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William Parisot, Steve Huvelle, Mansour Haddad, Guillaume Lefèvre, Phannarath Phansavath, et al.. Synthesis of 5 H -chromeno[3,4- c]pyridine derivatives through ruthenium-catalyzed [2 + 2 + 2] cycloaddition. *Organic Chemistry Frontiers*, 2023, 10 (5), pp.1309-1315. 10.1039/D2QO01918C . hal-04211393

HAL Id: hal-04211393

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Submitted on 19 Sep 2023

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Synthesis of 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridine derivatives through ruthenium-catalyzed [2+2+2] cycloaddition

William Parisot,^a Steve Huvelle,^a Mansour Haddad,^a Guillaume Lefèvre,^a Phannarath Phansavath,^a Virginie Ratovelomanana-Vidal^{a*}

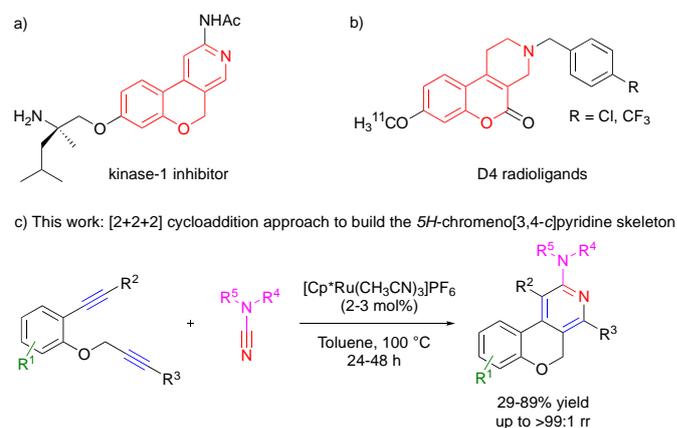
Valuable 5*H*-Chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridines were conveniently prepared through ruthenium-catalyzed [2+2+2] cycloaddition of diversely substituted α,ω -diynes with various cyanamides. The reaction was highly regioselective and tolerated a wide range of 1-ethynyl-2-(prop-2-yn-1-yloxy)benzene derivatives and cyanamides providing 32 new tricyclic pyridines that can serve as building blocks for further functionalization and enable access to a biologically relevant intermediate.

Introduction

Chromenopyridines constitute an important class of structurally diverse molecules displaying a variety of biological and pharmaceutical properties, such as antibiotic, antiallergical, or antipsychotic activities.¹ In particular, chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridines appear as promising candidates in medicinal chemistry. For example, a series of functionalized 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridines recently proved to be an efficient dual ROCK1 and ROCK2 inhibitor (Scheme 1a).² In this case, the nature of the functional chain bound to the chromenopyridine unit plays a key role in the ROCK inhibition process. ¹³C-labeled radioligands involving chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridin-5-one scaffolds were also used in *in vivo* PET studies for analysis of the dopamine D4 receptor subtype (Scheme 1b).³ It is of note that several 2,4-diaryl chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridin-5-ones were also used as ruthenium(II) ligands to afford complexes with enhanced spectral absorption properties.⁴ From a synthetic standpoint, multicomponent one-pot procedures have been reported for the synthesis of chromeno[2,3-*b*]pyridines,⁵ relying on tandem Knoevenagel condensations followed by nucleophilic additions. Similarly, tetrahydro-5*H*-chromeno[2,3-*b*]pyridines can be obtained by reaction of benzaldehydes, malonitrile and cyclohexanediones.⁶ Recent protocols of synthesis of chromeno[4,3-*b*]pyridines involving cyclocondensations under high pressure conditions were also reported.⁷ However, the reported strategies for accessing the regioisomer skeleton 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridine are more scarce. An example of functionalized 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridine was synthesized from flavan-4-ones by a Vilsmeier-Haack / malonitrile addition sequence.⁸ Condensation of trinitriles with ammonium acetate was also used to access functionalized 5-oxo-5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridines.⁹ Other recent multicomponent methods

to access 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridin-5-ones were also reported, using 4-chloro-3-(trifluoroacetyl) and heterocyclic amines in 2-step methods.¹⁰ Two reliable routes for the construction of the pyrane ring in 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridines were also reported, involving

