



Synthesis and hetero-Diels–Alder reactions of enantiomerically pure dihydro-1*H*-azepines†

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Thermolysis of enantiomerically pure 3-substituted 7,7-dihalo-2-azabicyclo[4.1.0]heptanes in the presence of K₂CO₃ gives in good yields 2-alkyl-6-halo-1-tosyl-2,3-dihydro-1*H*-azepines. These undergo highly stereoselective [4+2] cycloaddition reactions with heterodienophiles and arylation/alkenylation under Suzuki conditions.

Stereodefined azepine and azepane derivatives are valuable molecular scaffolds present in several bioactive natural products and pharmaceutically relevant molecules.¹ Species featuring these seven-membered heterocyclic cores and related compounds have received considerable attention because of their potential as glycosidase inhibitors² and anticancer,³ anti-diabetic⁴ and antiviral agents.⁵ Consequently, a number of methodologies have been developed for their preparation, with recent accounts detailing ring-expansion cascades,⁶ cycloaddition approaches⁷ and cyclisation strategies.⁸

The importance of *gem*-dihalocyclopropanes in synthesis stems in large part from their ready accessibility and high reactivity in a range of transformations.⁹ More specifically, a number of synthesis methodologies that have been developed exploit the reactivity of cyclopropanes bearing nitrogen substituents, most notably involving ring-opening and rearrangement processes.¹⁰ Of particular interest to us were the largely unexplored thermal ring-expansion reactions of *gem*-dihalocyclopropanes in which the three-membered ring was fused to an N-heterocycle. These often low-yielding processes required high temperatures or activation by silver(I) salts to generate the putative allylic cationic intermediates, which were typically intercepted by alcohols or hydride reagents to afford vinyl halides.¹¹ To date, there have been

few reports of the successful isolation of diene products in the absence of a nucleophilic additive or solvent.¹²

Our laboratory has previously investigated the synthesis and chemistry of *N*-arylsulfonyl-1,2,3,4-tetrahydropyridines, in particular the utility of these for the stereoselective elaboration of more complex N-heterocycles.¹³ It occurred to us that bicyclo[4.1.0] products of dihalocyclopropanation of enantiomerically pure *N*-arylsulfonyl-1,2,3,4-tetrahydropyridines would undergo ring-opening and deprotonation to give stereodefined dihydroazepines. In this work, we describe base-mediated thermal ring-expansion reactions of 3-substituted 7,7-dihalo-2-azabicyclo[4.1.0]heptanes to give halogenated dihydro-1*H*-azepines, and present stereoselective [4+2] cycloaddition and Pd(0)-catalysed cross-coupling reactions of these novel scaffolds.

The enantiomerically pure 2-substituted 1,2,3,4-tetrahydropyridines **1a–g** used in this study were synthesised according to the procedure of Harriy and co-workers¹⁴ from L-amino acid-derived *N*-tosylaziridines.¹⁵ Substrates **1a–g** were subjected to dihalocyclopropanation under conditions reported by Małkośa,¹⁶ giving dichloro- and dibromo-substituted 2-azabicyclo[4.1.0]heptanes **2a–g**, **3a–g** and **4a–g**, **5a–g**, respectively as *anti/syn* mixtures in good to excellent yields. For examples **a** (R¹ = Me), **d** (R¹ = TBDPSOCH₂), **f** (R¹ = Bn), and **g** (R¹ = 4-MeOC₆H₄CH₂), compounds **2/3** (X = Cl) and **4/5** (X = Br) were obtained as inseparable *anti/syn* mixtures (Table 1).

Moderate stereoselectivity for the *anti* diastereoisomers **2** and **4** was observed for all the substrates studied, as was indicated by ¹H NMR analysis and assigned unambiguously by X-ray crystallographic analysis of **2a** and **3a**. Similar facial selectivity in the dichlorocyclopropanation of cyclic enamides has been reported recently.¹⁷ We postulate that the lower *anti*-selectivity observed in the dibromocyclopropanation reactions is a consequence of the greater steric interaction of the carbene with the *N*-tosyl group, which adopts a conformation *anti* to the R substituent.¹³

