A Concise, Catalyst-Free Synthesis of Davis’ Oxaziridines using Sodium Hypochlorite


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Abstract N-Sulfonyloxaziridines (Davis’ oxaziridines) can be synthesized by reacting the corresponding N-sulfonylimines with aqueous sodium hypochlorite in acetonitrile without any catalyst. The pH of the aqueous sodium hypochlorite is crucial to obtain the product in high yield. Optimized conditions are presented that allow synthetically useful Davis’ oxaziridines to be easily obtained in up to 90% yields from the corresponding imines by using inexpensive, stable, environmentally friendly sodium hypochlorite pentahydrate crystals as the oxidant, with high reproducibility.

Key words oxaziridine, Davis’ oxaziridine, sodium hypochlorite, sodium hypochlorite pentahydrate, N-sulfonylimine, oxidation

Oxaziridines contain a strained three-membered ring consisting of a carbon, nitrogen, and oxygen atom. They are interesting reagents in organic synthetic chemistry because they can be used both as oxidizing and electrophilic amination reagents.1 Of the oxaziridines, N-sulfonyloxaziridines are the most extensively utilized in organic synthesis because of their stability. In the 1980s, Davis and co-workers developed the chemistry of N-sulfonyloxaziridines extensively, thus such compounds are commonly referred to as ‘Davis’ oxaziridines’.2 They are generally prepared through oxidation of the corresponding imine, and several oxidants (m-chloroperbenzoic acid, Oxone™, hydrogen peroxide or cumene hydroperoxide (CHP) with a catalyst) have been used for this purpose (Scheme 1).

Scheme 1

Sodium hypochlorite (NaOCl) is an ideal oxidant in organic synthesis, because it produces only non-toxic sodium chloride (NaCl) as a by-product following oxidation, and commercial aqueous NaOCl is non-explosive and inexpensive. Recently, we found that stable, crystalline sodium hypochlorite pentahydrate (NaOCl·5H2O), which is now commercially available from several companies, is a very useful oxidant for the nitroxy radical-catalyzed oxidation of alcohols as well as the oxidation of organosulfur compounds. However neither of these practical, environmentally friendly oxidants, aq. NaOCl or NaOCl·5H2O, have been used for the preparation of Davis’ oxaziridines. In this paper, we report the concise, catalyst-free preparation of Davis’ oxaziridines via reaction of N-sulfonylimines in aqueous acetonitrile with NaOCl under basic conditions (Scheme 2).
In initial optimization studies, N-tosylimine (1a) derived from benzaldehyde (3a) was chosen as a substrate, and treated with conventional 12% aqueous NaOCl in several solvents (Table 1). The desired oxaziridine 2a was produced efficiently in acetonitrile (entry 1). On the other hand, hydrolysis of the imine 1a predominated in other solvents, regenerating 3a (entries 2–4).

The main difference between conventional aqueous NaOCl and an aqueous solution prepared from NaOCl·5H2O crystals is the pH.5 As shown in Table 2, the pH of the former was 13, and the pH of the latter was 11. In our previous work5b,5c on the nitroxy radical-catalyzed oxidation of alcohols and the catalyst-free oxidation of sulfides to sulfoxides with NaOCl·5H2O, we observed that the pH of the aqueous NaOCl solutions dramatically influenced oxidation reactivity. Therefore, the reactivity of the 12% NaOCl aqueous solutions prepared from NaOCl·5H2O was evaluated while altering the pH with HCl or NaOH (Table 3).

As we had proposed, the reactivity of 1a toward NaOCl depended on the pH of the reaction mixture. A pH of 13 optimized the outcome (entries 3 and 4), and 2a was obtained in good isolated yields (71% and 69%) as shown in Scheme 3.
Further screening of the reaction conditions revealed that 6 equivalents of 12% aqueous NaOCl solution, prepared from NaOCl·5H2O with commercial pH 13 buffer (KCl-NaOH) in acetonitrile, afforded 1a in 90% isolated yield (Scheme 4).

Several sulfonylimines 1 were then treated with aqueous NaOCl under the optimized conditions using CH3CN as the solvent, including the optically active substrate 1g (Table 4). In most cases, the corresponding oxadizirine 2 was obtained in moderate to high yield. In the case of 1f, the desired 2f was obtained in only 4% yield accompanied by several unidentified by-products. Since the reaction conditions were basic, the acidic methyl proton of 1f might be removed, and the resulting anion 1f' converted into several by-products (Scheme 5).

A plausible reaction mechanism for the formation of 2 is depicted in Scheme 6. A hypochlorite anion attacks the imine carbon of 1 to produce intermediate A and then the amide anion attacks the oxygen atom to produce the oxaziridine 2. Strongly basic conditions are required to prevent the hydrolysis of 1 to the corresponding aldehyde.

**Table 4** Reaction of 1 with NaOCl in CH3CN

<table>
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<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>Time (min)</th>
<th>Yield (%)</th>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Scheme 3" /></td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Scheme 5" /></td>
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In conclusion, synthetically useful N-sulfonyloxaziridines (Davis’ oxaziridines) 2 can be synthesized from reaction of the corresponding N-sulfonylimine 1 with aqueous NaOCl in acetonitrile without need for a catalyst. Strongly basic conditions (pH 13) are required to obtain the products in high yields. Although both NaOCl·5H2O and conventional aq. NaOCl can be used as the oxidant, NaOCl·5H2O is recommended because, due to the instability of conventional aq. NaOCl, we observed that the target compounds are not always obtained in high yields.