either S_NAr or Williamson etherification as key steps.^{2b} In addition to the aforementioned strategies relying on the multistep construction of *N*-containing ring in the 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridine skeleton, the building of (hetero)aromatic rings by [2+2+2] cycloadditions is an extremely appealing tool since it allows the introduction of a high structural diversity in a single, atom-economic step.¹¹ Moreover, the cross-cyclization of 1,7-diynes with nitrile derivatives has already proved to be a powerful strategy for the obtention of functionalized aminopyridine substrates. As a continuation of our investigations on transition metal-catalyzed cycloaddition,¹² we hypothesized that novel 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridines could be obtained through ruthenium-catalyzed [2+2+2] cycloaddition reactions. To the best of our knowledge, such an approach has not been reported so far (Scheme 1c).



Scheme 1 Examples of biologically active compounds containing the 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridine (a, see ref. 2b) or the chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridin-5-one (b, see ref. 3) scaffolds; (c) synthetic approach reported in this work: formation of 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridines by [2+2+2] cycloaddition between 1,7-diynes and cyanamides.

A large scope of functionalized α,ω -diynes has been used, showing that a broad functional tolerance can be encompassed. Gram-scale and post-functionalization reactions on several cycloadducts are also described, making the process reported herein suitable for multistep high-scale syntheses.

Results and discussion

We started our study by investigating the [2+2+2] cycloaddition of 1-ethynyl-2-(prop-2-yn-1-yloxy)benzene **1a** and dimethylcyanamide **2a** using various transition metal complexes (Table 1). The reaction was first carried out in toluene at 100 °C with the ruthenium complex [Cp*RuCl]₄ (2 mol %). These conditions led to full conversion after 24 h with the formation of cycloadduct **3aa** as a single regioisomer albeit with a moderate isolated yield of 43% (Table 1, entry 1). However, under the same reaction conditions, the use of [Cp*Ru(CH₃CN)₃]PF₆ (5 mol %) provided the desired 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridine **3aa** in 83% yield with a high regioisomeric ratio of 96:4 (Table 1, entry 2). [Cp*Ru(cod)Cl] was less efficient affording a yield of 37% for **3aa** (Table 1, entry 3) whereas RuCl₃·*n*H₂O only gave a conversion of 58% (Table 1, entry 4). Although the rhodium and iridium complexes [Rh(cod)Cl]₂ and [Ir(cod)Cl]₂ afforded a complete conversion, no formation of the expected cycloadduct was observed in these cases (Table 1, entries 5 and 6).

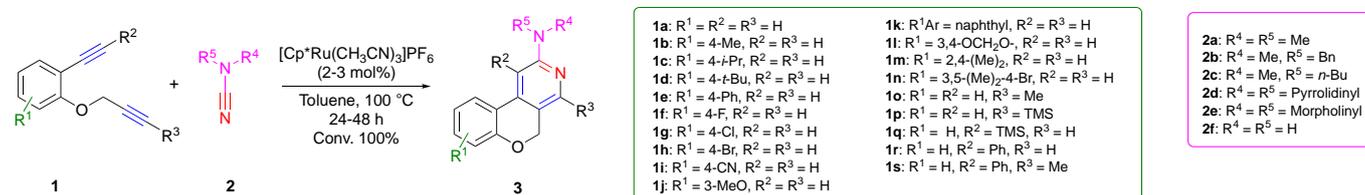
Table 1 Optimization of the reaction conditions for the metal-catalyzed [2+2+2] cycloaddition of diyne **1a** and cyanamide **2a**^a