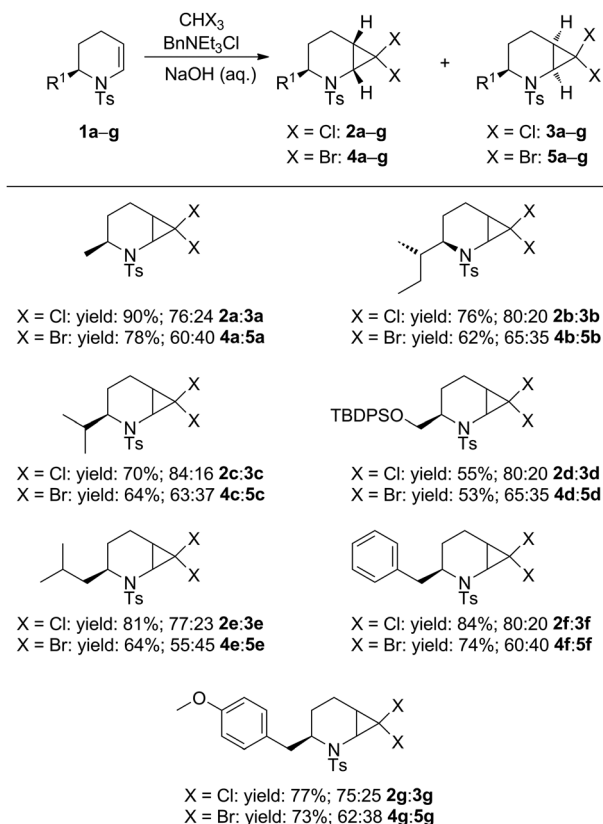
Initial ring-expansion experiments involved exposure of the *ca.* 3 : 1 mixture of **2a** + **3a** to varying combinations of base and silver salts (see ESI† for optimisation conditions). Although no consumption of substrate was observed at ambient temperature,

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† Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: Full experimental procedures, spectroscopic and X-ray crystallographic data (for **2b/3b**, **15**, **23**, **37**). CCDC 2011985–2011988. For ESI and crystallographic data in CIF or other electronic format see DOI: 10.1039/d0cc04413j

