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Copper-mediated tetrafluoroethylation of unsaturated organotrifluoroborates *via* generation of the HCF₂CF₂-radical from zinc 1,1,2,2-tetrafluoroethanesulfinate†

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A copper-mediated synthetic method for the incorporation of the 1,1,2,2-tetrafluoroethyl (CF₂CF₂H) group into unsaturated potassium organotrifluoroborate systems using the zinc 1,1,2,2-tetrafluoroethanesulfinate reagent has been developed. The HCF₂CF₂-radical, derived *in situ* from (HCF₂CF₂SO₂)₂Zn using TBHP as an oxidant, combines with a copper-catalyst to promote the replacement of the BF₃K group on alkenes and alkynes. The reactions are carried out under ambient air, using mild and practical conditions. The method provides access to tetrafluoroethylated alkene and alkyne products in moderate to good yields.

Organofluorine compounds play important roles in the fields of pharmaceuticals, materials sciences, and agrochemicals due to their recognized enhancement of physical, chemical, and medicinal properties.¹ The difluoromethyl group (CF₂H) is recognized as a bioisostere of the SH and OH groups,² and methodologies for the incorporation of the difluoromethyl (CF₂H) group into organic compounds have expanded dramatically over the past decade.³ The 1,1,2,2-tetrafluoroethyl group (CF₂CF₂H), a homolog of the CF₂H group, has the potential to combine the physicochemical properties of the difluoromethyl and perfluoroalkyl groups. To date, there have been studies demonstrating that tetrafluoroethylated compounds exhibit antiparasitic activity, and such compounds have emerged as potentially important candidates for application in the field of agrochemicals (Fig. 1).⁴ Recently, the incorporation of the tetrafluoroethyl group into organic molecules has begun to attract significant and sustained attention.⁵ Nevertheless, to date, only a handful of methodologies have been reported for this purpose, and these methodologies, for the most part, are limited to arene/heteroarene substrates (Scheme 1A).⁶

Recently, Baker, Boutureira, and co-workers reported a copper-mediated tetrafluoroethylation of electron-rich alkenyl

iodides using an *in situ* generated, ligandless [CuCF₂CF₂H] active species (Scheme 1B).⁷

However, this noteworthy approach requires pre-formation of the tetrafluoroethylating reagent and the use of a glove box throughout the two-stage process. We believe that our current,

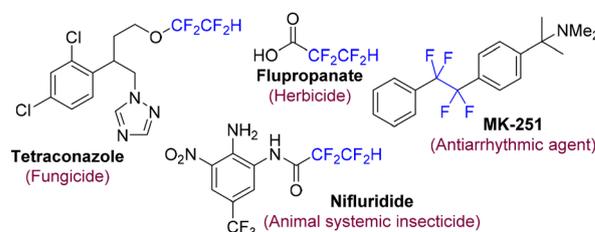
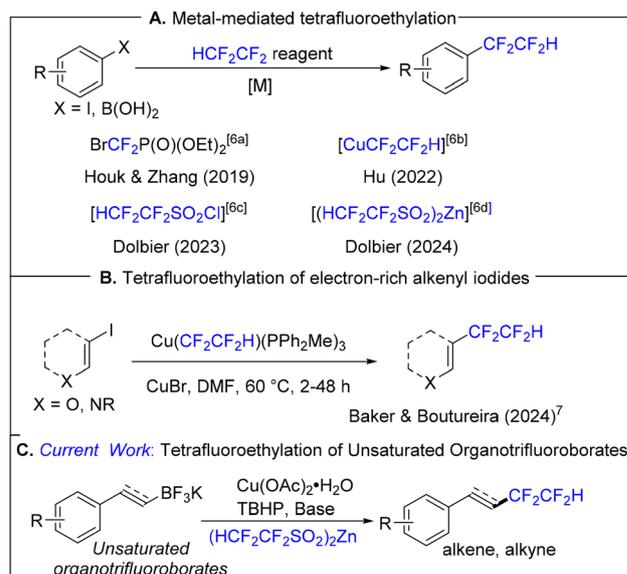


Fig. 1 Drugs and agrochemicals containing a tetrafluoroethyl group.