Entry	Catalyst (mol %)	Solvent/T (°C)	Conv (%)	Yield (%)	3aa:3aa' ratio
1	[Cp*RuCl] ₄ (2)	toluene/100	100	43	>99:1
2	[Cp*Ru(CH ₃ CN) ₃]PF ₆ (5)	toluene/100	100	83	96:4
3	[Cp*Ru(cod)Cl] (5)	toluene/100	92	37	>99:1
4	RuCl ₃ · <i>n</i> H ₂ O (5)	toluene/100	58	33	92:8
5	[Rh(cod)Cl] ₂ (5)	toluene/100	100	0	–
6	[Ir(cod)Cl] ₂ (5)	toluene/100	100	0	–
7	In(OTf) ₃ (5)	toluene/100	0	0	–
8	Fe(acac) ₃ (5)	toluene/100	0	0	–
9	FeSO ₄ (5)	toluene/100	0	0	–
10	[Cp ₂ Ni] (5), Xantphos (10), Cs ₂ CO ₃ (100)	toluene/100	0	0	–
11	CpCo(CO) ₂ (5)	toluene/100	26	21	76:24
12	[Cp*Ru(CH ₃ CN) ₃]PF ₆ (2)	toluene/100	100	84	96:4
13	[Cp*Ru(CH ₃ CN) ₃]PF ₆ (2)	DCE/80	54	40	97:3
14	[Cp*Ru(CH ₃ CN) ₃]PF ₆ (2)	DCM/50	43	26	97:3
15	[Cp*Ru(CH ₃ CN) ₃]PF ₆ (2)	EtOH/80	10	9	92:8
16	[Cp*Ru(CH ₃ CN) ₃]PF ₆ (2)	MeTHF/80	71	61	96:4
17	[Cp*Ru(CH ₃ CN) ₃]PF ₆ (2)	toluene/90	95	77	96:4
18	[Cp*Ru(CH ₃ CN) ₃]PF ₆ (1)	toluene/100	62	61	96:4

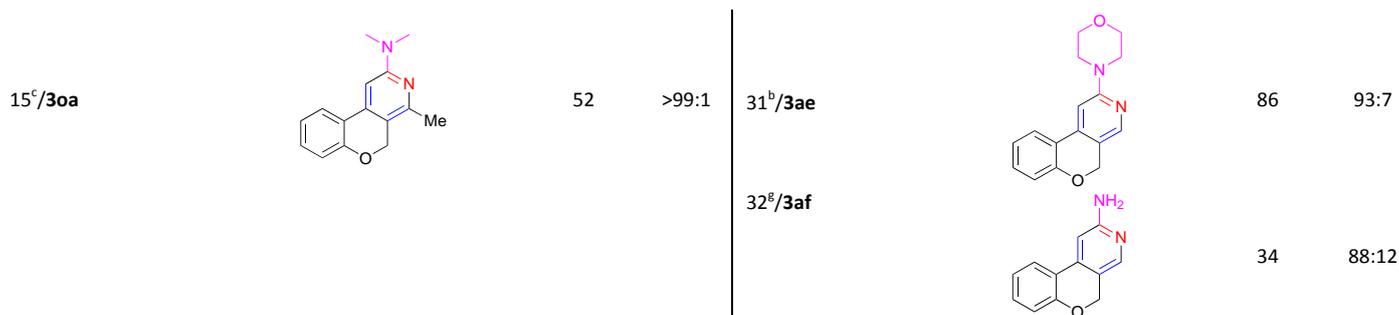
^a Reaction conditions: diyne **1a** (0.64 mmol, 100 mg), cyanamide **2a** (0.96 mmol, 1.5 equiv.), catalyst (1-5 mol %), solvent (0.3 M), 50-100 °C, 24 h.

On the other hand, the cycloaddition did not occur with In(OTf)₃, Fe(acac)₃, FeSO₄ or [Cp₂Ni]/Xantphos (Table 1, entries 7-10). The cobalt-catalyzed reaction using CpCo(CO)₂ not only led to a low yield

