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Gold-catalyzed [4+3]- and [4+2]-annulations of 3-en-1-ynamides with isoxazoles *via* novel 6π -electrocyclizations of 3-azahepta trienyl cations†

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New gold-catalyzed [4+3]-annulations of 3-en-1-ynamides with isoxazoles afford 4*H*-azepines efficiently; this process involves 6π electrocyclizations of gold-stabilized 3-azaheptatrienyl cations. In the presence of $\text{Zn}(\text{OTf})_2$, the resulting 4*H*-azepines undergo skeletal rearrangement to furnish substituted pyridine derivatives. We subsequently develop new catalytic [4+2]-annulations between the same 3-en-1-ynamides and isoxazoles to deliver substituted pyridine products using $\text{Au}(\text{I})/\text{Zn}(\text{II})$ catalysts. This work reports the first success of the 6π electrocyclizations of heptatrienyl cations that are unprecedented in literature reports.

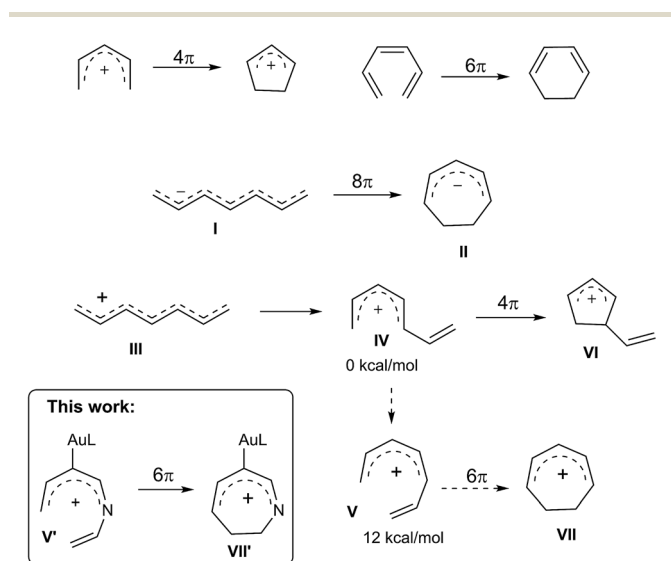
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Introduction

Electrocyclizations of acyclic conjugated π -motifs are powerful tools to access five-, six- and seven-membered carbocycles;¹ prominent examples include Nazarov cyclizations of penta-dienyl cations² and 6π electrocyclizations of trienes,³ which have found widespread applications in organic synthesis.

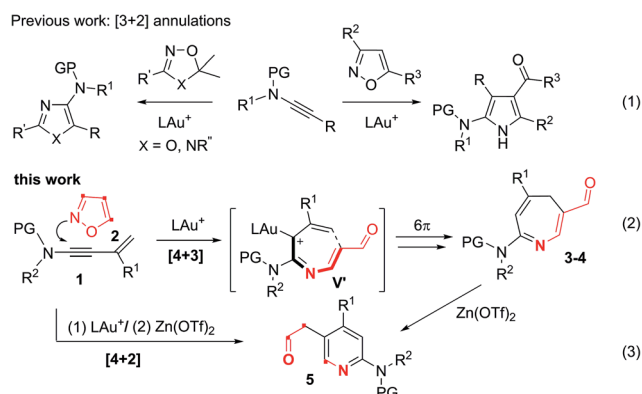
In the context of seven-carbon π -motifs, heptatrienyl anions **I** undergo facile 8π electrocyclizations *via* rapid interconversions among various anion configurations (Scheme 1).⁴ In contrast, heptatrienyl cations **III**⁵ exclusively undergo Nazarov reactions because of the difficulties of forming all σ -*cis* configured cations **V** that have a high energy state.^{5b} 1-Aza- and 1-oxaheptatrienyl cations⁶ were also reported to follow Nazarov cyclizations. The realization of a 6π electrocyclization of conjugated seven-membered cations is formidable but challenging. This work reveals the first success of such seven-membered cyclizations of gold-stabilized 3-azaheptatrienyl cations **V'** to form azacyclic products **3–4** *via* a new C–C bond formation.



Scheme 1 Electrocyclizations of conjugated π -motifs.