Scheme 1 Aryl tetrafluoroethylation methodologies.

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operationally simple method for direct vinylic and acetylenic tetrafluoroethylation will constitute a worthy addition to the synthetic chemist's toolbox.

Zinc 1,1,2,2-tetrafluoroethanesulfinate $(\text{HCF}_2\text{CF}_2\text{SO}_2)_2\text{Zn}$ is a bench-stable, easy-to-prepare and handle reagent, which was first introduced by our group in 2024,^{6d} when it was demonstrated to be a versatile reagent for the direct transfer of the $\text{CF}_2\text{CF}_2\text{H}$ group into organic substrates. This reagent serves as a precursor for tetrafluoroethyl radicals upon oxidative treatment with *t*-butyl hydroperoxide (TBHP), as demonstrated in the aforementioned study of the copper-mediated tetrafluoroethylation of arylboronic acids.^{6d} A key feature of this chemistry is the reaction of the HCF_2CF_2 -radical generated from $(\text{HCF}_2\text{CF}_2\text{SO}_2)_2\text{Zn}$ with a copper-aryl intermediate to provide $\text{ArCF}_2\text{CF}_2\text{H}$ products. The mild conditions and high selectivity associated with these reactions led us to consider additional applications of this chemistry. With that in mind, consistent with our long-standing interest in the development of fluoroalkylation methodologies,⁸ and inspired by multiple papers related to the trifluoromethylation of vinylic boronic acids using the NaSO_2CF_3 reagent,⁹ we sought to develop a mild and operationally simple protocol for the tetrafluoroethylation of potassium organovinyltrifluoroborates (Scheme 1C).

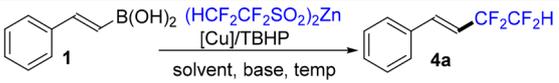
Unsaturated potassium organotrifluoroborate salts have gained increased attention due to their bench stability, high functional group tolerance, and ease of preparation from commercially available sources.¹⁰

Our initial experiments, however, were carried out using the commercially available *E*- β -styreneboronic acid **1** using conditions virtually identical to those used in our 2024 paper on tetrafluoroethylation of arylboronic acids (Table 1).^{6d} We were pleased to observe the formation of product **4a** in 48% yield (by ¹⁹F NMR) under the following conditions: $(\text{HCF}_2\text{CF}_2\text{SO}_2)_2\text{Zn}$, TBHP, K_2CO_3 and CuCl (1.0 equiv.) in a DCM/MeOH/ H_2O solvent system at 0 °C to room temperature (entry 1). A product derived from protodeborylation constituted the main byproduct, along with formation of trace amounts of the homocoupling product.

Optimizing the reaction involved carrying out experiments using various copper-catalysts, including CuI, $(\text{MeCN})_4\text{CuPF}_6$, $\text{CuCl}_2\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}$, $\text{Cu}(\text{OAc})_2\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}$, $\text{Cu}(\text{OTf})_2$, CuSO_4 , and CuI with added ligands. This led to variable yields of the desired product (see the ESI† for details of the optimization), with the best yields for conversion of the boronic acid obtained using: (a) $\text{Cu}(\text{OAc})_2\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (65%, entry 6) and (b) CuI with the ligand 1,10-phenanthroline (66%, entry 11). Using no base or increasing the reaction temperature to 50 °C led to lower yields (entries 9 and 10). Also, interestingly, when the reaction was carried out with no added catalyst, a reasonable yield of 33% was obtained. Such a non-catalyzed substitution reaction was never mentioned in related $\text{CF}_3\text{SO}_2\text{Na}$ -based studies.⁹

We then extended our optimization experiments to include other styreneboronic acid derivatives. Potassium organovinyl trifluoroborates have been shown to have some advantages for cross-coupling chemistry in terms of ease of preparation and greater nucleophilicity compared to organovinylboronic acids

