromethyl alcohols provided N-aryl amino amides through a Jödic-type reaction.[16] A common feature with the methods above is that their scope is very limited.

Poelarends and co-workers recently published an elegant biocatalytic approach to N-arylated aspartic acids through enzymatic reactions of anilines with fumarate.[17] Moderate to good yields with excellent ee were obtained, although sterical-

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Scheme 1. Recent N-arylations of amino acid derivatives and amines.

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[a] G. Kervefors, L. Kersting, Prof. B. Olofsson
Department of Organic Chemistry, Arhenius Laboratory
Stockholm University, SE-106 91 Stockholm (Sweden)
E-mail: Berit.Olofsson@su.se

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ly hindered or strongly electron deficient anilines were not tolerated.

Hyponuclear iodine compounds have become efficient reagents for a wide variety of transition metal-free reactions. Diaryliodonium salts have several attractive features including easy availability, high stability, and low toxicity. They are highly reactive electrophilic arylation reagents, and have been applied successfully in a variety of transition metal-free C-, O-, N- and S-arylations.[21]

Iodonium salts have been utilized to functionalize amino acid derivatives through fluoroalkylation,[22] and a small set of diaryliodonium bromides were employed in a Cu-catalyzed N-arylation of amino acid esters, which required excess substrate and a stoichiometric amount of AgNO₃ (Scheme 1b).[23] We have recently reported a metal-free N-arylation of aliphatic amines with diaryliodonium salts under mild conditions (Scheme 1c).[24] The methodology has a broad amine scope, but proved inefficient for arylation of amino acids. To facilitate the access to enantiomerically enriched N-arylated amino acid derivatives, we set out to develop a transition metal-free N-arylation of amino acids derivatives, and herein present our results.

### Results and Discussion

Phenylalanine methyl ester (1a) was chosen as the model substrate, and was obtained by deprotonation of the corresponding hydrochloride salt 1a·HCl. The free amine 1a proved to be unstable upon storage,[23a,25] and was therefore prepared within 5 days of use.

An extensive optimization was performed,[26] with initial screening of the arylation conditions using 4-nitrophenyl(phenyl)iodonium triflate (2aa-OTf). The conditions used in our arylation of aliphatic amines[24a] gave poor conversion into product 3a with substantial amounts of recovered 1a (Table 1, entry 1). The conversion was improved by increasing the temperature (entries 2,3), and the combination with excess iodonium salt resulted in 59 % yield of 3a (entry 4). Arylations with iodonium salt 2aa-OTf generally gave complete chemoselectivity,[27] with transfer of only the nitroaryl group, but we observed small amounts of phenylated side-product 3-Ar² and a deterioration of the overall mass balance when the reaction was performed at 150 °C.

The reactivity of 4-nitrophenyl(phenyl)iodonium salts with other anions (2aa-X) was next examined, and salts with tetrafluoroborate, tosylate or bromide anions proved to give inferior results (entries 5–7). In fact, iodonium salts 2aa-OTs and 2aa-Br suffered from a competing pathway where the anion acted as nucleophile to deliver the corresponding 4-nitrophenyl tosylate (4-OTs) and bromide (4-Br), respectively. Such side-products have previously been reported with diaryliodonium bromides,[26] whereas reactions with diaryliodonium tosylates are often efficient also at elevated temperatures.[24a,28b,29]

Unsymmetric diaryliodonium salts are known to react with high chemoselectivity when they have sufficiently different electronic properties.[20] The non-transferable aryl group is called a “dummy group”, and the phenyl group is generally a sufficient dummy group in transfer of strongly electron-deficient aryl groups.[27] Since the phenylated side-product was observed in this reaction, we investigated iodonium salts with other dummy groups to improve the chemoselectivity and simplify the isolation of product 3a. Reactions with mesityl salt 2ab-OTf resulted in similar yield and chemoselectivity (entry 8). The anisyl moiety is often a good dummy group[27] and salt 2ac-OTf indeed reacted with complete chemoselectivity. More surprisingly, the conversion was also improved and 3a was isolated in 79 % yield as the only product (entry 9). Further investigations with salt 2ac-OTf showed that changes in reaction stoichiometry had a negative impact (entries 10, 11). Comparable results were obtained at 130 °C (entry 12), and the reaction could even be performed at 110 °C with this salt, illustrating the reactionivity decrease to salt 2aa-OTf (entry 13 vs. 1). Importantly, the enantiomerically excess of product 3a was >98 %,[28] demonstrating that the reaction conditions were mild enough to not cause racemization despite the high reaction temperature.