of 21% but the regioisomeric ratio **3aa:3aa'** was affected as well, dropping to 76:24 (Table 1, entry 11). We next decreased the catalyst loading of [Cp*Ru(CH₃CN)₃]PF₆ to 2 mol % and pleasingly, the reaction afforded results comparable to those observed with 5 mol % of the ruthenium complex (Table 1, entry 12 vs entry 2). A survey of solvents was then carried out and toluene proved to be the most suitable solvent for the cycloaddition since DCE, DCM, EtOH, and 2-MeTHF were less effective and led to conversions of only 10-71% (Table 1, entries 13-16). A decrease of the reaction temperature to 90 °C or of the catalyst loading to 1 mol % had a detrimental impact on the conversion and **3aa** was isolated 77% and 61% yields, respectively (Table 1, entries 17 and 18). Consequently, the optimized reaction conditions were established as follows: diyne **1a** (1 equiv.), cyanamide **2a** (1.5 equiv.), [Cp*Ru(CH₃CN)₃]PF₆ (2 mol %) as the catalyst, toluene (0.3 M) at 100 °C. Applying these conditions, we first evaluated the scope of the [2+2+2] cycloaddition by exploring the combination of a series of diversely substituted α,ω -diynes **1** with various cyanamides **2**, namely dimethylcyanamide **2a**, *N*-benzyl-*N*-methyl cyanamide **2b**, *N*-butyl-*N*-methyl cyanamide **2c**, pyrrolidine cyanamide **2d**, morpholine cyanamide **2e** and cyanamide **2f** (Table 2). The transformation proved to be very general and numerous functional groups were tolerated. The [2+2+2] cycloaddition was first investigated with dimethylcyanamide **2a** and a range of 1-ethynyl-2-(prop-2-yn-1-yloxy)benzene derivatives **1a-1i** bearing either no substituent, or electron-donating (Me, *i*-Pr, *t*-Bu) and withdrawing (Ph, F, Cl, Br, CN) substituents in the 4-position of the benzene ring. The corresponding cycloadducts **3aa-3ia** were produced in 69-89% yields with high regioselectivities observed in all cases, from 91:9 to 96:4 *rr* (Table 2, entries 1-9). It should be noted that the structure of the major regioisomer **3aa** was unambiguously assigned by X-ray crystallographic analysis. On the other hand, the ruthenium-catalyzed cycloaddition of 1-ethynyl-3-methoxy-2-(prop-2-yn-1-yloxy)benzene **1j**, 1-ethynyl-2-(prop-2-yn-1-yloxy)naphthalene **1k**, or 5-ethynyl-6-(prop-2-yn-1-yloxy)benzo[*d*][1,3]dioxole **1l** with **2a** regioselectively delivered the desired polycyclic pyridines **3ja**, **3ka**, **3la** in 57-74% yields and regioisomeric ratios of 89:11 to 98:2 (Table 2, entries 10-12). 1-Ethynyl-3,5-dimethyl-2-(prop-2-yn-1-yloxy)benzene **1m** carrying two methyl substituents on the benzene ring proved to be a suitable partner for this reaction since the corresponding 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridine derivative **3ma** was obtained in 82% yield and 96:4 *rr* (Table 2, entry 13). Unsurprisingly and because cycloaddition is expected to be affected by the steric hindrance, the formation of **3na** incorporating a pentasubstituted benzene was more troublesome and the [2+2+2] cycloaddition proceeded in only 9% yield under the standard reaction conditions, and in 29% when using 5 mol% of the catalyst (Table 2, entry 14). To further evaluate the scope of the reaction, we examined internal diynes as coupling partners.

Table 2 Substrate scope of the ruthenium-catalyzed [2+2+2] cycloaddition of diene **1** and cyanamide **2**

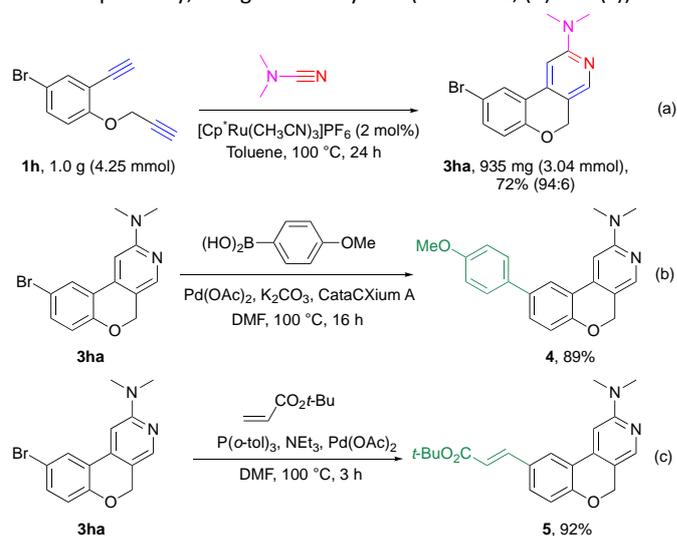
Entry	Compound	Yield (%) ^d	rr ^e	Entry	Compound	Yield (%) ^d	rr ^e
1 ^a / 3aa	R ¹ = H	84	96:4	16 ^a / 3ab	R ¹ = H	85	96:4
2 ^a / 3ba	R ¹ = 4-Me	87	96:4	17 ^a / 3cb	R ¹ = 4- <i>i</i> -Pr	43	92:8
3 ^a / 3ca	R ¹ = 4- <i>i</i> -Pr	81	95:5	18 ^a / 3gb	R ¹ = 4-Cl	74	93:7
4 ^a / 3da	R ¹ = 4- <i>t</i> -Bu	89	96:4	19 ^a / 3hb	R ¹ = 4-Br	81	94:6
5 ^a / 3ea	R ¹ = 4-Ph	88	94:6	20 ^a / 3lb		82	97:3
6 ^a / 3fa	R ¹ = 4-F	76	91:9	21 ^b / 3ac		65	95:5
7 ^a / 3ga	R ¹ = 4-Cl	69	91:9	22 ^a / 3ad	R ¹ = H	79	96:4
8 ^a / 3ha	R ¹ = 4-Br	78	94:6	23 ^a / 3bd	R ¹ = 4-Me	86	96:4
9 ^a / 3ia	R ¹ = 4-CN	78	91:9	24 ^b / 3dd	R ¹ = 4- <i>t</i> -Bu	77	94:6
10 ^a / 3ja		57	97:3	25 ^b / 3ed	R ¹ = 4-Ph	71	92:8
11 ^b / 3ka		67	89:11	26 ^a / 3fd	R ¹ = 4-F	83	94:6
12 ^a / 3la		74	98:2	27 ^b / 3id	R ¹ = 4-CN	77	93:7
13 ^a / 3ma		82	96:4	28 ^b / 3jd		68	97:3
14 ^f / 3na		29	59:41	29 ^b / 3kd		54	89:11
				30 ^b / 3md		78	96:4