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The advent of gold catalysis has inspired new annulations between alkynes and poor nucleophiles.⁷ N–O containing nucleophiles serve as useful building blocks to construct valuable azacyclic frameworks.⁷ Ye and Hashmi reported interesting [3+2]-annulations of isoxazoles or benzisoxazoles with electron-



rich ynamides, yielding substituted pyrrole derivatives through aza-Nazarov cyclizations of the key intermediate [eqn (1)].^{7,8} These [3+2]-annulations were extensively expanded to other N–O heterocycles including benzisoxazoles, 1,2,4-oxadiazoles, 1,4,2-dioxazoles and 4,5-dihydro-1,2,4-oxadiazoles, yielding additional five-membered azacycles as depicted in [eqn (1)].⁹ Here, we report two distinct [4+3]- and [4+2]-annulations between 3-en-1-ynamides and isoxazoles using varied catalysts. An Au(I) catalyst alone delivers 4*H*-azepines 3–4 through 6π electrocyclizations of intermediates **V'** [eqn (2)] whereas a combined action of Au(I)/Zn(II) on the same reactants furnishes highly functionalized pyridines 5 [eqn (3)]. With our convenient synthesis, the synthetic utility of new 4*H*-azepines 3–4 is also reported.¹⁰

Results and discussion

We examined the reactions of 3-methyl-3-en-1-ynamide **1a** with 3,5-dimethylisoxazole **2a** using various gold catalysts. Heating this mixture (**1a/2a** = 1 : 2 ratio) in hot DCE with 5 mol% LAuCl/AgNTf₂ [L = *p*-(*t*-Bu)₂(*o*-biphenyl)] and IPr afforded a [4+3]-annulation product, 4*H*-azepine **3a**, in 64% and 75% yields respectively (Table 1, entries 1–2). Under these conditions, a low loading (1.2 equiv.) of 3,5-dimethylisoxazole **2a** gave **3a** in a decreased yield, *ca.* 62% (entry 3). With a 10 mol% catalyst, IPrAuCl/AgNTf₂ gave a clean reaction, yielding desired **3a** up to 91% (entry 4). We tested other phosphine ligands such as PPh₃ and P(OPh)₃, yielding desired **3a** in satisfactory yields (78–81%, entries 5–6). Other counter anions such as OTf[−] and SbF₆[−] were also effective in producing **3a** in 85–88% yields (entries 7–8). AgNTf₂ alone was not active at all (entry 9).

Table 1 [4+3]-Annulations over various gold catalysts



Entry	Catalyst [mol%]	x	Time [h]		Yield ^b [%]		
			1	2	1a	3a	1a-H'/1a-H''
1 ^c	LAuCl/AgNTf ₂ [5]	2	3	20	64	—	
2 ^d	IPrAuCl/AgNTf ₂ [5]	2	7	12	75	7 [2.5 : 1]	
3	IPrAuCl/AgNTf ₂ [5]	1.2	7	23	62	5 [1 : 1]	
4	IPrAuCl/AgNTf ₂ [10]	2	3	—	91	Trace	
5	PPh ₃ AuCl/AgNTf ₂ [10]	2	3.5	—	81	5 [1.25 : 1]	
6	[PhO] ₃ PAuCl/AgNTf ₂ [10]	2	3.5	—	78	13 [1.1 : 1]	
7	IPrAuCl/AgSbF ₆ [10]	2	2.5	—	85	6 [1.4 : 1]	
8	IPrAuCl/AgOTf [10]	2	2	—	88	Trace	
9	AgNTf ₂ [10]	2	15	33	—	11	

^a [**1a**] = 0.15 M. ^b Product yields are reported after separation from a silica column. ^c L = *p*-(*t*-Bu)₂(*o*-biphenyl). ^d IPr = 1,3-bis(diisopropylphenyl)-imidazol-2-ylidene. Ms = methanesulfonyl, DCE = 1,2-dichloroethane, and Tf = trifluoromethanesulfonyl.

Table 2 [4+3]-Annulations with various 3-en-1-ynamides



(1) R⁴, EWG = CH₃, Ts (**3b**, 3 h, 84%, **x-ray**)
 (2) R⁴, EWG = *c*-Pr, Ts (**3c**, 7 h, 86%)
 (3) R⁴, EWG = Bn, Ts (**3d**, 4.5 h, 87%)
 (4) R⁴, EWG = *n*-Bu, *n*-BuSO₂ (**3e**, 6 h, 90%)

(5) (**3f**, 22 h, 64%)

(6) R¹ = *i*-Pr (**3g**, 4 h, 74%)
 (7) R¹ = *c*-Pr (**3h**, 2 h, 79%)
 (8) R¹ = Ph (**3i**, 2.5 h, 58%)

(9) R⁴, EWG = *n*-Bu, Ms (**3j**, 5 h, 55%, **3j/3j'** = 5:1)
 (10) R⁴, EWG = CH₃, Ts (**3k**, 4 h, 68%, **3k/3k'** = 11.1:1)

(11) (**3l**, 2.5 h, 48%, **x-ray**) (**6l**, 43%, *E/Z* = 3.3:1)
 (12) (**3m**, 14 h, 16%) (**6m**, 73%, **x-ray**)

^a [**1**] = 0.15 M. ^b Product yields are reported after separation from a silica column. EWG = electron withdrawing group.