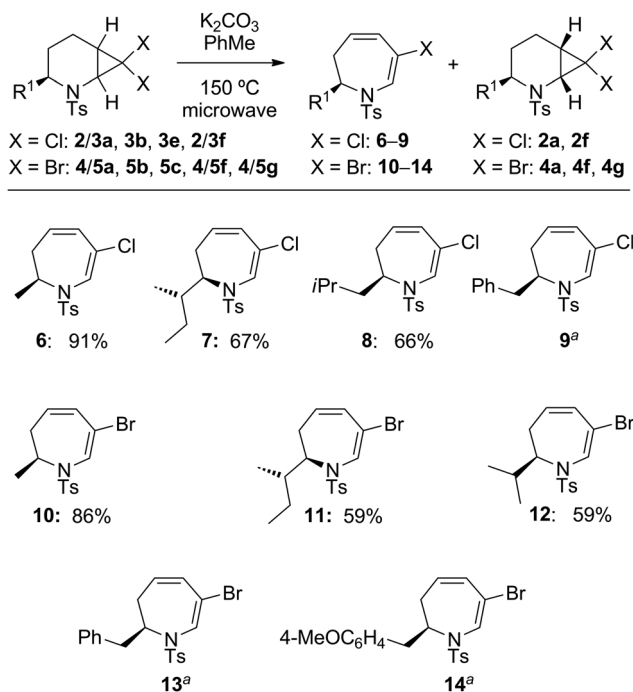


Table 1 Cyclopropanation of enantiomerically pure 1,2,3,4-tetrahydro-pyridines

the use of microwave irradiation at 150 °C resulted in conversion of only the *syn* diastereoisomer **3a** into the desired dihydro-1*H*-azepine **6**. Further investigation revealed that Ag(I) additives were unnecessary and that the addition of one equivalent of potassium carbonate in toluene at 150 °C for 5 hours under microwave irradiation conditions resulted in improved yields of **6**, although the *anti* diastereoisomer **2a** still failed to react under these modified conditions. Several additional 7,7-dihalo-2-azabicyclo[4.1.0]heptanes were subjected to the optimised ring-expansion reaction conditions either as pure *syn* isomers **3** (**3b**, **3e**: $\text{R}^1 = s\text{-Bu}$, $i\text{-Bu}$) and **5** (**5b**, **5e**: $\text{R}^1 = s\text{-Bu}$, $i\text{-Pr}$) or as *anti/syn* mixtures of **2/3** (**2/3a**, **2/3f**: $\text{R}^1 = \text{Me}$, Bn) and **4/5** (**4/5a**, **4/5f**, **4/5g**: $\text{R}^1 = \text{Me}$, Bn , $4\text{-MeOC}_6\text{H}_4\text{CH}_2$) to give dihydroazepines **6–14** in good to excellent yields based on the *syn* isomers **3** and **5** (Table 2). Dihydroazepines **9**, **13** and **14** were inseparable from the unreacted *anti* substrates **2f**, **4f** and **4g**, respectively.

The difference in ring-expansion reactivity between the *syn* isomers **3/5** and the *anti* isomers **2/4** is striking. Inspection of the obtained crystal structures for **2a** and **3a** indicates a greater degree of nitrogen pyramidalisation in the *syn*-isomer **3a** than in the *anti*-isomer **2a** (see X-ray ESI†). We speculate that this increases the availability of the nitrogen lone pair in **3** to participate in cyclopropane ring opening (Scheme 1).

The cycloaddition reactivity of the enantiomerically pure dihydroazepines was investigated next. Combination of analogues **6**, **9**, **13** and **14**¹⁸ at ambient temperature with the highly reactive

Table 2 Ring-expansion of 7,7-dihalo-2-azabicyclo[4.1.0]heptanes to give 2,3-dihydro-1*H*-azepines **6–14**^a

^a Compounds **9**, **13**, **14** were obtained as inseparable mixtures with unreacted *anti* substrates **2f**, **4f** and **4g**, respectively.

heterodienophiles 4-phenyl-3*H*-1,2,4-triazole-3,5(4*H*)-dione, and *tert*-butyl or benzyl nitrosoformate generated *in situ* by $\text{Bu}_4\text{NIO}_4^-$ mediated oxidation of the corresponding alkyl hydroxycarbamates gave in excellent yields the products of [4+2] heterocycloaddition, exclusively *anti* with respect to the R^1 substituent on the seven-membered ring (Table 3). The stereochemistry of the cycloadducts **15** and **23** was unequivocally established by X-ray crystallographic analysis (Fig. 1), which demonstrated also the complete regioselectivity of formation of the benzyl nitrosoformate adduct **23**.

The last part of this study looked at the functionalisation of bromo-substituted 6-bromo-2,3-dihydro-1*H*-azepines using Pd-catalysed cross-coupling reactions. Substrates **10–13** were coupled with a range of electron-rich and electron-poor arylboronic acids under Suzuki–Miyaura conditions to give the 6-arylated analogues in excellent yields (Table 4).¹⁹ On combination with excess 4-phenyl-3*H*-1,2,4-triazole-3,5(4*H*)-dione in CH_2Cl_2 at ambient temperature, the triene product **31** entered into hetero-Diels–Alder reaction to give in 87% yield a chromatographically separable mixture of the mono- and bis-adducts **36** and **37** in a 1:2.5 ratio (Scheme 2). The stereochemistry of mono-adduct **36** was

