Tetrahedron 74 (2018) 2669–2676

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Tetrahedron

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/tet

Aerobic intramolecular aminothiocyanation of unactivated alkenes promoted by *in situ* generated iodine thiocyanate

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 11 January 2018
Received in revised form
8 April 2018
Accepted 10 April 2018
Available online 12 April 2018

Keywords:
Aminothiocyanation
Dithiocyanatoiodate
Iodine thiocyanate
Iodonium ion
Sulfonium ion

ABSTRACT

Aerobic intramolecular aminothiocyanation of unactivated alkenes has been developed by *in situ* generated iodine thiocyanate under open-flask conditions. This protocol provides a concise and efficient method for synthesizing SCN-containing pyrrolidine, piperidine and indoline derivatives with isolated yields of up to 87%. Furthermore, mixing iodine and sodium thiocyanate with oxygen afforded iodine thiocyanate (ISCN) and dithiocyanatoiodate $[I(SCN)_2]^-$ which were testified by liquid chromatography mass spectrometry. A mechanistic investigation indicates that iodonium ion and sulfonium ion intermediates might be involved in this transformation.

1. Introduction

Thiocyanate compounds are especially important, not only as core moiety of complex compound existing in natural products, biologically active chemicals, pharmaceuticals and functional materials,[1] but also as key precursors in synthesizing thioheterocycles, thioesters, thiols and thiosulfonates.[2] For example, Prasad's group has used pyran-2-ones with thiocyanates for the synthesis of intermedia compounds, then via sulfenylation obtain human immunodeficiency virus-1 (HIV) protease inhibitors.[3] Undoubtedly, it is very promising method to install SCN group into molecules using low toxicity and wide available of the thiocyanate salts as thiocyanation reagent. Over the past several decades, alkynes, aromatics and carbonyl compounds under different oxidative conditions have successfully accessed to SCN-containing compounds.[4] In recent years, the difunctionalization of alkenes with thiocyanates affording SCN-containing compounds has been reported.[5–7] For examples, Liu's group reported a convenient way of trifluoromethylthiocyanation of alkenes by copper catalysis, using trimethylsilyl isothiocyanate as thiocyanating reagent and Togni reagent as trifluoromethyl source.[6] In 2016, Egami reported that chlorothiocyanation adducts was gave by alkenes with trimethylsilyl isothiocyanate and 1-chloro-1,2-benziodoxol-3-(*H*)-one.[7] Guo's group reported a route towards synthesis of SCN-containing dihydrofurans and lactones by tandem radical cyclization of olefinic compounds.[8]

In 2004, Gataullin et al. utilized N-benzyl-2-(2-cyclohexenyl)-aniline to produce the corresponding 1-thiocyanato derivatives via aminothiocyanation in the presence of iodine and sodium dicarbonate, however the synthesis of pyrrolidine, piperidine and indoline derivatives has not been exploited through aminothiocyanation.[9] It is well-known that the iodine-participated addition of alkenes proceeds through iodonium intermediate, whereas the mechanism involving some possible more reactive species under air condition, remains unknown and undiscovered in this aminothiocyantion. Herein we would like to report an intramolecular aminothiocyanation of unactivated alkenes with *in situ* generated iodine thiocyanate ISCN or its anion complex $[I(SCN)_2]^-$. In this article, the formation of species ISCN and $[I(SCN)_2]^-$ are discovered utilizing liquid chromatography mass spectrometry (LC-MS) detection and thus the yields of aminothiocyanation products were improved significantly.

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https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tet.2018.04.023
0040-4020/

2. Results and discussion

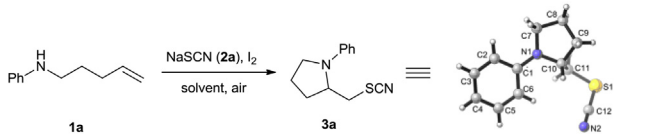
(1- At the outset of our investigation, we selected the N-(pent-4-en-1-yl)aniline 1a as the model substrate and available sodium thiocyanate 2a as the thiocyanation reagent (Table 1). Firstly, various solvents were screened; as a result the usage of MeCN led to form desired product 3a in 32% yield with conversion value of 70% in the presence of 2 equivalents of iodine at room temperature for 8 h (entry 1). Fortunately, the structure of 3a was confirmed convincingly through single-crystal X-ray diffraction analysis. When aminothiocyanation was carried out in DCM and DCE, 3a was generated only in 6% and 9% yields with conversions of 99% and 34%, respectively (entries 2 and 3). Subsequently, aprotic solvents such as methanol and ethanol were evaluated, and the desired aminothiocyanation products were afforded in low yields of 31% and 17%, respectively (entries 4 and 5). When Et_2O and THF were used as solvents, the yields were 14% and 41% respectively (entries 6 and 7). When EtOAc was utilized as a solvent, 3a was improved to 44% yield (entry 8). It was worth to note that NIS replacing I_2 as an iodine source resulted in the same level of reactivity under the same conditions (see supporting information). The amount of iodine was investigated; as a result the amount of iodine increased to 3.5 equivalents resulted in the better yield (80%), then more or less amount of iodine is detrimental to this aminothiocyanation (entries 9–11). Moreover, the amount of sodium thiocyanate was optimized; as a result either decreasing or increasing the equivalents of sodium thiocyanate reduced the yield (entries 12 and 13). When 3 mL or 5 mL of acetic ether was added, the yield of 3a decreased slightly (entries 14 and 15). The effects of reaction temperatures were examined as well, and the best results were observed when the temperature was elevated to 50 °C, while either raising or lowering the temperature led to lower yields (entries 16–18).