Table 3 [4+3]-Annulations with various isoxazoles



Entry	(R ¹ , R ²)	2	Time [h]	Yield [%]	4
(1)	H, H	2b	4	84	4a (X-ray)
				8	7a'
(2)	H, Me	2d	3	75	4b
(3)	Me, H	2c	3	87	4c
(4)	Et, Et	2e	6	85	4d
(5)	<i>n</i> -Bu, <i>n</i> -Bu	2f	7	81	4e
(6)	Me, <i>n</i> -Bu	2g	3	82	4f
(7)	<i>n</i> -Bu, <i>c</i> -Pr	2h	2	77	4g
(8)	Ph, <i>n</i> -Bu	2i	4	69	4h
(9)	Ph, Ph	2j	6.5	61	4i
				30	5i (X-ray)
(10)	Me, Ph	2k	4	71	4j

(15) R¹ = Ph (**5i**)
 R¹ = Me (**5j**)
 Yield: 15%
 Product: **5j**

^a [**1b**] = 0.15 M. ^b Product yields are reported after separation from a silica column.



Suitable substituents of 3-en-1-ynamides **1** are crucial to achieve 6π cyclizations of 3-azaheptatrienyl cations **V'** [eqn (2)]. We tested the reactions on 3-en-1-yne **1b–1m** bearing a C(3)-substituent to circumvent aza-Nazarov cyclizations as reported in Ye's work.⁷ Herein, only entries 9 and 10 showed the presence of 3-azanorcaradienes **3'**. We examined these [4+3]-annulations on 3-methyl-3-en-1-ynamides **1b–1e** bearing various sulfonamides NTsR⁴ (R⁴ = Me, cyclopropyl, benzyl and N(*n*-C₄H₉) (–SO₂Bu)), affording the desired 4*H*-azepines **3b–3e** in high yields (84–90%, Table 2, entries 1–4). Nevertheless, this new annulation becomes less efficient for 3-en-1-ynamide **1f** bearing an oxazolidin-2-one to yield product **3f** in 64% yield (entry 5).

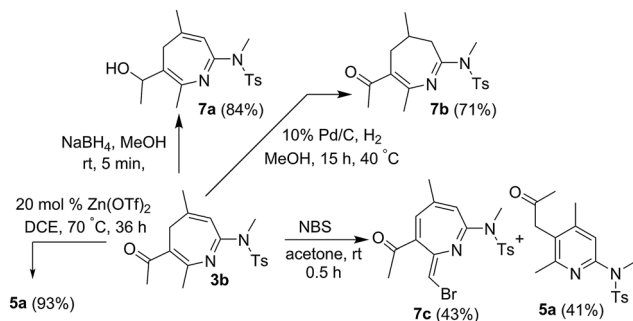
We altered the C(3)-substituents as in substrates **1g–1i**; their resulting products **3g–3h** (R¹ = isopropyl and cyclopropyl) were obtained in 74–79%, and **3i** (R¹ = Ph) with only 58% yield (entries 6–8). Notably, when a long *n*-butyl group was present as in species **1j** and **1k**, their corresponding reactions afforded compounds **3j/3j'** = 5/1 and **3k/3k'** = 11.1 : 1, respectively, in 55% and 68% yields (entries 9–10). For *E*-configured trisubstituted 3-en-1-yne **1l** (R¹ = Me, R² = Ph and R³ = H), 4*H*-azepine **3l**

and pyrrole **6l** were obtained in equal proportions (entry 11). When a cyclohexenyl group was present for alkene as in species **1m**, pyrrole product **6m** was dominant over azepine **3m** (entry 12). Accordingly, preferable 3-en-1-yne comprise a small R² or R³ substituent whereas R¹ must be substituted. Herein, the structures of 4*H*-azepines **3b** and **3l**, and pyrrole species **6m** were confirmed with X-ray diffraction.¹¹

