

261. Methyl-triisopropoxy-titanium, a Highly Selective Nucleophilic Methylating Reagent¹⁾

Preliminary Communication

by Beat Weidmann²⁾ and Dieter Seebach³⁾

Laboratorium für Organische Chemie der Eidgenössischen Technischen Hochschule,
ETH-Zentrum, Universitätstrasse 16, CH-8092 Zürich

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Summary

Replacement of lithium or magnesium by titanium can furnish nucleophilic organometallic reagents of high selectivity as exemplified by the title compound **1** (see *Tables 1–3*).

After a period of vivid development of new synthetic methods in the past two decades, organic chemists will have to turn increased attention to the question of how to achieve *selectivities* of a degree which are usually observed in biochemical processes. The use of transition metals [1] for this purpose is just beginning to emerge. As a contribution, we describe a first example of application of a simple and probably general method of adjusting the reactivity of carbanionic reagents by the use of titanium derivatives.

The carbon nucleophiles now used most widely for C,C-bond formations are lithium and magnesium compounds. Their most serious drawbacks are pronounced basicity and too high reactivity⁴⁾. They do not for instance, cleanly distinguish between the different types of carbonyl groups (aldehyde, ketone, ester, amide) and their analogues (cyano, nitro groups). As a rule, other electrophilic functional groups in the same molecule must be protected or should not be present when an RLi- or RMgX-addition to a carbonyl group is to be carried out⁵⁾. A demonstration of this situation is given in *Table 1*, entry 1 and 2. From this and other

1) Presented by D. S. at the meeting of the Organic Division of the German Chemical Society, Bad Nauheim, October 16, 1980.

2) Part of the projected PhD thesis of B. W., ETH Zürich.

3) Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.

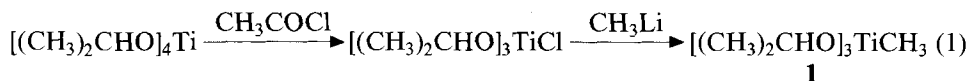
4) We have measured the *heat of reaction* of the addition of butyllithium to propanal (in tetrahydrofuran/hexane at -95°) of ca. 45 kcal/mol (hitherto unpublished results by A. Hidber of these laboratories). To the best of our knowledge, the *activation energy* of this process has not been measured.

5) Cadmium- and zinc-derivatives have occasionally been used for increasing selectivity in reactions of carbonyl compounds [2].

Table 1. *Result of the addition of methyllithium, methylmagnesium bromide, and 1 (1 mol-equiv. of CH₃M) to a 1:1 mixture of benzaldehyde and acetophenone (1 mol-equiv. each) in diethyl ether at room temperature. The numbers given are approximate product distributions determined by gas-chromatographic FID-integrations. With CH₃Li and CH₃MgBr further, non-identified products are formed besides the three alcohols, which were characterized by comparison with authentic samples.*

Entry		Relative peak areas of				
		$\text{C}_6\text{H}_5\text{CH}=\text{O}$	$\text{C}_6\text{H}_5\text{C}(=\text{O})\text{CH}_3$	$\text{C}_6\text{H}_5\text{C}(\text{OH})(\text{CH}_3)_2$	$\text{C}_6\text{H}_5\text{CH}(\text{OH})\text{CH}_3$	$\text{C}_6\text{H}_5\text{CH}_2\text{OH}$
1	Li	3	0.5	32	23	8
2	MgBr	2	52	8	30	5
3	Ti[OCH(CH ₃) ₂] ₃	0	48	≤ 1	44	0

experiments⁴), we can make a rough estimate that the activation energy⁴) of the addition of alkyltitanium compounds to carbonyl groups is well below 10 kcal/mol and that $\Delta\Delta G^\ddagger$ (i.e. the selectivity) between the addition to benzaldehyde and to acetophenone is less than 1 kcal/mol. In sharp contrast to methyllithium and methylmagnesium bromide, the methyltitanium reagent **1**⁶), readily available [3] from commercial⁷) titanium tetra(2-propanolate) according to equation (1), adds



with high selectivity to the carbonyl group of the aldehyde and does not generate side products (see entry 3 of Table 1). From this and the results assembled in Table 2, we conclude that the $\Delta\Delta G^\ddagger$ -value for the two intermolecularly competing processes is approximately one order of magnitude larger with **1** than it is with methyllithium⁸). Table 2 contains the reactions of **1** with various carbonyl compounds and the corresponding reaction conditions, Table 3 shows the solvent dependence of the addition to 4-*t*-butyl-cyclohexanone.

The following remarks seem appropriate: The neat compound **1** is a distillable, yellow liquid which can be stored at least for several months under inert atmosphere in a refrigerator; it is miscible with most common aprotic organic solvents and can be employed with a rather small solvent effect in solvents ranging from pentane to acetonitrile. Compound **1** reacts at reasonable rates with aldehydes at temperatures between -70 and -20° and with ketones between $+25$ and $+80^\circ$. Additions to esters, *S*-thiolates, nitriles, and epoxides do not compete. At lower temperatures the carbonyl addition can be carried out in the presence of nitro groups. The preferred process is 1,2-addition to α,β -unsaturated aldehydes and

⁶) Compound **1** and other alkyl- and aryl-titanium compounds with a variety of RO- and R₂N-groups have been known for some time (see [3] and ref. cited therein). As far as we know, bis(dimethylamino)-benzophenone, the *Gilman*-test reagent, was the only carbonyl compound to which the addition of these organometallic compounds was carried out.