Table 1 Optimization of the reaction conditions^a



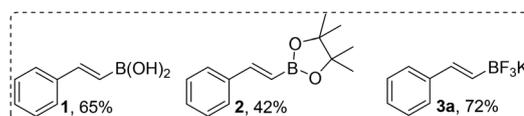
Entry	[Cu]-catalyst	Base	4a % yield ^b (¹⁹ F NMR)
1	CuCl	K_2CO_3	48
2	CuCl	NaHCO_3	51
3	CuI	NaHCO_3	49
4	$(\text{MeCN})_4\text{CuPF}_6$	NaHCO_3	46
5	$\text{CuCl}_2\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}$	NaHCO_3	56
6	$\text{Cu}(\text{OAc})_2\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}$	NaHCO_3	65
7	$\text{Cu}(\text{OTf})_2$	NaHCO_3	31
8	CuSO_4	NaHCO_3	29
9	$\text{Cu}(\text{OAc})_2\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}$	None	59
10 ^c	$\text{Cu}(\text{OAc})_2\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}$	NaHCO_3	58
11 ^d	CuI/1,10-phen	NaHCO_3	66
12 ^e	CuI/TMEDA	NaHCO_3	50
13	$\text{Cu}(\text{OAc})_2\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}/1,10\text{-phen}$	NaHCO_3	51
14 ^f	$\text{Cu}(\text{OAc})_2\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}$	NaHCO_3	72
15 ^g	$\text{Cu}(\text{OAc})_2\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}$	NaHCO_3	42
16 ^h	None	NaHCO_3	33

^a General conditions: **1** (0.2 mmol, 1 equiv.), [Cu]-catalyst (1 equiv.), base (1 equiv.), TBHP (70% in H_2O , 5 equiv.), DCM/MeOH/ H_2O (4 : 4 : 3 ratio), 0 °C-rt, 15 h, under a nitrogen atmosphere. ^b Yields were determined by ¹⁹F NMR analysis using PhCF_3 as an internal standard. ^c The reaction was conducted at 50 °C. ^d 2 equiv. of 1,10-phenanthroline. ^e 3 equiv. of TMEDA. ^f (*E*) $\text{PhCH} = \text{CHBF}_3\text{K}$ was used as the starting material. ^g (*E*) $\text{PhCH} = \text{CHBPin}$ was used as the starting material. ^h No copper.

and esters.¹¹ Using *E*- β -styryl potassium trifluoroborate **3a** provided the best yield (72%; entry 14) under the otherwise same reaction conditions (Scheme 2). In contrast, pinacol ester **2** provided a lower yield (42%, entry 15) of the desired product.

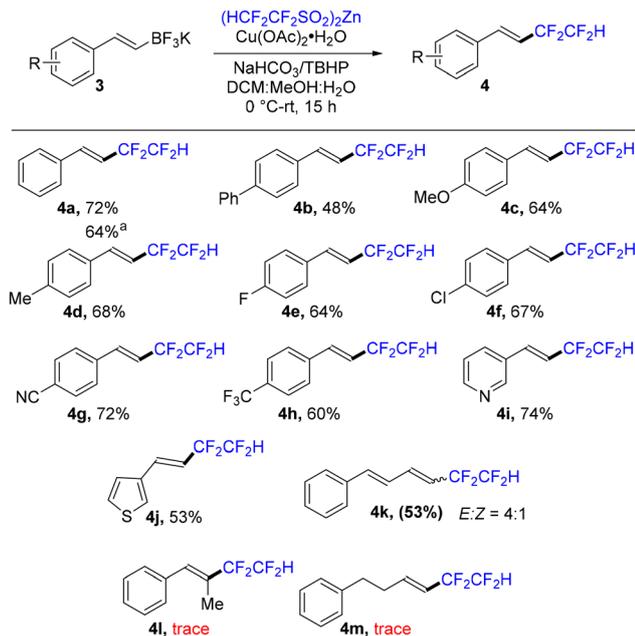
With the development of a mild optimized reaction procedure, the substrate scope of the reaction was then investigated. The transformations were equally effective for a variety of substituents on the phenyl ring (Scheme 3). Although trifluoromethylations of arylboronic acids bearing strong electron-deficient substituents have been shown to be less reactive, due to slower transmetalation,¹² in our case, substrates with electron-rich and electron-poor aromatic rings provided similar results in the reaction. Additionally, C-3 substituted heteroaromatic pyridine (**4i**, 74%) and thiophene (**4j**, 53%) also led to the desired product in good yields.

