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Molecular iodine: An efficient and environment-friendly catalyst for the synthesis of calix[4]resorcinarenes

Iode moléculaire : un catalyseur efficace et écologique pour la synthèse de calix[4]résorcinarènes

Fatemeh Darvish [*], Shima Khazraee

Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science, K.N. Toosi University of Technology, Tehran 15875-4416, Iran

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ABSTRACT

Iodine catalyzes the cyclocondensation of various aldehydes with resorcinol to give tetrameric cyclic products, resorcinarenes. Through the reaction of resorcinol with aromatic aldehydes, the product is obtained as a mixture of two isomers, the all-*cis* isomer (rccc) and the *cis-trans-trans* isomer (rctt), whereas a single diastereomer, the all-*cis*, is formed with aliphatic aldehydes. Besides excellent isolated yields, the use of iodine makes this procedure simple, convenient, cost-effective and practical.

RÉSUMÉ

L'iode catalyse la cyclo-condensation de divers aldéhydes avec le résorcinol afin de préparer des produits cycliques tétramériques appelés résorcinarènes. Les produits obtenus avec des aldéhydes aromatiques présentent deux isomères (RCCC et RCTT), tandis qu'un seul diastéréoisomère (RCCC) est formé avec les aldéhydes aliphatiques. Ainsi, cette nouvelle procédure faisant intervenir l'iode comme catalyseur constitue une nouvelle méthode simple et rentable pour l'obtention de calix[4]resorcinarènes.

1. Introduction

Calix[4]resorcinarenes (resorcinarenes) are widespread cyclic tetrameric host compounds for ions, sugars and organic molecules; as a consequence they are used as starting materials for a variety of cavitands or other macrocyclic host molecules[1]. They have also been applied as stationary phases in HPLC [2] and chiral capillary gas chromatography for the separation of positional isomers of substituted benzenes [3]. Furthermore, they can exhibit a liquid-crystalline behavior through the appropriate choice of the R groups on the resorcinarene [4]. Fig. 1 represents the general procedure for the formation of calix[4]resorcinarenes by cyclocondensation of resorcinol and aldehydes.

The most common synthetic method still involves mineral acid catalysis of this condensation in hot alcohol solution [5], in which the use of large quantities of concentrated HCl leads to excessive waste streams that are

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[*] Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: darvish@kntu.ac.ir, darvich_f_m@yahoo.com (F. Darvish).

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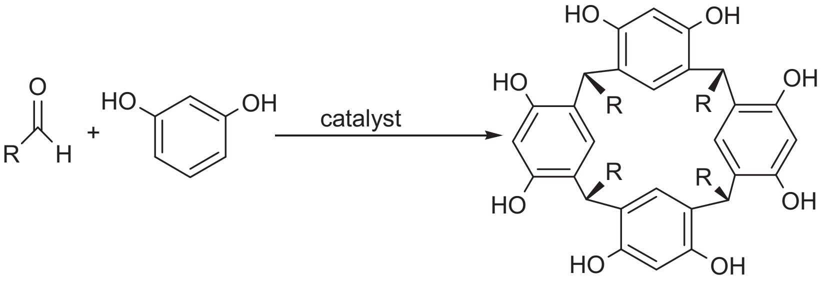

Fig. 1. Synthesis of calix[4]resorcinarenes by cyclocondensation of resorcinol and aldehydes.

environmentally unfriendly and expensive to deal with. A solvent-free synthesis method of calix[4]resorcinarenes using *p*-TsOH as the catalyst has also been reported [6]. This convincing green approach was unsuccessful because the longer the alkyl chain of the aldehyde, the lower the reaction yield. Classical Lewis acids like $BF_3.OEt_2$, $AlCl_3$ and $SnCl_4$ have been used only for the synthesis of aromatic aldehyde-derived resorcinarenes [7]. Unfortunately, this method has several disadvantages such as the use of large quantities of these Lewis acids to obtain good yields of the product and the sensitivity of these catalysts to water, which results in acidic and metal oxide by-products upon aqueous work-up. More recently, triflate-based catalysts such as ytterbium(III) triflate [8] and bismuth(III) triflate [9] have been introduced for this condensation. Expensive preparation and corrosive starting material to prepare triflate salt could be one of the disadvantages of this method. The use of lanthanide sulfonate [10] and the microwave-assisted synthesis of resorcinarene in the presence of HCl and tungstophosphoric acid (TPA) has also been reported [11]. Therefore, the development of new synthetic methods would be of special interest.

