Transition-Metal-Free α-Vinylation of Enolizable Ketones with β-Bromostyrenes

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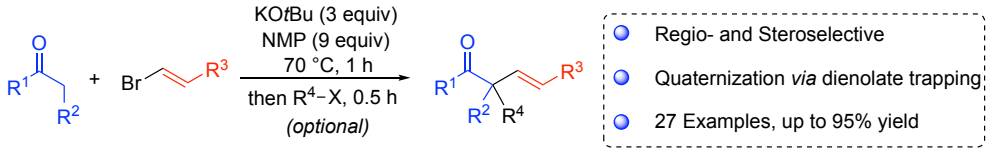
Supporting Information Placeholder



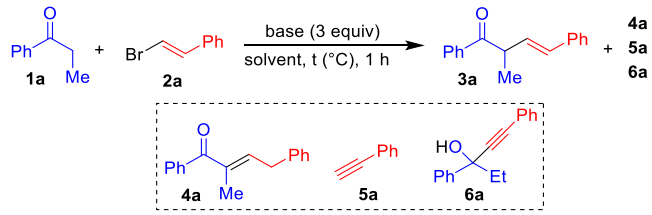
ABSTRACT: An α-vinylation of enolizable ketones has been developed by using β-bromostyrenes and a KO*t*Bu/NMP system. β,γ-Unsaturated ketones of *E* configuration were obtained in excellent yield and selectivity. Further synthetic possibilities are highlighted by one-pot functionalization *via* trapping of intermediate dienolates with alkyl, allyl, benzyl, and propargyl halides to generate quaternary centers. The reported transformation is believed to proceed *via* phenylacetylene and propargylic alcohol intermediates.

The regio- and stereoselective synthesis of β,γ-unsaturated carbonyl compounds is an important transformation in organic chemistry since these units are present in many natural products and serve as building blocks to access complex structures.[1] The search for efficient and selective methods to yield allylic carbonyl compounds has a long history. With an objective of alleviating the intrinsic limitation of prototropic rearrangement of β,γ-unsaturated carbonyl compounds into their α,β-unsaturated counterparts,[2] many syntheses have been developed based on the use of organometallic reagents,[3] metal-mediated coupling reactions,[4] and transition-metal catalyzed α-vinylation reactions of enolates.[5] In contrast, there have been few reports for the synthesis of allylic carbonyl compounds that do not require transition metals.[6] In early investigations on radical-chain transformations, Bunnett reported the photostimulated reaction between potassium acetonate and vinyl halides.[7] An observation made by Galli in 1993 showed that a competing elimination-addition pathway *via* acetylene intermediates was involved under certain conditions.[8] The presence of propargylic alcohols hinted at an ionic mechanism involving Favorsky-type reactions. Multiple contributions by Galli, Rappoport, and Rossi later hinted that an unequivocal S$_{RN}$1 ketone α-vinylation reaction occurred only for triphenylvinyl bromide, highlighting the rich mechanistic world of vinylic substitution reactions. Recently, Trofimov developed on Galli's initial observation by developing a general base-mediated synthesis of β,γ-unsaturated ketones by the reaction of enolizable ketones and arylacetylenes at temperatures ≥ 80 °C.[9] The reactions proceed in the presence of either KOH or KO*t*Bu in DMSO to provide β,γ-unsaturated ketones in good selectivities, however isomerization into their α,β-unsaturated ketones derivatives could not be avoided (minimally 5–10%).

We recently developed a transition-metal-free protocol for the α-arylation of enolizable ketones with aryl halides using a mixture of KO*t*Bu and DMF.[10] Since the reactions of aryl iodides proceed at room temperature under these conditions, we believed that the development of a very mild α-vinylation of enolizable ketones was feasible. Our main goal was to achieve complete selectivity for β,γ-unsaturated ketone isomers of *E* configuration at low temperatures.

To start our investigation, we reacted propiophenone **1a** with β-bromostyrene **2a**[11] in DMF during 1 hour at 70 °C in the presence of KO*t*Bu as base. Under these conditions, addition of 3 equiv of the latter gave the expected β,γ-unsaturated ketone **3a** in 66% yield, along with 16% of enone **4a** (entry 1). Switching the solvent to DMSO or NMP furnished **3a** in 72% and 93% yields, respectively, along with trace amounts of the isomerized enone **4a** when NMP was employed (entries 2 and 3). The yields of **3a** decreased to 61% and 22% by using only 2 and 1 equiv of KO*t*Bu (entries 4 and 5). The use of NaO*t*Bu gave a low yield (entry 6), while LiO*t*Bu proved to be totally unsuitable since phenylacetylene **5a** and propargylic alcohol **6a** were generated in 11% and 72% yields, respectively (entry 7). Other potassium bases, such as KOH or K_2CO_3, also gave disappointing results (entries 8, 9) and reactions at room temperature only led to 39% and 52% yields, after 1 h and 24 h, respectively (entry 10). Moreover, lower **3a**/**4a** ratios were obtained at 25 °C than at 70 °C. Under the optimal conditions, ketones were thus reacted with β-bromostyrenes in the presence of 3 equiv of KO*t*Bu in NMP at 70 °C for 1 h (entry 3).