It should be noted that the tetrafluoroethylation reactions occurred with generally high selectivity, with no (*Z*) isomeric product being observed by NMR, except in the case of substrate **3k**, which features an extended conjugation. As expected, a substrate with a sterically hindering β -methyl substituent (**3l**) led to no product formation. Also, our methodology did not



Scheme 2 Comparison of styrene boronic acid derivatives.



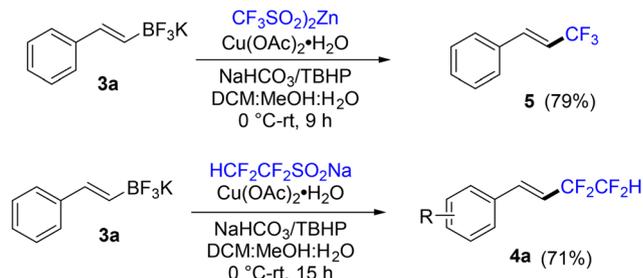


Scheme 3 Substrate scope of alkenyltrifluoroborates. Reaction conditions: **3** (0.2 mmol), $\text{Cu}(\text{OAc})_2 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$ (1 equiv.), NaHCO_3 (1 equiv.), TBHP (70% in H_2O , 5 equiv.), $(\text{HCF}_2\text{CF}_2\text{SO}_2)_2\text{Zn}$ (2 equiv.), $\text{DCM}/\text{MeOH}/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (4 : 4 : 3 ratio), 0°C-rt , 15 h, under a nitrogen atmosphere; yields were determined by ^{19}F NMR using PhCF_3 as an internal standard. ^a 1 mmol scale.

tolerate the substitution of an alkyl group for the aryl group (**3m**). Finally, a scale-up reaction using potassium styryltrifluoroborate **3a** and $(\text{HCF}_2\text{CF}_2\text{SO}_2)_2\text{Zn}$ was performed. This reaction proceeded smoothly to give the desired product **4a** with only a modest decrease in yield (64%).

A possible mechanism for this reaction would be one analogous to that proposed by Beller *et al.* in their paper on the Cu-mediated trifluoromethylation of aryl and vinyl boronic acids using the $\text{CF}_3\text{SO}_2\text{Na}$ reagent.^{9a} However, this mechanism does not readily explain the lack of reactivity of **3l** and **3m**. Instead, a mechanism involving addition of the radical to the terminal vinylic carbon, followed by oxidation of the radical by TBHP and subsequent elimination of the BF_3 group, with or without Cu complexation, makes more sense, especially since the reaction was shown to occur in the absence of the Cu catalyst.

In a brief comparative study, the reactions of the analogous trifluoromethyl reagent $(\text{CF}_3\text{SO}_2)_2\text{Zn}$ and $\text{HCF}_2\text{CF}_2\text{SO}_2\text{Na}$ (Langlois-type) reagent with *E*- β -styryl potassium trifluoroborate (**3a**) were examined under identical reaction conditions to those shown in Scheme 3. The results of these reactions are provided in Scheme 4. The successful reaction of zinc bis(trifluoromethylsulfinate) with **3a** demonstrates that diverse fluoroalkyl zinc reagents should be effective for fluoroalkylation of potassium styryltrifluoroborates under our conditions. The likewise productive reaction of the tetrafluoroethyl Langlois-type reagent $\text{HCF}_2\text{CF}_2\text{SO}_2\text{Na}$ suggests a similarity in reactivity between Na and Zn fluoroalkylsulfonates in this reaction.



