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Synthesis of arginine-containing hydroxamate dipeptidomimetics

Jiwon Seo and Richard B. Silverman*

Department of Chemistry, Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, and Cell Biology, The Center for Drug Discovery and Chemical Biology, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60208-3113, USA

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Abstract—The syntheses of arginine-containing hydroxamates using various peptide coupling methods are described. Fmoc-Arg(NO_2)-Cl prepared at low temperature did not undergo intramolecular δ-lactam formation and effectively provided desired hydroxamates (**8** and **10**) in good yields. Fmoc and *N*-nitro protecting groups can be easily removed. Therefore, this report provides a facile synthesis of arginine-containing peptidomimetic compounds.

1. Introduction

L-Arginine is a guanidino-containing basic amino acid,[1] which is positively charged at neutral pH, and is involved in many important physiological processes.[2] Many enzymes show a preference for arginine residues in natural substrates and synthetic inhibitors, for example, nitric oxide synthases[3] and trypsin-like serine proteases.[4] Therefore, peptidomimetics of arginine-containing biologically active molecules have been of interest for medicinal chemists and have provided molecules with better bioavailability, biostability, and potency.[1]

Despite the importance of arginine mimetics, the scope of their syntheses has been limited because of the difficulty of the chemistry associated with arginine. Firstly, the highly basic nature and nucleophilic character of the guanidino moiety in arginine normally requires appropriate protection of this group before subsequent chemical manipulation.[1] Ideally, protecting groups have to be removed easily under mild conditions and should be orthogonal to the other protecting groups. Secondly, acylation reactions of activated arginine usually compete with the side reaction of intramolecular δ-lactam formation (Fig. 1).[5] The latter case is a serious problem, especially when the reaction involves a weak nucleophile.

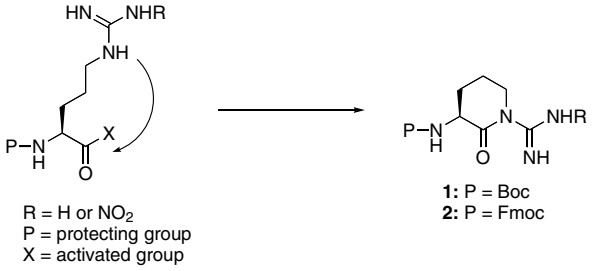

Figure 1. Intramolecular cyclization of arginine.

In the course of our research program of neuronal isoform selective nitric oxide synthase inhibitors discovery, we needed to synthesize nitroarginine-containing dipeptide peptidomimetic compounds (**8** and **10**, Scheme 2). The key feature in the inhibitor synthesis was the hydroxamate-forming coupling reaction. This reaction involves weakly nucleophilic *N*-alkyl hydroxylamines (**5** and **6**, Scheme 1), and the reaction requires strong activation of the other reactant, namely, protected arginine (**3** or **4**, Scheme 2). For this purpose, we investigated a way to activate nitroarginine, while avoiding common side reactions, and to provide a readily useful intermediate not only for the hydroxamate coupling, but also for the other arginine-containing pseudopeptides syntheses.

Keywords: Arginine; Hydroxamate; Peptidomimetics; Acid chloride.
* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 847 491 5653; fax: +1 847 491 7713; e-mail: Agman@chem.northwestern.edu