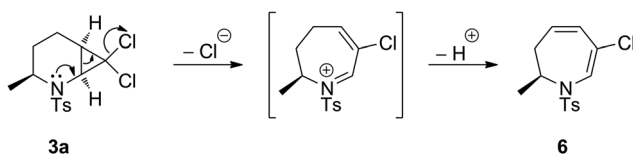
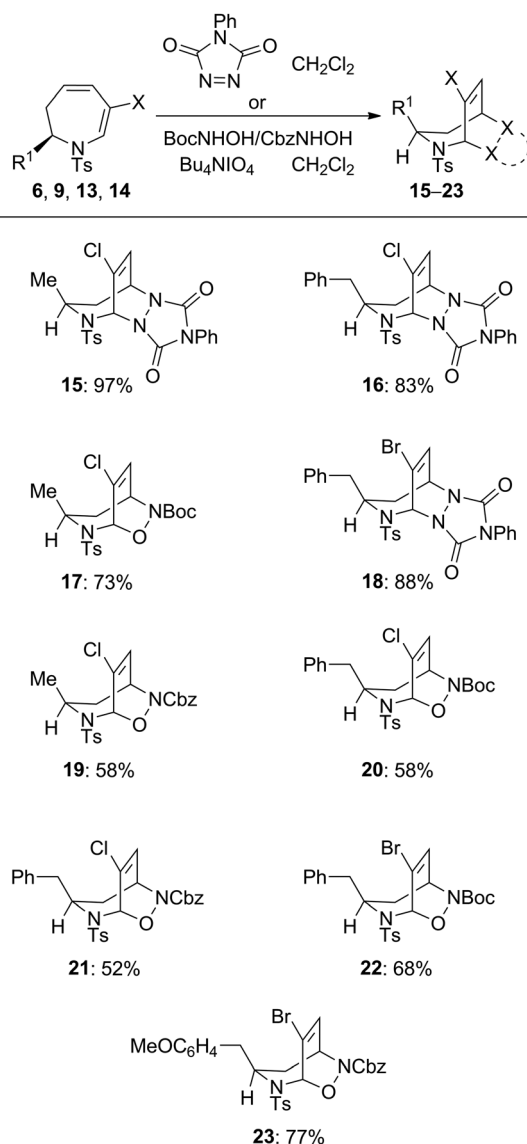
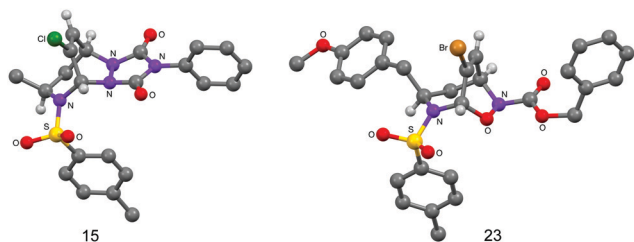
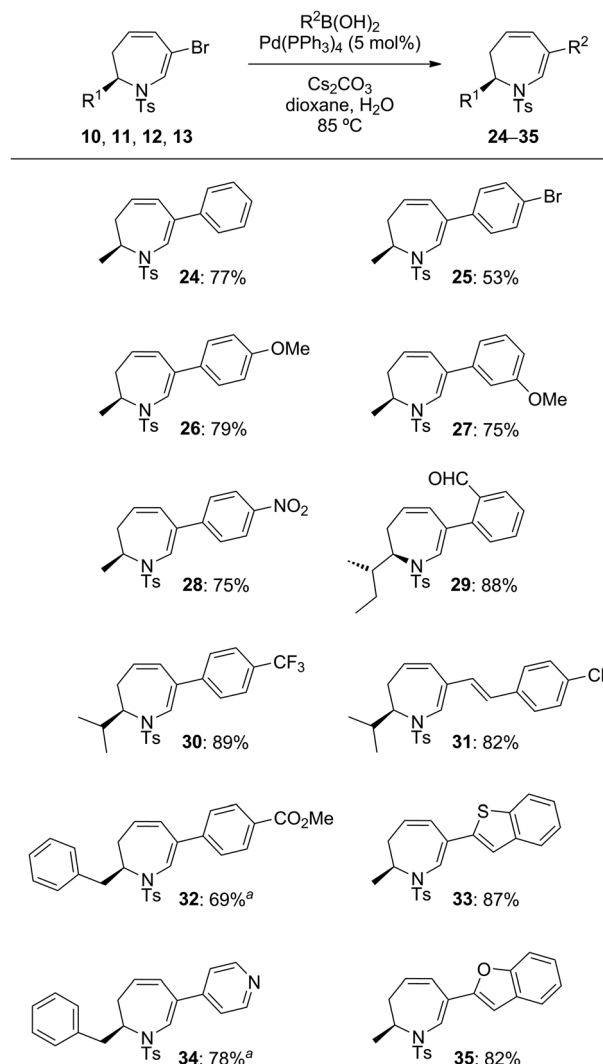
**Scheme 1** Proposed mechanism for ring-opening of **3a**.