^aConditions: diyne **1** (0.3–0.8 mmol), cyanamide **2** (1.5 equiv.), [Cp**Ru*(CH₃CN)₃]PF₆ (2 mol %), toluene (0.3 M), 100 °C, 24 h. ^b[Cp**Ru*(CH₃CN)₃]PF₆ (3 mol %), toluene, 100 °C, 48 h. ^c[Cp**Ru*(CH₃CN)₃]PF₆ (2 mol %), toluene, 100 °C, 120 h. ^dIsolated yield with complete conversion. ^eDetermined by ¹H NMR of the crude product after cycloaddition. ^f[Cp**Ru*(CH₃CN)₃]PF₆ (5 mol %), toluene, 100 °C, 64 h. ^g[Cp**Ru*(CH₃CN)₃]PF₆ (5 mol %), 2-MeTHF, 80 °C, 120 h.

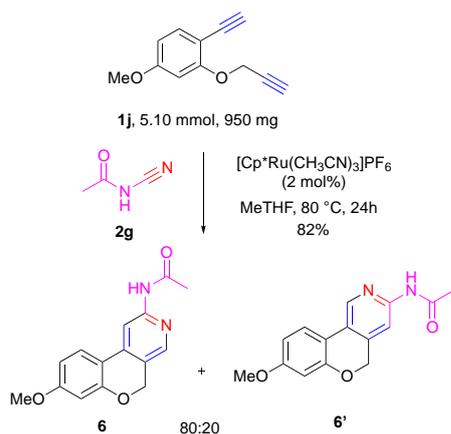
In this context, the cycloaddition was extended to an internal diyne bearing a methyl group at one end (**1o**, R² = H, R³ = Me) and provided the tetrasubstituted pyridine **30a** in 52% yield and an excellent regioselectivity of >99:1 (Table 2, entry 15). However, replacing the methyl substituent with the more sterically demanding trimethylsilyl group (**1p**, R¹, R² = H, R³ = TMS) had a detrimental impact and the expected product was isolated in only 8% yield (not shown). Positioning the trimethylsilyl group or a phenyl substituent on the other end of the diyne (**1q**, R¹ = H, R² = TMS, R³ = H and **1r**, R¹ = H, R² = Ph, R³ = H) did not allow the formation of the corresponding cycloadducts and the reaction of diyne **1s** (R¹ = H, R² = Ph, R³ = Me) bearing two internal alkynes also failed. The Ru-catalyzed cycloaddition was next examined by varying the substitution pattern on the cyanamide partner. Thus, reacting *N*-benzyl-*N*-methylcyanamide **2b** with variously substituted 1,7-diyne under the optimized conditions afforded the tricyclic pyridines in 43–85% yields with regioisomeric ratios ranging from 92:8 to 97:3 (Table 2, entries 16–20). The use of *N*-butyl-*N*-methylcyanamide **2c** in this reaction was less efficient than with its congeners **2a** or **2b** and the cycloadduct **3ac** was formed in a lower yield of 65% (Table 2, entry 21). On the other hand, pyrrolidine-1-carbonitrile **2d** proved to be an effective partner for the reaction that proceeded in 54–86% yields with *rr* values ranging from 89:11 to 97:3 (Table 2, entries 22–30). Finally, compound **3ae** bearing a morpholinyl substituent on the pyridine ring was successfully synthesized in 86% yield starting from morpholine cyanamide **2e** (Table 2, entry 31). Interestingly, the use of the non-protected cyanamide **2f** also allowed the formation of the corresponding tricyclic product although in a moderate yield of 34% and a *rr* value of 88:12 (Table 2, entry 32). Having established the scope of the reaction with respect to α,ω -diyne components, we turned our attention to post-functionalizations of the new valuable polycyclic products as well as to a scale-up of this transformation. The efficiency of the ruthenium-catalyzed [2+2+2] cycloaddition was indeed supported by a gram-scale experiment that was carried out with diyne **1h** and dimethylcyanamide **2a** under the optimized conditions. The reaction afforded the expected cycloadduct **3ha** in 72% yield and a regioisomeric ratio of 94:6, values comparable to those observed on smaller scale (Scheme 2, (a)). Moreover, the newly synthesized 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridines can serve as useful