⁷) We thank Dr. G. Bier of the *Dynamit-Nobel AG*, Troisdorf, Germany, for generous gifts of titanium tetraalcoholates.

⁸) At room temperature, $\Delta\Delta G^\ddagger$ -values of 1 and 10 kcal/mol lead to product ratios of 85:15 and 10⁷:1, respectively.

Table 2. Reactions of the methyltitanium derivative **1** (conc. ca. 0.4M) with carbonyl compounds (conc. ca. 0.3M) to give products of type $R^1R^2C(OH)CH_3$. The products were identified by comparison of spectroscopic data with those of authentic samples; in most cases, the product purity was also determined by analytical gas-chromatography.

Carbonyl derivative	Mol-equiv. of 1	Temp. [°C]	React. time [h]	Solvent	Product ($>C(OH)CH_3$) [%]
2,2-Dimethyl-propanal	1.2	–25	15	EtOEt	60
Heptanal	1.2	–50	4	THF	97
Cinnamaldehyde	1.2	–50	4	EtOEt	91 ^{a)}
Benzaldehyde	1.2	–50	4	THF	92
2-Nitro-benzaldehyde	1.2	–50	4	THF	92
4-Nitro-benzaldehyde	1.2	–50	4	THF	95
2-Naphtaldehyde	1.2	–50	4	THF	99.5
Cyclopentanone	2.0	RT.	48	EtOEt	70
Cyclohexanone	2.0	RT.	48	THF	79
(+)-Fenchone	10.0	+80°	10	Isooctane	84 ^{b)}
Acetophenone	2.0	RT.	48	EtOEt	96
Isopropyl benzoate	2.0	RT.	24	EtOEt	1.5 ^{c)}
S- <i>t</i> -Butylthiobenzoate	1.2	RT.	48	THF	– ^{d)}
(Benzonitrile)	1.2	RT.	48	EtOEt	no reaction
(Styrene epoxide)	1.2	RT.	48	EtOEt	no reaction

a) No 1,4-adduct could be detected.

b) One diastereomer only.

c) 88.5% of unreacted ester was recovered; other esters are transesterified to give isopropyl esters.

d) Ca. 10% isopropyl benzoate was formed; > 80% unreacted thioate was recovered.

Table 3. Reaction times, yields and ratios of the diastereomeric alcohols from the addition of **1** to 4-*t*-butyl-cyclohexanone at room temperature in different solvents. Concentration of **1**: 3 mmol/ml, concentration of the ketone: 1.5 mmol/ml, i.e. ratio 2:1. The *cis/trans*-ratios refer to 4-*t*-butyl-1-methyl-1-cyclohexanol, *cis* being the product of equatorial, *trans* the product of axial methyl attack [4].

Solvent	% Alcohol formation after					<i>cis/trans</i> Ratio
	½ h	1 h	2 h	3 h	4 h	
Pentane	98	99.8				89:11
Diethyl ether	96	99.3				86:14
Tetrahydrofuran		73		89		87:13
Pyridine	95	98	100			83:17
Methylene chloride	65	75	88		96	82:18
Acetonitrile	–	–	–	–	–	86:14

2-phase system, 14 h at 25°

ketones. Compound **1** transfers the methyl group diastereoselectively to 4-*t*-butyl-cyclohexanone (Table 3) and exhibits a pattern of basicity, nucleophilicity, Lewis-acid character, redox potential, hydride transfer ability, and sensitivity to steric hindrance, which are entirely different from those of methyl-lithium and Grignard-reagent.

From the results described, the following projects evolve and are being pursued in our laboratory: (i) *in situ* applications of other organometallic reagents of type **1**

including those derived from less stable carbanionoid components; (ii) other RO- and R₂N-substituents⁶) at titanium and related metals for taylor-made reactivities; (iii) the use of chiral RO-groups leading to asymmetric alkylating reagents.

Experimental Part

Typical Procedure [1-(p-nitrophenyl)-1-ethanol from p-nitro-benzaldehyde and 1]. To a solution of 820 mg (5.43 mmol) of *p*-nitro-benzaldehyde in 15 ml of THF, stirred at -50°, is added 1.6 ml (6.4 mmol) of neat 1. After stirring for 4 h at -50°, the reaction mixture is poured on toluene/2N HCl. The organic layer is washed with NaHCO₃-solution, dried (MgSO₄) and concentrated evaporatively to give 867 mg (95.6%) of spectroscopically and chromatographically pure product as yellow oil. - ¹H-NMR. (CDCl₃): 1.55 (d, J=7, 3 H); 2.5 (br. s, 1H); 5.45 (qa, J=7, 1H); 7.2-8.0 (AA'BB'-system, 4 H).

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