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Microwave-assisted Aminolysis of Vinylepoxides
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Abstract: Di- and trisubstituted vinylepoxides in NH₄OH were subjected to microwave irradiation affording the corresponding vicinal amino alcohols in high yields. The reaction is stereospecific and highly regioselective for addition at the allylic carbon.

Keywords: Amino alcohols; Aminolysis; Microwave heating; Ring-opening; Vinylepoxides.

Apart from being frequently occurring structural subunits in diverse natural products, vicinal amino alcohols own a fundamental position in asymmetric synthesis as 1,2-difunctional chiral auxiliaries and as building blocks for the preparation of biologically active compounds. Accordingly, a number of routes have been developed towards these structures. With the advancement of diastereo- and enantioselective syntheses of epoxides, cleavage of oxiranes by nitrogen nucleophiles has become one of the most investigated routes to vicinal amino alcohols. This strategy, however, is often limited by poor regioselectivity, except for terminal oxiranes (Scheme).

Insert Scheme

It has been shown that the steric and electronic influence of substituents on the oxirane ring control the regioselectivity of its ring opening reactions; conjugating substituents, e.g. phenyl and vinyl, usually promote ring opening at the adjacent carbon. We have previously reported that 1,2-disubstituted vinylepoxides can be ring-opened stereospecifically and highly regioselectively by ammonia and amines to afford the corresponding vicinal amino alcohols in good yields. This aminolysis reaction was successfully used in the enantioselective synthesis of N-H vinylaziridines, compounds which have been used for the stereoselective construction of larger nitrogen heterocycles, and in the asymmetric synthesis of (+)-1-deoxynojirimycin. However, the scope of the reaction is limited as it requires prolonged heating in neat ammonia, and when sterically hindered substrates are used the reaction is almost completely retarded. Due to these difficulties, further investigation was necessary.

Stogryn and Brois have shown that monosubstituted vinylepoxides can be opened using NH₄OH, but with more highly substituted substrates the reaction becomes too slow for synthetic purposes. With this procedure, vinylepoxide 1a gave amino alcohol 2a in only 13% yield after 10 days (Table 1, entry 1), whereas heating the same substrate in neat ammonia and tosic acid (0.05 eq) afforded 2a in 77% yield after 3 days (entry 2).

In recent years, the application of microwave-assisted reactions in organic synthesis has received considerable attention. Compared to conventional heating, microwave irradiation often gives greatly enhanced
reaction rates and less byproducts. Gratifyingly, using a microwave assisted protocol we obtained 2a in 93% yield in only 8 minutes (entry 3).

*Insert Table 1*

When we subjected di- and trisubstituted vinyl epoxides 1a-g to microwave irradiation at 30W in NH$_2$OH, complete conversion into amino alcohols 2a-g was generally obtained within 8 min (Table 2). The yields for the unhindered disubstituted substrates are better or as good as our previously reported results (entry 1,2). More sterically hindered substrates also seem to be efficiently converted into amino alcohols, as derivative 1c gave a yield of 90% compared to only 23% after 4 days in neat ammonia at 130°C (entry 3). The procedure is effective even for trisubstituted substrates (entry 4,5); the 1,2,2-trisubstituted vinyl epoxide 1d afforded 2d in 76% yield whereas the cyclic substrate 1e, with a quaternary allylic carbon, gave 2e and its regioisomer (1:1) in a combined yield of 77%. The latter results are remarkable, as trisubstituted substrates were inert or reacted sluggishly using the original protocol. Aminolysis of 1f gave a 2:1 mixture of amino alcohol 2f and its regioisomer, reflecting a competition between the allylic and benzylic position (entry 6). More surprisingly, 1g also gave a regioisomeric mixture, the explanation for which is less obvious. Interestingly, by lowering the irradiation effect from 30W to 5W it was possible to suppress ring-opening of 1g in the homoallylic position; the regioisomeric ratio was then increased from 6:1 to 9:1, although the reaction time needed to reach full conversion was longer.

To summarize, we have presented an efficient, microwave-assisted protocol for the regioselective and stereospecific synthesis of vicinal amino alcohols. Compared to previous methods, this procedure uses milder reaction conditions, shorter reaction times, generally gives higher yields and is applicable to a larger set of substrates. We are currently investigating the ring-opening of vinyl epoxides by other nucleophiles using these conditions.

*Insert Table 2*

**Typical procedure**

Vinylepoxide 1a (0.086 mmol) in NH$_2$OH (2.5 ml) was subjected to focused microwave irradiation at 30W for 8 minutes. The solvent was evaporated at reduced pressure and the crude product chromatographed (EtOAc:MeOH 6:1+1% NH$_3$) to give amino alcohol 2a in 93% yield.

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**References and Notes**


12. The relative configuration of each amino alcohol was determined by conversion into the corresponding oxazolidinone or aziridine. The *trans*-vinylaziridines obtained from *anti*-amino alcohols showed J=2.3-2.6 Hz and the *cis*-oxazolidinones prepared from the same precursors had J=7.8-8.1 Hz, which is in accordance with the assigned structures. See Barrett, A. G. M.; Seefeld, M. A.; White, A. J. P. *J. Org. Chem.* 1996, *61*, 2677-2685 and Pretsch, E.; Clerc, T.; Seibl, J.; Simon, W. *Tables of Spectral Data for Structure Determination of Organic Compounds*; Springer: Berlin, 1989. The relative configuration of compound 2d was determined by NOE-experiments on the corresponding oxazolidinone.
Table 1. Investigation of the aminolysis of 1a

![Reaction Scheme]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Reaction time</th>
<th>Yield (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>NH₄OH, rt → Δ</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>NH₄, TsOH·H₂O (0.05 eq), 80 ºC</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>NH₂OH, microwave irradiation, 30W</td>
<td>8 min</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. Aminolysis of vinyl epoxides

\[
\begin{array}{ccccc}
\text{Entry} & \text{Substrate} & \text{Product} & \text{Yield(%)} \\
1 & 1a & 2a & 93 (77) \\
2 & 1b & 2b & 87 (93) \\
3 & 1c & 2c & 90 (23) \\
4 & 1d & 2d & 76^c (25) \\
5 & 1e & 2e & 77^d (-)^e \\
6 & 1f & 2f & 98 (70)^f \\
7 & 1g & 2g & 95^g (-) \\
\end{array}
\]

\(^a\)All substrates were irradiated for 8 min at 30W (except where noted). The reaction conditions have not been optimized for each substrate. \(^b\)Isolated yields. Numbers in parenthesis refer to results obtained in neat NH\(_3\), TsOH·H\(_2\)O (0.05 eq) at 130°C (80°C for entry 1) for 3 days (4 days for entry 3). \(^c\)8 min, 30W. \(^d\)Regioisomeric ratio 1:1. \(^e\)See text. \(^f\)Isolated as a 2:1 (4:1) regioisomeric mixture. \(^g\)Regioisomeric ratio 6:1 (8 min, 30W), 9:1 (30 min, 5W).
Scheme