NOVEL CYCLIZATION OF UNSATURATED ALCOHOLS BY PHENYL SELENOCYANATE IN THE PRESENCE OF COPPER BIS(TRIFLUOROMETHANESULFONATE)

Hirofumi Inoue¹ and Shizukiya Murata*

Graduate School of Human Informatics, Nagoya University
Chikusa, Nagoya, 464-01 Japan

Abstract—Intramolecular oxyselenenylation of unsaturated alcohols by phenyl selenocyanate with copper bis(trifluoromethanesulfonate) proceeds stereoselectively to give cyclic ethers.

Organic selenocyanates, which have been known for more than 100 years, are very stable compounds and can be widely prepared from the corresponding organohalogen compounds or aromatic amines by simple substitution reactions using potassium selenocyanate and so on.² In addition, it is very easy to convert the -SeCN group into other selenium functional groups.²,³ Therefore, aryl selenocyanates have been generally employed as fundamental precursors for various organoselenium nucleophiles such as ArSe⁻.²⁻⁴ In the contrast, there were only a few examples of aryl selenocyanates which were activated by Lewis acids or metal salts (Cu²⁺ or Ni²⁺) as an electrophilic organoselenium reagent in organic synthesis.⁵⁻⁹ In this communication, we describe about preparation of a new electrophilic reagent from phenyl selenocyanate (1) and copper bis(trifluoromethanesulfonate) (Cu(OTf)₂)¹⁰ and its application to regio- and stereoselective cyclization of unsaturated alcohols.

\[
\text{PhSeCN-Cu(OTf)₂ \xrightarrow{\text{toluene}} \quad 2 \quad \text{trans-4a - 4c} \quad + \quad \text{cis-4a - 4c}}
\]

3a, 4a: R = CH₃; 3b, 4b: R = OCH₃; 3c, 4c: R = OCOC₆H₄CF₃-p
Table 1. Cyclization of Unsaturated Alcohols (3) by PhSeCN-Cu(OTf)$_2$ (2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>unsaturated alcohol (3)</th>
<th>cyclic ether (4) (yield/%)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>CH$_3$CH=CH$_2$OH</td>
<td>Ph$_2$SeCH$_2$Ph (88)</td>
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<td>CH$_3$=C(=O)CH$_3$</td>
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\[\text{yield after silica gel column chromatography.} \quad b^{\text{trans/cis}} = 96:4. \]
\[c^{\text{trans/cis}} = 13:87. \quad d^{\text{trans/cis}} = 23:77. \quad e^{\text{trans/cis}} = 89:11. \]

The reagent (PhSeCN–Cu(OTf)$_2$, 2) was obtained from a 1:1 mixture of 1 and Cu(OTf)$_2$ in toluene (at 50 °C) or dichloromethane (under reflux) as a yellowish brown suspension.
Reactions of 4-methyl-5-hexen-1-ol (3a) and the 4-methoxy and 4-p-trifluoromethylbenzoyloxy analogs (3b and 3c, respectively) with 2 proceeded at 25 °C to give trans-2-phenylselenomethyl-3-methyltetrahydoropyran (trans-4a, 95% yield; 96:4 selectivity), cis-4b (78%; trans/cis = 13:87), and cis-4c (78%; trans/cis = 23:77) as major products, respectively. The results of cyclization of unsaturated alcohols (3a − 3f) by 2 are summarized in Table 1. There, exo-cyclized 5- and 6-membered ring ethers (4a − 4f) were regioselectively obtained in high yields. Existence of either endo-cyclized products or nitriles resulting from the cyanoselenenylation⁶ was not detected in the crude reaction mixtures. The exo selectivity and stereoselectivities depending on substituents at the allylic position were almost same as reactions which were carried out by benzeneselenenyl trifluoromethanesulfonate (PhSeOTf),¹¹−¹⁵ and yields of 4 were better than those in reactions using PhSeOTf.