Table 1. α-Styrylation of Propiophenone 1a with β-Bromostyrene 2a: Reaction Conditions[a]



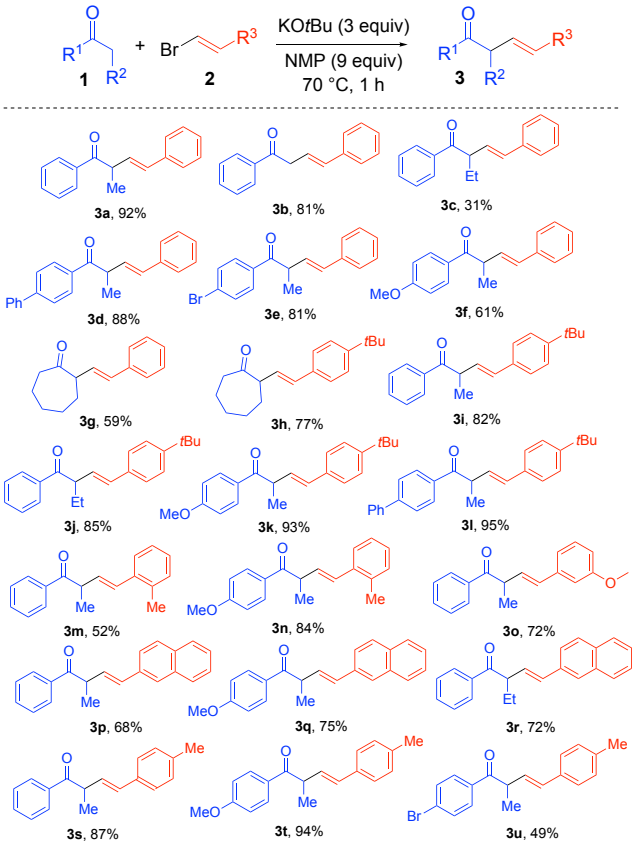
entry	base	solvent	temp (°C)	**3a** (%)	**4a** (%)	**5a** (%)	**6a** (%)
1	KO*t*Bu	DMF	70	66	16	0	0
2	KO*t*Bu	DMSO	70	72	23	0	0
3	KO*t*Bu	NMP	70	93[b]	2	0	0
4	KO*t*Bu[c]	NMP	70	61	2	2	0
5	KO*t*Bu[d]	NMP	70	22	5	6	0
6	NaO*t*Bu	NMP	70	46	5	0	0
7	LiO*t*Bu	NMP	70	4	0	11	72
8	KOH	NMP	70	8	4	4	0
9	K_2CO_3	NMP	70	0	0	0	0
10	KO*t*Bu	NMP	25	39 (52)	7 (8)	6 (5)	38 (36)

[a] Reaction conditions: propiophenone **1a** (2 mmol), β-bromostyrene **2a** (1 mmol), base (3 mmol), solvent (9 mmol), yields calculated by ^{1}H NMR using hexamethylbenzene as an internal standard. Yields in parentheses were calculated after 24 h. [b] 70 % from the iodostyrene and 28 % for the chorostyrene. [c] 2 mmol. [d] 1 mmol.

We subsequently turned our attention to the scope of the reaction (Scheme 1). In addition to propiophenone, acetophenone undergoes vinylation to give **3b** in a very good 81% yield without the double vinylation product being detected. On the contrary, butyrophenone only led to a low 31% of **3c**. Electron-withdrawing and -donating substituents are well tolerated at the *para* position of propiophenones, giving **3d–3f** in good to excellent yields. Cycloheptanone also undergoes vinylation to give **3g** in 59% yield and the reaction also tolerated a *p-tert*-butyl substituent on the styrene partner, yielding 77% of α-vinylketone **3h**. Reactions of electron-rich or -poor aryl ketones with various β-bromostyrenes substituted at all positions (*o*, *m*, *p*) with methyl, *tert*-butyl, methoxy and naphthyl groups provided the desired compounds **3i–3u** in yields ranging from 49% to 95% (Scheme 1). Selectivity for β,γ- *vs* α,β-unsaturated ketones is almost complete in all cases, the lower yields being caused by incomplete conversions. In all cases, β,γ-unsaturated ketones were obtained with complete selectivity for *E* stereoisomers.