We next examined whether the deprotonation of 1a·HCl could be combined with the arylation to circumvent the handling of unstable amine 1a. 1a·HCl was thus reacted with salt 2ac-OTf (1–2 equiv) in the presence of 2 equiv sodium carbonate (Scheme 2). However, only minor amounts of 3a were detected and the major product was instead 4-Cl, which formed when the released chloride anion acted as a competing nucleophile. The mass balance in the first reaction shows that 1a is rather stable at elevated temperatures once 2ac-OTf is consumed, but partly decomposes in the presence of excess 2ac-OTf, likely due to the high oxidation potential of the diaryliodonium salt.[26]

The arylation scope of amino ester 1a with various aryl(ani)-syl(iodonium triflates 2-OTf was subsequently examined. Aryl
groups with electron-withdrawing groups (EWG) were efficiently transferred using the optimized conditions (Scheme 3 A), as exemplified by the synthesis of \( p \)-CN substituted products 3b and 3c. Aryl groups with CF\(_3\) substituents were also well tolerated (3d–3f), where even the sterically encumbered product 3f was formed in high yield. Also halogen-containing aryl moieties could be transferred to provide 3f–3h. Iodomonium salts with strong EWG reacted with similar efficiency at 130 and 150 °C while the other salts showed reduced activity at 130 °C.\(^{[26]}\)

The transfer of aryls with electron-donating groups (EDG) is generally more challenging in reactions with diaryliodonium salts. We were hence pleased to see that such arylations were feasible by prolonging the reaction time to 24 h. In this fashion, the phenylated product 3i was isolated in 67% yield, and a tert-butyl-substituted aryl moiety could also be transferred to provide 3j. The method demonstrated good compatibility with the sterically demanding mesityl group (3k) and a highly functionalized aryl moiety could be transferred (3l). A heteroaryliodonium salt was employed to give pyridyl product 3m in modest yield. Additionally, the 6-membred cyclic diaryliodonium salt 2n could be used to generate the iodo-substituted product 3n in 59% yield. Reactions with cyclic diaryliodonium salts generally require transition metal catalysis due to decreased reactivity,\(^{[12]}\) and this result is conceptually important as reactions with such salts have higher atom efficiency and deliver products with a convenient iodine handle for further transformations.\(^{[32]}\)

The substrate scope of primary amino esters 1 was next examined. Arylation of benzyl ester 1b was first investigated and provided the arylated products 3o and 3p in equally high yields as the corresponding methyl ester 1a (cf. products 3a, 3b). Having demonstrated the compatibility of the benzyl protecting group, it was used to protect alanine (1c) and valine (1d), as their corresponding methyl esters (1e, 1f) proved to be volatile and easily evaporated under vacuum or high temperatures. Arylation of the alanine and valine benzyl esters was successful providing 3q and 3r in moderate to good yields. Substrates 1c and 1d could also be arylated with less activated diaryliodonium salts, providing the phenylated and tert-butyl-substituted products 3s–3v. The reactions with valine ester 1d gave consistently higher yields than the corresponding reactions with 1c, a trend that has also been reported in previous N-arylations.\(^{[2a, 12a, 13b]}\)

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**Scheme 2.** Attempted arylation of amino acid ester salt 1a-HCl (\(^1\)H NMR yields with TMB as internal standard).

**Scheme 3.** Arylation scope with amino acid esters 1, ee values 95–98% unless stated. (a) Reaction at 130 and 150 °C gave similar results. (b) Symmetric salt 2 (Ar\(_1^\prime\) = Ar\(_2^\prime\)) used.
We next explored the compatibility with more challenging substrates, such as unprotected, heteroatom-substituted amino acid esters. Heteroatom substituents are usually well tolerated in metal-free arylation with diaryliodonium salts, but such substrates proved difficult to arylate under the reaction conditions. For example, reactions with tryptophan methyl ester (1g) gave only 15% product with 2ac-OTf, which could be due to competing coordination of the indole nitrogen to the iodine(III) reagent. To the contrary, arylation of tyrosine methyl ester (1h) delivered the diarylated product 3w in high yield and retained ee, without detection of the corresponding monoarylated product 3w (Scheme 4).

Scheme 4. Diarylation of tyrosine methyl ester.

To investigate the performance of the unsymmetric anisyl salts, a few products in the scope were also synthesized using the corresponding aryl(phenyl) salts or symmetric diaryliodonium salts. Reagents with the anisyl dummy generally performed best, as chemoselectivity problems were avoided and better arylation yields were obtained.[26] SFC and HPLC analyses were performed to determine the ee of the products, since previously reported methods for N-arylation of amino esters showed partial racemization[26] or had insufficient data to judge the enantiomeric purity.[26]

As expected, the current methodology generally left the existing stereocenter intact and the majority of the products were isolated with 95 to >98% ee. Even when prolonged reaction time was applied in reactions with EDG salts, very little racemization occurred.