It was known that organic selenocyanate (RSeCN) was converted into selenenyl halide (RSeX) by a metal salt (CuX₂ or AgX),¹⁶ and formation of PhSeOTf by the same mechanism was likely to occur. However, the reactivity of 2 toward 3 was lower than that of typical PhSeOTf prepared from PhSeCl and AgOTf. For example, the trans isomer of 3d (trans-2-allylcyclohexanol) which was smoothly cyclized by PhSeOTf even at -78 °C¹³ did not react with 2 in the same conditions. And even in the presence of trifluoromethanesulfonic acid, oxyselenenylation of 3a to 4a by 1 has not proceeded. Thus, we suppose that the reagent (2) contains a highly electrophilic organoselenium complex of copper. Mechanisms of stereoselectivities of 4a, 4b, 4c, and 4f were explained by the steric repulsion (4a and 4f: trans predominating) and the electronic attraction (4b and 4c: cis predominating) between the allylic substituent (R) and electropositive Se atom in 3-membered ring cationic seleniranium intermediates.¹⁵,¹⁷−¹⁹

The following is a typical example of the reaction of 3 with 2: A mixture of Cu(OTf)₂ (0.36 g, 1.0 mmol) and 1 (0.18 g, 1.0 mmol) in toluene (3.5 mL) was stirred at 50 °C for 1 h. To the resulting suspension was added 3a (0.10 g, 0.90 mmol) at 25 °C, and the mixture was stirred for 1 h. To this was added saturated NaHCO₃ (3 mL) and dichloromethane (15 mL), and precipitate was removed by a centrifuge. The organic solution was concentrated, and the residue was subjected to silica gel column chromatography eluting with 5% (v/v) ethyl acetate in petroleum ether. A 96:4 mixture of trans-4a and cis-4a was obtained as pale yellow oil (0.23 g, 95% yield). Spectroscopic and analytical data of the products were listed in the reference.¹⁵

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1. Recent address: Kawasaki Plastics Laboratory, Showa Denko Co. Ltd., 3 – 2 Chidori-cho, Kawasaki-ku, Kawasaki, 210 Japan


3. ArSeCN is one of the most suitable precursors for ArSe-, see: K. B. Sharpless and M. W. Young, J. Org. Chem., 1975, 40, 947.

4. 2-Nitrophenyl selenocyanate in the presence of (C4Hg)3P has been employed to the preparation of alkyl aryl selenides from alcohols, see: P. A. Grieco, S. Gilman, and M. Nishizawa, J. Org. Chem., 1976, 41, 1485.


10. Trifluoromethanesulfonate was abbreviated as OTf.


18. Since reactions of 3-methyl-4-penten-1-ol and 3-p-trifluoromethylbenzoyloxy-4-penten-1-ol, which are tetrahydrofuran forming analogs of 3a and 3c respectively, with PhSeOTf predominantly give trans isomers, we would like to propose the thermodynamic mechanism rather than the kinetic (stereoelectronic) mechanism which is employed for explanation of stereoselectivities in haloetherification, oxymerculation, and so on. In addition, a reaction of PhSeOTf with trans-2-allylcyclohexanol in CH2Cl2 at 0 °C affords a thermodynamically favored endo-cyclized product. See references 13, 15, 17, and S. Current and K. B. Sharpless, Tetrahedron Lett., 1978, 5075.

19. Although the molecular orbital study on 3-buten-2-ol supported the kinetically controlled cis-cyclization (see: S. D. Kahn, C. F. Pau, W. J. Hehre, J. Am. Chem. Soc., 1986, 108, 7396), results of our preliminary calculations on 1-Se-methyl-2-(1-methoxyethyl)-seleniranium and 1-Se-methyl-2-(1-methylpropyl)seleniranium (PM3 and ab-initio) exhibit that conformations in which Se+ and OCH3 groups are nearly are stabilized.

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