Isoxazoles of a wide scope are compatible with these [4+3]-annulations, as depicted in Table 3. The reaction of unsubstituted isoxazole **2b** with model 3-en-1-ynamide **1b** afforded the desired 4*H*-azepine **4a** in 84% yield, together with pyrrole **7a'** in only 8% yield (entry 1). Mono-substituted 3-methyl or 5-methyl isoxazoles **2c** and **2d** are also suitable for these annulations to afford compounds **4b** and **4c** in 75% and 87% yields, respectively (entries 2–3). We prepared additional 3,5-disubstituted isoxazoles **2e–2i** with R¹ = alkyl and phenyl, and R² = alkyl; their annulations proceed smoothly to produce desired **4d–4h** in 69–85% yields (entries 4–8). For di-substituted isoxazoles **2j** and **2k** bearing R² = Ph, 4*H*-azepines **4i** and **4j** were obtained in 61% and 71% yields respectively, together with their rearrangement products **5i** and **5j** in 15–30% yields (entries 9–10). Compounds **4a** and **5i** were characterized by X-ray diffraction.¹¹

Our convenient synthesis of 4*H*-azepines provides new synthetic utilities; several new functionalizations are depicted in Scheme 2. NaBH₄-reduction of species **3b** delivered an alcohol derivative **7a** in 84% yield. Selective hydrogenation of the same species afforded 2-aza-1,3-dien-5-one **7b** in 71% yield. A final treatment of 4*H*-azepine **3b** with NBS in acetone afforded compound **7c**, of which the molecular structure was determined by ¹H NOE spectra.

The Lewis-catalyzed rearrangement of 4*H*-azepines **3–4** to substituted pyridines **5** [eqn (3)] is unprecedented in 4*H*-azepine chemistry.¹⁰ We undertook such novel [4+2]-annulations



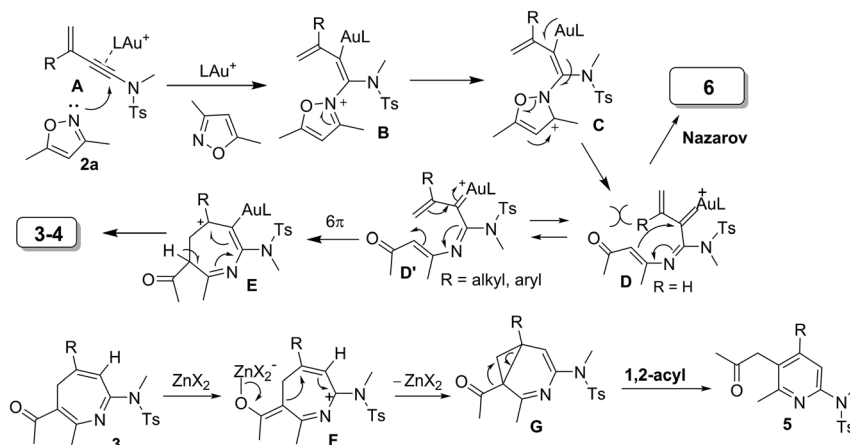
Scheme 2 New functionalization of 4*H*-azepines.

Table 4 [4+2]-Annulations between 3-en-1-ynamides and isoxazoles

Entry	(R ¹ , R ² , EWG)	1	(R ³ , R ⁴)	2	Time [h]	Yield [%]	5
(1)	Me, Me, Ts	1b	Me, Me	2a	19	73 (35) ^f	5a (X-ray)
(2)	<i>n</i> -Bu, Me, Ts	1k	Me, Me	2a	33	64	5b
(3)	<i>c</i> -Pr, Me, Ts	1h	Me, Me	2a	20	56	5c
(4)	<i>i</i> -Pr, Me, Ts	1g	Me, Me	2a	15	51	5d
(5)	Me, <i>n</i> -Bu, Ms	1a	Me, Me	2a	28	63	5e
(6)	Me, Me, Ts	1b	<i>n</i> -Bu, <i>n</i> -Bu	2f	19	78	5f
(7)	Me, Me, Ts	1b	Et, Et	2e	16	69	5g
(8)	Me, Me, Ts	1b	<i>n</i> Bu, <i>c</i> -Pr	2h	20	75	5h
(9)	Me, Me, Ts	1b	Ph, Ph	2j	24	80	5i (X-ray)
(10)	Me, Me, Ts	1b	Me, Ph	2k	30	75	5j

^a [1] = 0.15 M. ^b Product yields are reported after separation from a silica column. ^c The value in parentheses is reported using a mixture of IPrAuCl/AgNTf₂ (10 mol%) and Zn(OTf)₂ (20 mol%) in hot DCE (70 °C, 48 h); **3b** was also isolated in 28% yield.