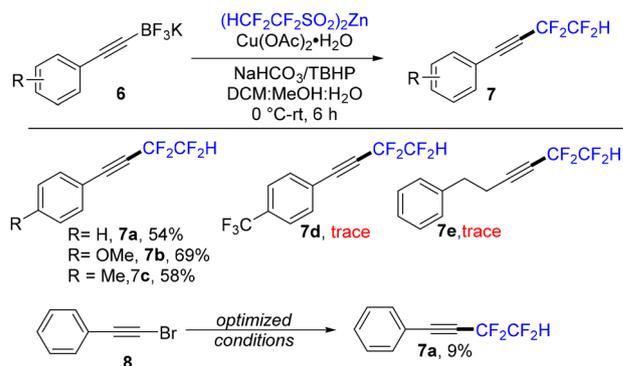
Scheme 4 Brief exploratory comparisons of reagents.

Alkynes continue to be versatile synthons in synthetic organic chemistry,¹³ and tetrafluoroethyl-substituted alkynes hold promise as valuable synthetic intermediates.

Buoyed by the success of the potassium styryltrifluoroborate chemistry, we endeavoured to extend it to the study of potassium alkynyl trifluoroborates (Scheme 5). Potassium alkynyl trifluoroborates are readily prepared and are stable under ambient laboratory conditions.¹⁴ They are convenient to handle and useful as synthetic intermediates for further transformations.¹⁵

Using our previously optimized conditions with potassium phenylethylyltrifluoroborate (**6a**) as the substrate, the desired product was only obtained in a modest (32%) yield. Using different copper catalysts, such as CuCl , CuSO_4 , CuI , $\text{Cu}(\text{OTf})_2$, and $(\text{MeCN})_4\text{CuPF}_6$, led to diminished yields, with protodeboronation being the main alternative observed pathway. Also, when using a haloalkyne, such as (bromoethynyl)benzene **8**, as a substrate, the desired product was obtained in a very poor yield of only 9%.¹⁶ However, when using a shorter (6 h) reaction time along with a modified solvent ratio (DCM , MeOH , $\text{H}_2\text{O}/1 : 1 : 2$ ratio), the desired product **7a** could be obtained in a synthetically useful isolated yield (54%).

Neutral and electron-rich aryl alkynes were found to give satisfactory results in the reaction, but unfortunately, the electron-deficient trifluoromethyl-substituted phenyl compound



Scheme 5 Substrate scope of alkynyltrifluoroborates. Reaction conditions: **6** (0.2 mmol), $\text{Cu}(\text{OAc})_2 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$ (1 equiv.), NaHCO_3 (1 equiv.), TBHP (70% in H_2O , 5 equiv.), $(\text{HCF}_2\text{CF}_2\text{SO}_2)_2\text{Zn}$ (2 equiv.), $\text{DCM}/\text{MeOH}/\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (1 : 1 : 2 ratio), 0°C-rt , 6 h, under a nitrogen atmosphere; yields were determined by ^{19}F NMR using PhCF_3 as an internal standard.



(6d) and a simple alkyl-substituted alkyne (6e) failed to produce more than trace amounts of the product. In a final experiment to assess side product formation under optimized conditions, substrate 6a produced, in addition to the desired product 7a (55%), the protodeborylation (20%) and homo-coupling (5%) products.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we report a convenient copper-mediated radical tetrafluoroethylation of unsaturated potassium organotrifluoroborates using the bench-stable $(\text{HCF}_2\text{CF}_2\text{SO}_2)_2\text{Zn}$ reagent as the source of the HCF_2CF_2 group. Thus, using a convenient reaction procedure, the synthesis of a diverse group of *E*- β -tetrafluoroethylstyrenes was achieved with modest to good yields. This chemistry has also been successfully extended to the synthesis of aryl tetrafluoroethylalkynes.

Author contributions

The synthetic work was carried out largely by Md N. A., with significant assistance from S. M. and T. U. W. R. D. Jr. supervised the work and wrote the manuscript with feedback from the other authors.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

Data availability

The data supporting this article have been included as part of the ESI.†

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