intermediates for further decoration on the benzene ring. For instance, **3ja** was subjected to Pd-catalyzed Suzuki-Miyaura and Heck cross-coupling reactions affording the targeted compounds **4** and **5** respectively, in high 89–92% yields (Scheme 2, (b) and (c)).



Scheme 2 Gram-scale and post-functionalization reactions

Finally, to further explore the synthetic methodology, the developed procedure was applied to the synthesis of the pharmaceutically relevant intermediate **6** of a potent inhibitor of AAK1 developed by Bristol Meyer Squibb.^{2b} Satisfyingly, the reaction provided **6** as a separable mixture of the 2 regioisomers **6** and **6'** in 82% yield and a regioisomeric ratio of 80:20 (Scheme 3).



Scheme 3 Application to the synthesis of the pharmaceutically relevant intermediate **6**

Conclusions

In summary, we have reported an efficient access to 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridines that relies on the ruthenium-catalyzed [2+2+2] cycloaddition of 1-ethynyl-2-(prop-2-yn-1-yloxy)benzene derivatives with cyanamides. This atom-economical transformation was highly regioselective and produced the desired cycloadducts in yields up to 89% from a wide range of α,ω -diynes and cyanamides. Diversely functionalized 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridines derivatives were readily prepared using this method that could be efficiently transposed to gram-scale. The process allowed the synthesis of 32 novel 5*H*-chromeno[3,4-*c*]pyridines. Moreover, the various tricyclic pyridines can serve as valuable building blocks for further post-functionalization reactions and enabled access to a biologically relevant intermediate.

Experimental

Typical procedure for the [2+2+2] cycloaddition: a sealed tube was charged with $[\text{Cp}^*\text{Ru}(\text{CH}_3\text{CN})_3]\text{PF}_6$ (6.5 mg, 1.28×10^{-2} mmol, 0.02 equiv.) and dimethylcyanamide **2a** (76 μL , 0.96 mmol, 1.5 equiv.) was added. Under argon a solution of diyne **1a** (100 mg, 640 μmol , 1.0 equiv.) in 1.8 mL of anhydrous toluene was added. The tube was sealed, and the reaction mixture was stirred vigorously at 100 °C for 24 h. When the reaction was complete, the solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The residue was purified by flash column chromatography (SiO_2 , petroleum ether/EtOAc 80:20), then the excess of cyanamide was distilled off with a Kugelrohr distillation apparatus, affording **3aa** as a pale-brown oil (121 mg, 535 μmol , 84%).

Author Contributions

WP and SH contributed equally to this work.

Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank the CNRS and the MESRI for financial support. WP is grateful to the MESRI for a grant. The authors thank G. Gontard (Sorbonne Université, Paris, France) for determining the X-ray structure of **3aa**, Dr. C. Fosse (Chimie ParisTech), and the MS3U platform (Sorbonne Université, Paris, France) for HRMS analysis and Dr M.-N. Rager for NMR analysis. Ile de France Region is gratefully acknowledged for financial support of the 500 MHz NMR spectrometer of Chimie ParisTech in the framework of the SESAME equipment project (16016326).

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