To further highlight the synthetic potential of this base-mediated α-vinylation of ketones, we performed one-pot trapping of intermediate dienolates with carbon-based electrophiles (Scheme 2). As expected, β,γ-unsaturated ketones **7** bearing all-carbon quaternary centers at the α position could be isolated in good 60–71% yields, except for **7b** leading to a low 35% yield (Scheme 2).

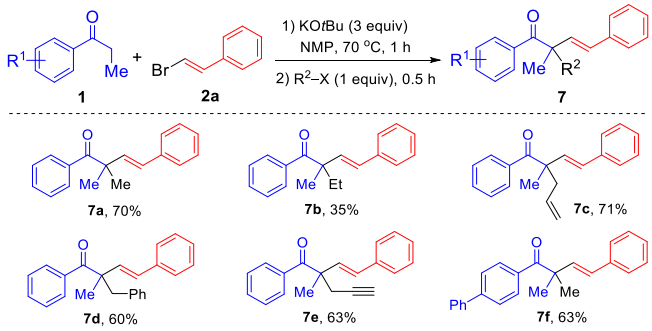
Scheme 1. Substrate Scope of the α-Vinylation of Ketones[a]



[a] Reaction conditions: ketone **1** (2 mmol), β-bromostyrene **2** (1 mmol), KO*t*Bu (3 mmol), NMP (0.9 mL), 70 °C, 1 h; isolated yields.

Beyond iodoalkanes, this method enables efficient one-pot procedures using allyl, benzyl and propargyl bromides. However, the use of iodobenzene did not lead to the corresponding α-arylated ketone, probably due to steric hindrance.

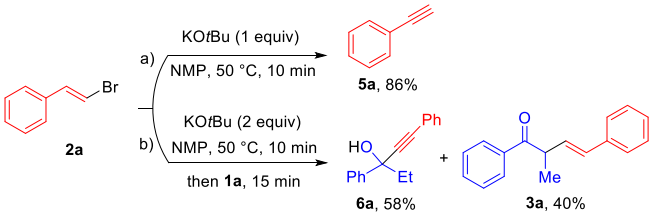
Scheme 2. One-Pot Trapping of Dienolate Intermediates for the Generation of Quaternary Carbon Centers[a]



[a] Reaction conditions: ketone **1** (2 mmol), β-bromostyrene **2a** (1 mmol), KO*t*Bu (3 mmol), NMP (9 mmol), 70 °C, 1 h, then R^2–X (1 mmol), 0.5 h; isolated yields.

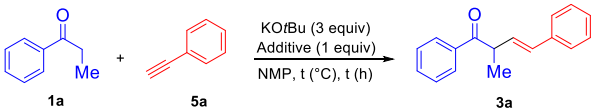
In order to gain insight into the reaction mechanism, we reacted β-bromostyrene **2a** with 1 equiv of KO*t*Bu and observed 86% yield of phenylacetylene **5a** in only 10 minutes at 50 °C (Scheme 3, path a). Under the same reaction conditions, propargylic alcohol **6a** is obtained in 58% yield and β,γ-unsaturated ketone **3a** (*E* configuration) in 40% yield when 2 equiv of KO*t*Bu are used and 1 equiv of propiophenone **1a** is added after 10 minutes in a Favorsky-type reaction (Scheme 3, path b).[12] Both **5a** and **6a**, which were observed as by-products during optimization (see table 1), are likely reaction intermediates or side reaction products.

Scheme 3. Generation of Phenylacetylene 5a and Propargylic Alcohol 6a from β-Bromostyrene 2a



When then observed that, in the reaction conditions disclosed herein, the reaction of propiophenone **1a** and phenylacetylene **5a** to give **3a** is efficient at low temperatures (Table 2). While a low 7% yield of the latter is observed after 5 minutes at 50 °C, accompanied by 81% of intermediate **6a**, prolonging the reaction time to 4 h leads to an excellent 90% in **3a** (*E* isomer) (entries 1and 2). The reaction gives the same yield after 24 h at room temperature (entry 3). To the best of our knowledge, the selective formation of β,γ-unsaturated ketones of *E* configuration from simple ketones and arylacetylenes has never been never reported at temperatures lower than 80 °C.[9] Worth noting that reactions performed in the presence of stoichiometric amounts of hydroquinone (entry 4) and galvinoxyl (entry 5) as potential radical scavengers lowered the yields to 22% and 39%, respectively. While an effect is observed, one cannot conclude that the process involves radical intermediates.