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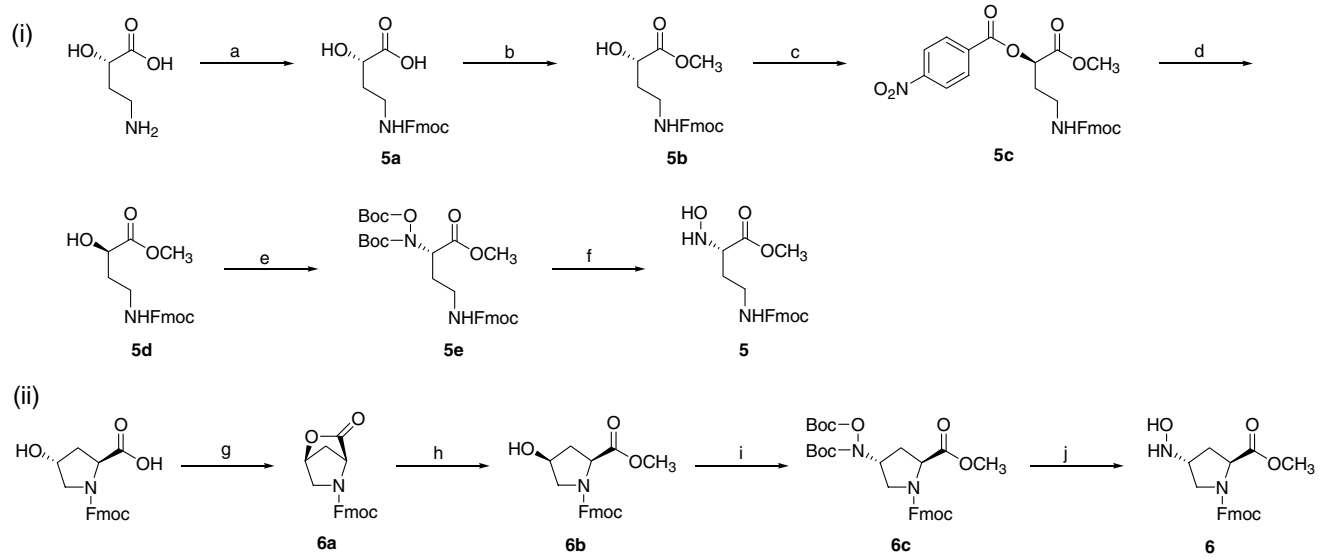
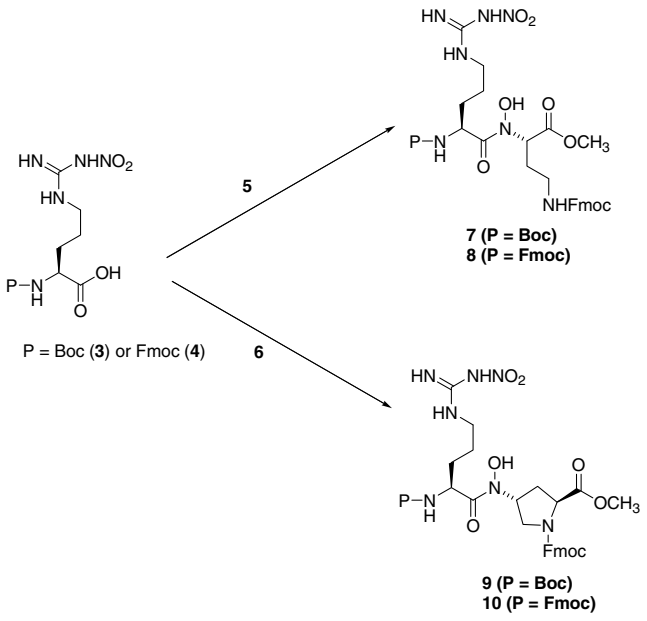


Scheme 1. Synthesis of *N*-alkylhydroxylamines **5** and **6**. Reagents and conditions: (a) Fmoc-Cl, 10% Na_2CO_3, dioxane, 86%; (b) MeI, $NaHCO_3$, DMF, 95%; (c) *p*-nitrobenzoic acid, DEAD, PPh_3, THF, 94%; (d) MeOH, NaN_3, 40 °C, 98%; (e) Boc-NH-O-Boc, DEAD, PPh_3, THF, 60%; (f) 50% TFA, CH_2Cl_2, 96%; (g) DIAD, PPh_3, THF, 85%; (h) MeOH, NaN_3, 40 °C, 96%; (i) Boc-NH-O-Boc, DEAD, PPh_3, THF, 45%; (j) 50% TFA, CH_2Cl_2, 98%.



Scheme 2. Nitroarginine-containing dipeptidomimetic intermediate syntheses.

2. Results and discussion

TFA salts of *N*-alkylhydroxylamines **5** and **6** were prepared according to Scheme 1. For the synthesis of **5**, commercially available (*S*)-(−)-4-amino-2-hydroxybutyric acid was protected followed by a series of two Mitsunobu reactions to obtain the hydroxylamine functionality with the desired chirality. Fmoc-*trans*-4-Hydroxy-L-proline was converted to **6** by the following successive reactions: an intramolecular Mitsunobu reaction, a sodium azide catalyzed methanolysis, a Mitsunobu reaction with *N*,*O*-diBoc protected hydroxylamine, and a Boc deprotection.[6]

Attempted reactions to obtain **7** or **9** using uronium- or phosphonium-based peptide coupling reagents[7] resulted in no isolable product formation.[8] In these reactions, most of the starting material (**5** or **6**) remained unchanged, indicating that **5** or **6** are weak nucleophiles; consequently, side product **1** (Fig. 1)[9] was observed. Because it has been reported that one of the halophosphonium salts, PyBroP,[10] is highly efficient for difficult coupling reactions with essentially no epimerization,[11] we employed this reagent for the coupling of **4** with **5**. PyBroP/DIEA reagent provided an 8% isolated yield of **8**. The yield was slightly improved by using the in situ acid fluoride forming reagent TFFH/Na_2CO_3. Acid fluoride is reported to be an effective reagent for sterically demanding peptide coupling reactions.[12] However, the yield of **8** did not exceed 20% with TFFH, and **2** was recovered as a major product.

To compare the reactivity of hydroxylamine **5** with an *O*-protected hydroxylamine analogue, a coupling reaction using *O*-benzyl protected hydroxylamine **11** (Scheme 3) was attempted. Under peptide coupling conditions such as EDC/HOAt, HATU/DIEA, and PyBroP/DIEA, compound **11** did not couple with **4**. Therefore, we concluded that free hydroxylamine **5** was more reactive than protected hydroxylamine **11** in the coupling reaction with **4**, and investigated further for a better coupling system with **5**.

To overcome the low reactivity problem of hydroxylamines **5** or **6**, a highly activated protected nitroarginine, such as an acid chloride, seemed desirable, if not necessary, for the coupling reaction. Previously, the use of sulfonamide (i.e., tosyl) protected arginines for the