To make further explorations, the product **3a** was obtained in 76% yield in argon atmosphere (entry 19). As a contrast, **3a** was gave in 90 or 92% yields, respectively in air or in pure oxygen atmosphere (entries 17 and 20), which indicates that the oxygen improved animothiocyanation of unactivated alkenes. Accordingly, the mixture of sodium thiocyanate and iodine were stirred in a round-bottom flask under open-flask conditions at 50 °C for 8 h, the reaction solution were detected by liquid chromatography mass spectrometry, and species ISCN (**I**) and $[I(SCN)_2]^-$ (**II**) were observed: the cation model of $[NaI(SCN)]^+$ is found 224.1 (calcd: 223.8), and the radical cation models of $[I(SCN)_2]^{+\bullet}$ are found 266.1 (calcd: 265.8) with Na^+ and 282.2 (calcd: 281.8) with K^+ (Fig. 1). The complex of iodine and sodium thiocyanate was able to afford $[I_2(SCN)]^-$ which complexed with thiocyanates under oxidation condition by oxygen affording iodine thiocyanate (**I**),[10] then the complex of ISCN (**I**) and SCN^- afforded $[I(SCN)_2]^-$.[11] Accordingly, N-(pent-4-en-1-yl)aniline was subjected to the reaction mixture of I_2 and NaSCN, however the same level of yield was observed (Table 1, entry 21). So the addition subsequence of feedstocks has no effect to this reaction.

A series of commercially available inorganic as well as organic thiocyanates were investigated, and results revealed that thiocyanate sources had an effect on the reactivity of this reaction (Table 2). NH_4SCN (**2b**) gave a close level of reactivity to NaSCN (entry 1), KSCN (**2c**) generated the desired product in a relatively low yield of 75% (entry 2), whereas no reaction was observed when CuSCN (**2d**) was employed as the SCN source (entry 3). Organic thiocyanates such as guanidine thiocyanate (**2e**), 1-butyl-3-methylimidazolium thiocyanate (**2f**) and tetrabutylammonium thiocyanate (**2g**) were attempted as well, and the aminothiocyanation products were afforded in 78–80% yields (entries 4–6).

With the optimal conditions for aminothiocyanation in hand, the scope of the reaction was investigated, as the results summarized in Table 3. Different substitutions such as alkyl, alkoxy, trifluoromethoxy and halogen on benzene ring of anilines were explored; as a result *ortho*-methyl substitution **3b** was not obtained

Table 1
Optimization of reaction conditions.[a]



Entry	Solvent	NaSCN (eq.)	I_2 (eq.)	T (°C)	Conv.[b] (%)	Yield[b] (%)
1	MeCN	3	2	rt	70	32
2	DCM	3	2	rt	99	6
3	DCE	3	2	rt	34	9
4	MeOH	3	2	rt	99	31
5	EtOH	3	2	rt	99	17
6	Et_2O	3	2	rt	99	14
7	THF	3	2	rt	99	41
8	EtOAc	3	2	rt	99	44
9	EtOAc	3	3	rt	99	73
10	EtOAc	3	3.5	rt	99	80
11	EtOAc	3	4	rt	99	76
12	EtOAc	2.5	3.5	rt	99	73
13	EtOAc	3.5	3.5	rt	99	78
14	EtOAc	3	3.5	rt	99	77[c]
15	EtOAc	3	3.5	rt	99	75[d]
16	EtOAc	3	3.5	40	99	82
17	EtOAc	3	3.5	50	99	90
18	EtOAc	3	3.5	60	99	85
19	EtOAc	3	3.5	50	99	76[e]
20	EtOAc	3	3.5	50	99	92[f]
21	EtOAc	3	3.5	50	99	90[g]

[a] Conditions: **1a** (0.5 mmol), NaSCN (specified) and I_2 (specified) in solvent (4 mL) at rt for 8 h under air.
[b] Yield determined by ^1H NMR using mesitylene as an internal standard.
[c] 3 mL of EtOAc.
[d] 5 mL of EtOAc.
[e] The reaction was performed in argon atmosphere.
[f] The reaction was performed in oxygen atmosphere.
[g] NaSCN and I_2 were stirred for 1 h in EtOAc, then **1a** was added to the mixing solvent.

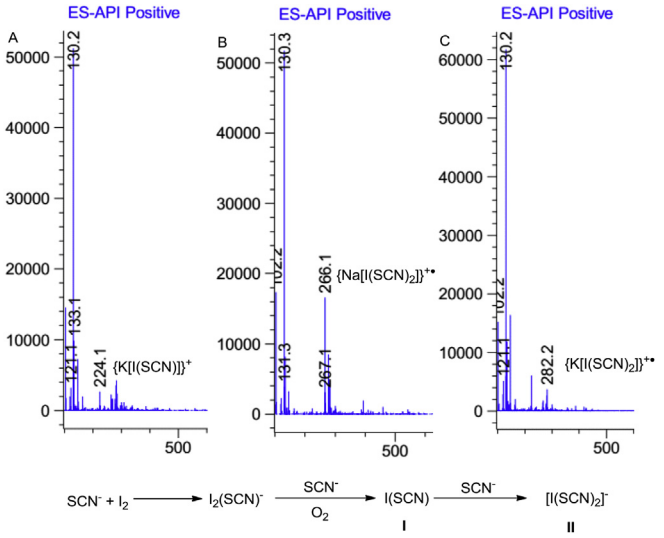


Fig. 1. Capture of Iodine thiocyanate (ISCN) and dithiocyanatoiodate $[I(SCN)_2]^-$ by LC-MS.