Table 3 Hetero-Diels–Alder reactions of 6-halo-2,3-dihydro-1*H*-azepines^a

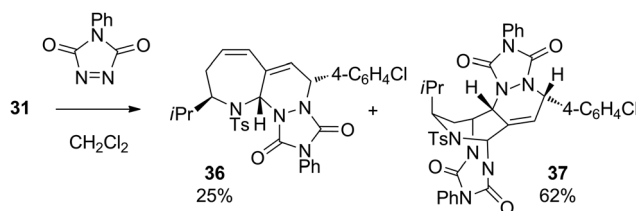
^a Compounds 9, 13, 14 were used as inseparable mixtures with unreacted 2f, 4f and 4g, respectively; yields of 16, 18, 20–23 are based on the calculated amount of the dihydroazepines in the mixtures (¹H NMR).

**Fig. 1** The crystal structures of **15** and **23**.

inferred from the stereoselectivity observed in the hetero-Diels–Alder reactions of 6, 9, 13 and 14; that of the bis-adduct **37** was established by X-ray crystallographic analysis (Fig. 2).

Table 4 Suzuki cross-coupling reactions of 6-bromo-2,3-dihydro-1*H*-azepines^a

^a 2-Benzyl-6-bromo-1-tosyl-2,3-dihydro-1*H*-azepine **13** was used in these reactions as an inseparable mixture with unreacted **4f**; yields for products **32** and **34** are for the two steps from the **4f/5f** mixture based on the calculated amount of **5f** (¹H NMR).

**Scheme 2** Formation of **36** and **37**.

This selectivity demonstrated the expected greater intrinsic reactivity of the *s*-cis cyclic diene in **31** with respect to the conformationally more flexible styryl-containing endocyclic/exocyclic moiety.



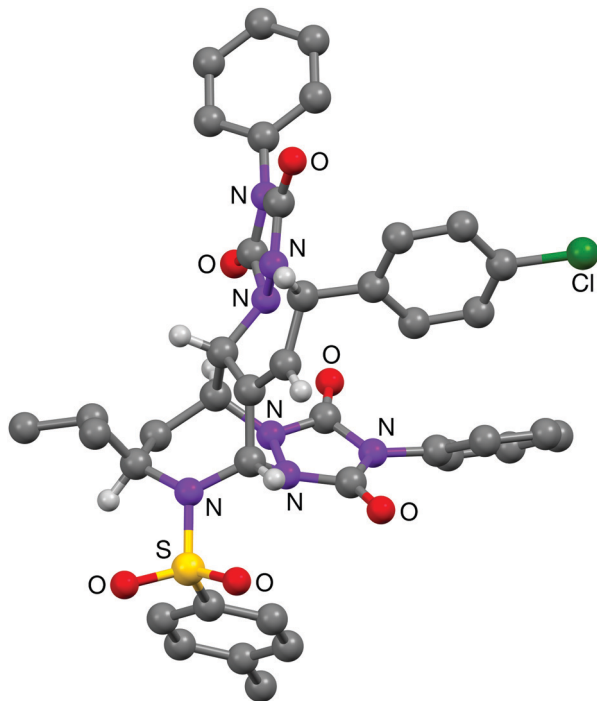


Fig. 2 The structure of **37-A**, one of the two independent molecules present in the crystal of **37**.

In conclusion, we have developed an efficient ring-expansion sequence for the conversion of stereodefined 7,7-dihalo-2-azabicyclo[4.1.0]heptanes into enantiomerically pure 2,3-dihydro-1H-azepines. These molecular scaffolds undergo hetero-Diels–Alder cycloadditions with high stereoselectivity and complete regioselectivity. Additionally, these entities can be efficiently elaborated with a range of aromatic substituents using Suzuki coupling reactions. Further investigation into dihydroazepine derivatisation and application of this chemistry to natural and unnatural product synthesis is ongoing.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

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- In the hetero-Diels–Alder reactions 2,3-dihydro-1H-azepines **9**, **13** and **14** were used as inseparable mixtures with the unreacted anti-7,7-dihalo-2-azabicyclo[4.1.0]heptanes **2f**, **4f** and **4g**, respectively.
- Bromo-substituted hetero-Diels–Alder adducts **18** and **22** also were found to be effective substrates in Suzuki reactions, giving arylated products in 75–98% yield. Full experimental and spectroscopic details are provided in the ESI†.