Molecular iodine as a mild Lewis acid has received considerable attention as an inexpensive, non-toxic, readily available and environmentally friendly catalyst in organic and pharmaceutical syntheses [12]. It is also highly tolerant to air as well as to moisture. Recent studies indicate that iodine can be effectively used as a catalyst for acetylation [13], protections and deprotections, oxidations, three-component synthesis of protected homoallylic amines [14], direct oxidative conversion of alkyl halides into nitriles, synthesis of bis(indolyl) methanes [15], alkylation of active methylene compounds [16], and synthesis of amidophenol [17]. We now report the utility of iodine as an efficient catalyst for the condensation of aldehydes and resorcinol to give the corresponding resorcinarenes in excellent yields.

2. Results and discussion

Initially the reaction between pentanal and resorcinol was used as a model reaction. To optimize the catalyst's loading, amounts of 0, 5, 10, and 20 mol% of iodine were tested, respectively. The results are summarized in Table 1. A 20 mol% loading of iodine was sufficient to obtain the best yield of resorcinarene **1a** (Table 1, entry 4). To optimize the reaction temperature, the synthesis of compound **1a** was carried out in ethanol at room temperature, 30, 50, and 78 °C, respectively (Table 2). We found that below the reflux temperature of ethanol, no reaction occurred. Therefore, the desired reaction temperature should be 78 °C (Table 2, entry 4).

Table 1
The effect of different amounts of iodine for the synthesis of **1a** ($R = C_4H_9$).

Isolated yield [%]	Iodine [mmol%]	Entry
–	0	1
73	5	2
80	10	3
95	20	4

Conditions: pentanal (1 mmol) and resorcinol (1 mmol) in presence of different catalytic amounts of catalyst at 80 °C in ethanol for 2 h.

We carefully analyzed the ^1H NMR spectra of **1**, **2**, **3** (aliphatic) and **4**, **5**, **6** (aromatic). The condensation reaction of resorcinol with aromatic aldehydes in the presence of iodine formed a mixture of diastereomers (Fig. 2). With benzaldehyde, the product was obtained as a mixture of diastereomers, all-*cis* (rccc, C_{4v}) isomer (**a**) and the *cis-trans-trans* (rctt, C_{2v}) isomer (**b**). The ^1H NMR spectrum of benzaldehyde-derived resorcinarene showed one singlet at $\delta = 5.37$ for the bridge benzylic protons (4 H) and two singlets at $\delta = 5.55$ and 6.11 for the intra-annular aromatic protons H_{in} (each 2 H), indicating that the C_{2v} isomer had been produced. An equivalent single resonance for the four ortho protons of resorcinol rings at $\delta = 6.12$ and the four meta protons at $\delta = 6.33$ were consistent with those previously reported for the C_{4v} isomer. Other aromatic aldehydes such as 4-hydroxybenzaldehyde and 4-methoxybenzaldehyde were also tested.

In both cases, the corresponding resorcinarenes were a mixture of C_{4v} and C_{2v} isomers as well. For the ^1H NMR

Table 2
Optimization of temperature for the synthesis of **1a** ($R = C_4H_9$).

Isolated yield [%]	Temp. [°C]	Entry
–	r.t.	1
–	30	2
–	50	3
95	78	4

Conditions: pentanal (1 mmol) and resorcinol (1 mmol) in the presence of a catalytic amount of catalyst (20 mol%) in ethanol for 2 h.