Scheme 3 A plausible reaction mechanism.

between 3-en-1-ynamides **1** and isoxazoles **2** using Au(I)/Zn(II) in a relay series, as depicted in Table 4. In the reactions of various 3-substituted 3-en-1-ynamides **1** (R^1 = methyl, *n*-butyl, cyclopropyl and isopropyl) with 3,5-dimethylisoxazole **2a**, substituted pyridines **5a–5d** were obtained in satisfactory yields (51–73%, entries 1–4). In entry 1, if the reaction was performed with combined Au(I)/Zn(II) catalysts in a non-relay operation, compounds **5a** and **3b** were isolated in 35% and 28% yields respectively. For 3-en-1-ynamide **1a** bearing a NMs(*n*-butyl), the corresponding product **5e** was obtained in 63% yield (entry 5). We tested the reactions on 3,5-disubstituted isoxazoles **2e–2f** & **2h** bearing all alkyl substituents, producing desired **5f–5h** in good yields (69–78%, entries 6–8). For such disubstituted isoxazoles bearing R^4 = Ph, the reactions afforded the desired pyridine derivatives **5i** and **5j** in 75–80% yields (entries 9–10). The molecular structures of compounds **5a** and **5i** were characterized by X-ray diffraction.¹¹

Scheme 3 rationalizes the crucial roles of substituents of 3-en-1-ynamides in the chemoselectivity that relies on two conformational structures **D** versus **D'**. The N-attack of isoxazole at gold- π -ynamide **A** is expected to form a gold-carbene **D'**, which can be visualized as a gold-stabilized cycloheptatrienyl cation. Conformation **D** is favorable with $R = H$, which prefers aza-Nazarov reactions.¹² When a C(3)-substituent is present ($R =$ alkyl and aryl), all σ -*cis* configured species **D'** are the preferable geometry to induce novel 6π electrocyclizations. This ring closure is expected to proceed through an attack of enamide at the alkenylgold moiety that is also visualized as a gold-stabilized cation. Additional C(4)-substituents render the formation of cations **D'** difficult, thus yielding pyrrole **6** as byproducts. A loss of an acidic proton from seven-membered cations **E** is expected to yield azepines **3–4**. 4*H*-Azepines **3–4** bear an enone conjugated with a triene; this extensive conjugation is very stable to impede a 6π electrocyclization of their triene moieties unless a Lewis acid is present. Zn(OTf)₂ likely coordinates with the carbonyl of 4*H*-azepine **3** to generate a 2-azapentadienyl cation **F** bearing a zinc enolate, further enabling an intramolecular cyclization to generate species **G**. A 1,2-acyl shift¹⁴ of species **G** delivers the observed product **5**.¹³

Conclusions

In summary, this work describes new gold-catalyzed [4+3] annulations¹⁵ of 3-substituted 3-en-1-ynamides with isoxazoles to form 4*H*-azepines. A relay catalysis is also developed with Au(I)/Zn(II) catalysts to achieve [4+2] annulations from the same reactants. The mechanisms of gold-catalyzed [4+3] annulations involve unprecedented 6π electrocyclizations of 3-azacycloheptatrienyl cations to form 4*H*-azepines **3–4** efficiently. Control experiments confirm that 4*H*-azepines **3–4** are catalyzed by Zn(OTf)₂ to undergo new rearrangement reactions to form substituted pyridine derivatives.

Conflicts of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements

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- 11 Crystallographic data of compounds **3b**, **3l**, **4a**, **5a**, **5i**, and **6m** were deposited in Cambridge Crystallographic Data Center: **3b**: CCDC 1589549, **3l**: CCDC 1589562, **4a**: CCDC 1589561, **5a**: CCDC 1589558, **5i**: CCDC 1589559 and **6m**: CCDC 1589560.†
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- 13 As suggested by one reviewer, an alternative mechanism is also possible for the Zn(II)-catalyzed rearrangement; this process involves an isomerization of initial species **3** to an unconjugated iminoyl ketone **H**, followed by a 6π -cyclization to generate species **I**. A subsequent Zn(II)-catalyzed aromatization of species **I** is expected to yield the final product **5**. In this process, species **H** is relatively higher than **3** in energy, but its feasibility is not excluded.



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