Secondary amino esters were evaluated next, and proline methyl ester (5a) proved to be a suitable substrate (Scheme 5). Arylation with electron-withdrawing aryl moieties provided products 6a–6c in high yields. Upon prolonged reaction time, also phenylation (6d) and mesylation (6e) was feasible, these transformations proved better with symmetric iodonium salts than with the anisyl salts. N-arylation of the N-methylated α-phenylalanine ester 5b resulted in 58% yield of 6f with high enantiomeric excess, and β-phenylalanine ester (5c) gave the nitrophenylated product 6g in good yield. SFC analysis of products 6 showed a small decrease of the enantiomeric purity (90–94% ee).

N-Protected derivatives of 1a,b remained largely untouched under the reaction conditions, which is useful in arylation of more complex substrates. To this end, acetyl- and tosyl-protected derivatives of 1a gave no arylation, whereas a Boc-protected derivative of 1b gave 9% of 3o with 82% recovered substrate, meaning that the Boc-group had been partially fragmented under the reaction conditions.[26] A series of control experiments were performed to indicate a possible mechanism of the arylation.[26] Running the reaction without argon atmosphere gave a significantly lower yield. Addition of DPE as radical trap did not affect the outcome of the reaction, indicating that a radical pathway is unlikely.[33] Furthermore, reactions in the presence of furan (5 equiv) as arylene trap did not result in formation of Diels–Alder adducts. Based on that experiment and the formation of only one regioisomeric product in reactions with substituted diaryliodonium salts, an arylene pathway can be excluded.[33] Additionally, an attempted arylation of 1a with iodobenzene or 1-ido-4-nitrobenzene at 150°C resulted in quantitative recovery of the starting materials, and an SAr pathway with the iodoarene formed from 2ac-OTf can therefore be ruled out.

Finally, the product stability was investigated by subjecting 3a to the reaction conditions (Scheme 6). No diarylated product was formed and 3a could be recovered in 68% yield. The ee of 3a remained intact, demonstrating that the arylated product is stable to racemization under the reaction conditions. However, partial decomposition of 3a had occurred, which explains the mass balance problems observed in some reactions. A stability test of 2ac-OTf in the absence of any amino acid ester also showed partial decomposition at 150°C.[26]

Scheme 5. Arylation of amino acid esters 5. [a] Reaction at 130°C. [b] Symmetric salt 2 (Ar = Ar') used, 24 h reaction time.


Based on the experiments described above, we suggest that the reaction follows a traditional ligand coupling pathway, where the amine does a ligand exchange with the triflate to give intermediate I, followed by deprotonation to II and ligand coupling to yield product 3 (Scheme 7).
Conclusions

A transition metal-free N-arylation of amino acid derivatives with diaryliodonium salts has been presented. The moderate reactivity of the substrates was overcome by increasing the reaction temperature, which initially resulted in a chemoselectivity problem. The method has a broad arylation scope and is compatible with transfer of both electron deficient and electron rich aryl groups in good to high yields. ortho-Substituents and various functional groups are well tolerated, including a cyclic diaryliodonium salt. The amino acid ester scope includes primary and secondary α-amino esters, as well as β-amino esters, and the products were generally obtained with excellent enantiomeric excess. The use of ary(anisyl)iodonium tri-esters, and the products were generally obtained with excellent enantiomeric excess. The use of ary(anisyl)iodonium tri-esters, and the products were generally obtained with excellent enantiomeric excess. The use of ary(anisyl)iodonium tri-esters, and the products were generally obtained with excellent enantiomeric excess.

Experimental Section

Arylation of amino acid esters 1 and 5: Amino acid ester 1 (0.2 mmol), salt 2 (0.4 mmol, 2.0 equiv) and Na₂CO₃ (0.2 mmol, 1.0 equiv) were added to an oven-dried, pressure-stable microwave vial and dried under vacuum for 15 min. The vial was flushed with argon 3–4 times followed by the addition of anhydrous toluene (1 mL, degassed by bubbling with argon for 20 min). The vial was added to a preheated oil bath at 150°C, and stirred for 4–24 h. After completion, the reaction was cooled to rt and Celite was added to a reheated oil bath at 150°C (1 mL, degassed by bubbling with argon for 20 min). The vial was argon 3–4 times followed by the addition of anhydrous toluene (1 mL, degassed by bubbling with argon for 20 min). The vial was added to a preheated oil bath at 150°C, and stirred for 4–24 h. After completion, the reaction was cooled to rt and Celite was added. The volatiles were removed under reduced pressure, and the mixture was purified by column chromatography (SiO₂ with pentane/EtOAc as eluent system), to provide product 3 or 6. The enantiomeric purity was analyzed by Chiral SFC, Diacel OJ-H, 25°C, 0.3 mm column, 10% MeOH in CO₂, flow rate: 0.8 mL min⁻¹.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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[26] See the Supporting Information for details.


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