All reagents were purchased from Nacalai Tesque, Wako Pure Chemical Industries, Kanto Kagaku, Kishida Reagents Chemical Co., Tokyo Chemical Industry, or Aldrich, and used without further purification. Melting points were measured with a Yanaco micro melting point apparatus (MP-J3) and are uncorrected. NMR spectra were recorded with a Shimadzu GCMS-QP1100EX spectrometer. Mass spectra were recorded with a JASCO IR-8300 FT-IR spectrophotometer. Specific rotations were measured with a JASCO DIP-370 polarimeter. IR spectra were recorded with a JASCO DIP-370 polarimeter. All of the sulfonyl imines 1 were prepared according to reported methods (1a.2b, 1b.3a 1c.1d, 1d.1f, 1f.1g).6 NMR yields were determined using dimethyl sulfone as an internal standard. All of the products obtained in this study are identical to those reported.

Preparation of 2: Typical Procedure

An aqueous NaOCl solution prepared from NaOCl·5H2O (987 mg, 6.0 mmol) and pH 13 buffer solution (KCI-NaOH) (50 mL) was added to a stirred solution of 1a (260 mg, 1.0 mmol) in acetonitrile (10 mL) at 0 °C. The resulting mixture was stirred at r.t. for 30 min. Water (30 mL) was added to the reaction mixture, and the mixture was extractcd with EtOAc (3 × 30 mL). The extract was washed with brine, dried with anhydrous magnesium sulfate, filtered and evaporated. The residue was purified by silica-gel column chromatography using hexane/EtOAc (20:1) as an eluent to obtain pure 2a (250 mg, 90%) as colorless crystals.

3-Phenyl-2-tosyl-1,2-oxaziridine (2a)6

Colorless crystals: mp 87–92 °C (lit.3a 87 °C). 1H NMR (CDCl3): δ = 8.03 (brs, 1 H), 7.96 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2 H), 7.89–7.84 (m, 3 H), 7.57–7.52 (m, 2 H), 7.45 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2 H), 7.40 (dd, J = 8.8, 2.0 Hz, 1 H), 5.61 (s, 1 H), 2.50 (s, 3 H). 13C NMR (CDCl3): δ = 146.43, 142.20, 134.72, 132.57, 131.50, 130.07, 129.75, 129.45, 128.86, 128.33, 127.92, 127.88, 127.64, 126.82, 123.45, 21.86.

7b-Phenyl-7b-benzo[d][1,2]oxazireno[2,3-b]isothiazol-3,3-dioxide (2c)6

According to the representative procedure, 2c (190 mg, 73%) was obtained from 1c (242 mg, 1.00 mmol). Colorless crystals: mp 97–99 °C (lit.6 105–106 °C).

7b-(4-Chlorophenyl)-7b-benzo[d][1,2]oxazireno[2,3-b]isothiazol-3,3-dioxide (2d)6

According to the representative procedure, 2d (237 mg, 81%) was obtained from 1d (276 mg, 1.00 mmol). White solid; mp 140–143 °C (lit.6 144–145 °C).

7b-(3-Chlorophenyl)-7b-benzo[d][1,2]oxazireno[2,3-b]isothiazol-3,3-dioxide (2e)6

According to the representative procedure, 2d (237 mg, 81%) was obtained from 1d (276 mg, 1.00 mmol). Pale-orange solid; mp 124–126 °C (lit.6 125–126 °C).

7b-Methyl-7b-benzo[d][1,2]oxazireno[2,3-b]isothiazol-3,3-dioxide (2f)6

According to the representative procedure, 1f (181.5 mg, 1.00 mmol) was treated with aq. NaOCl to provide a crude product (28.0 mg containing 2f (4%), 1H NMR yield using dimethyl sulfoxide as an internal standard). All the peaks shown below appeared in the 1H and 13C NMR spectra of the crude product.

1H NMR (CDCl3): δ = 3.10 and 3.27 (AB quartet, J = 8.0 Hz, 2 H), 2.64 (m, 1 H), 1.50–2.13 (m, 6 H), 1.18 (s, 3 H), 1.03 (s, 3 H).
$^{13}$C NMR (CDCl$_3$): $\delta =$ 98.77, 54.06, 48.32, 45.80, 33.64, 28.39, 26.56, 20.55, 19.50.

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**References and Notes**


(4) Galvin, J. M.; Jacobsen, E. N.; Palucki, M.; Frederick, M. O. e-EROS 2013, DOI: 10.1002/047084289X.rs084.pub3 ; and references cited therein.


(6) Given that addition of 10 mol% tetrabutylammonium hydroxide (Bu$_4$NOH) accelerated the oxidation reaction in a biphasic solvent system using trifluoromethylbenzene (benzotrifluoride, BTF), the reaction might proceed enantioselectively if an optically pure alkylammonium salt was employed. As a preliminary result, the desired product 2a was obtained with 7% ee when the reaction was conducted using $N$-benzylcinchonidinium chloride.