Table 2. α-Styrylation of Propiophenone 1a with Phenylacetylene 5a[a]

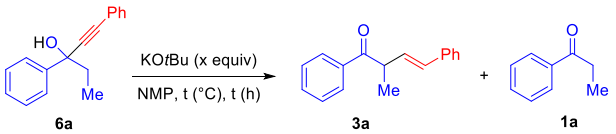


entry	additive	t (h)	temp (°C)	**3a** (%)
1	–	0.09	50	7b
2	–	4	50	90
3	–	24	25	91
4	hydroquinone	4	50	22
5	galvinoxyl	4	50	39

[a] Reaction conditions: propiophenone **1a** (2 mmol), phenylacetylene **5a** (1 mmol), additive (1 mmol), KO*t*Bu (3 mmol), NMP (9 mmol), yields calculated by ^{1}H NMR using hexamethylbenzene as an internal standard. [b] **6a** is obtained in 81% as a by-product.

We next investigated the conditions for the transformation of propargyl alcohol **6a**, as another potential intermediate of the reaction (Scheme 3), into β,γ-unsaturated ketone **3a** (Table 3). In the absence of a base at 100 °C for 24 h, **6a** is recovered quantitatively (entry 1), but the presence of 1 equiv of KO*t*Bu already leads to 2% of **3a** and 36% of **1a** *via* a retro-Favorsky reaction [13] at only room temperature (entry 2). By increasing the temperature up to 50 °C, **3a** was obtained in 35% and 40% yields after 0.5 h and 4 h respectively (entries 3–4). Complete rearrangement of **6a** to **3a** was obtained only *via* the addition of 2 equiv of KO*t*Bu at 50 °C, leading to 72% of the desired compound **3a** (entry 5). Interestingly, the use of a catalytic amount of KO*t*Bu (20 mol%) only led to a slight rearrangement of **6a** into **1a** without formation of **3a**, even at 100 °C (entry 6).

Table 3. Base-Mediated Rearrangement of Propargylic Alcohol 6a to β,γ-Unsaturated Ketone 3a[a]

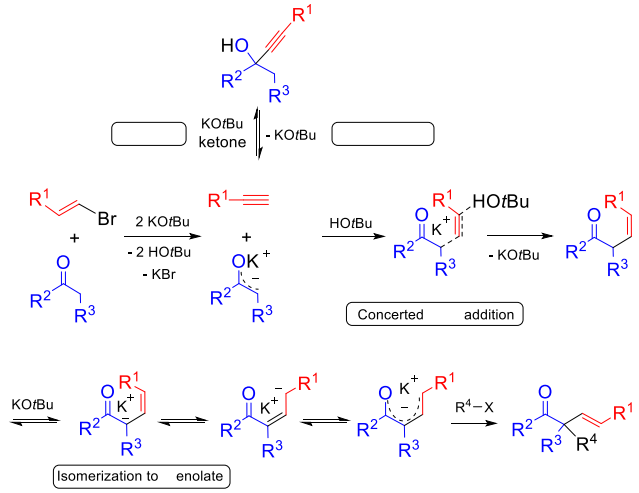


entry	x	t (h)	temp (°C)	**6a** (%)	**3a** (%)	**1a** (%)
1	–	24	100	100	0	0
2	1	0.5	25	50	2	36
3	1	0.5	50	16	35	42
4	1	4	50	18	40	26
5	2	4	50	0	72	7
6	0.2	4	100	76	0	24

[a] Reaction conditions: propargylic alcohol **6a** (1 mmol), KO*t*Bu (x mmol), NMP (9 mmol), yields calculated by ^{1}H NMR using hexamethylbenzene as an internal standard.

In light of these results, we propose an ionic mechanism based on the one postulated by Trofimov for the base-mediated addition of arylacetylenes to ketones (Scheme 4).[9a-c] The arylacetylene and the enolate, in situ generated by *β*-elimination reaction of the bromostyrene and deprotonation of the ketone respectively, would react together by a concerted *trans* addition with the assistance of HO*t*Bu to provide the *E* dienolate **D** after base-mediated isomerization of the intermediate *Z* allylic ketone **C**. A Favorsky reaction could also be envisioned from the attack of the corresponding acetylide on the ketone.[12] A retro-Favorsky reaction from the corresponding propargylic alcohol **A** [13] could then explain the results obtained in Scheme 3 and Table 3.

Scheme 4. Plausible Reaction Mechanism



In summary, we have developed a highly regio- and stereoselective synthesis of β,γ-unsaturated ketones of *E* configuration from enolizable ketones and *β*-bromostyrenes under transition metal-free conditions. The reactions can be performed with KO*t*Bu at room temperature for 24 h in moderate yields or up to 70 °C for only 1 h without isomerization into the thermodynamically favored enones. The observation that radical scavengers did not completely suppress the transformation, coupled with the successful trapping of intermediates with carbon-based electrophiles to generate all-carbon quaternary centers, rather points toward an ionic mechanism.[14]

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website. Experimental procedures, compound characterization, and copies of ^{1}H NMR and ^{13}C NMR spectra.

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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