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α-Bromoacetate as a Mild and Safe Brominating Agent in the Light-Driven Vicinal Dibromination of Unactivated Alkenes and Alkynes

Harshvardhan Singh, Supuni I. N. Hewa Inaththappulige, Raj K. Tak, and Ramesh Giri*

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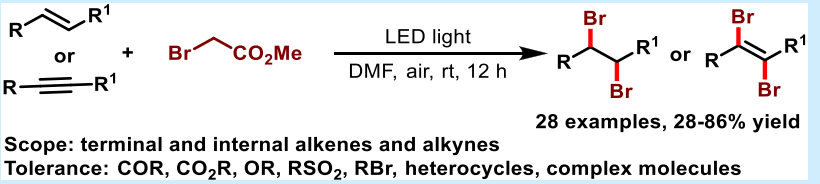
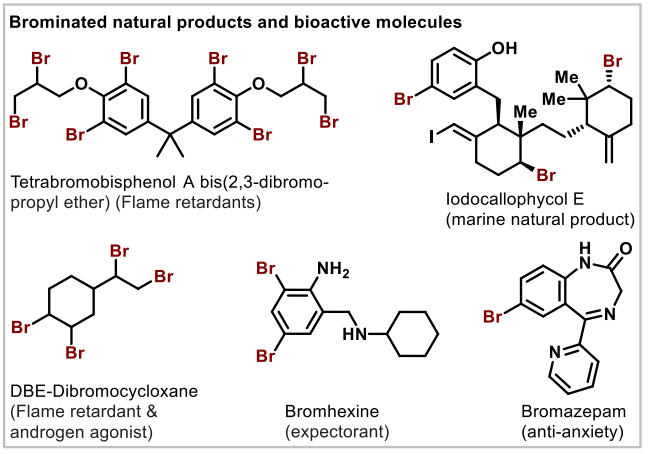


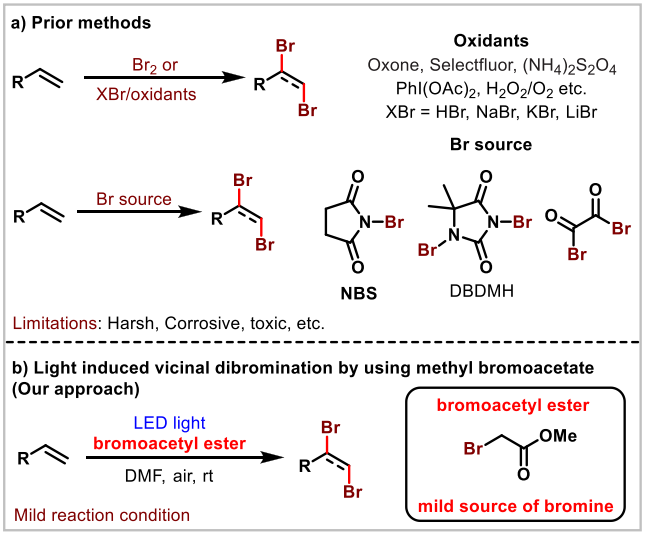
ABSTRACT: Light-induced vicinal dibromination of unactivated alkenes and alkynes has been demonstrated by using methyl α-bromoacetate as a mild brominating agent. A near-visible light (370 nm) light-emitting diode (LED) mediates this simple dibromination reaction under mild conditions with the inexpensive and nontoxic α-bromoacetate. The reaction proceeds well with both terminal and internal alkenes and alkynes and those contained in N/O-heterocycles, indicating its versatility in synthesizing dibrominated organic compounds.

Halogenated compounds are used widely and routinely in organic synthesis due to their convenient accessibility and excellent reactivity. In particular, brominated organic compounds are of particular significance due to their inimitable role in many pharmaceuticals,[1] agrochemicals,[2] and flame retardants[3] (Scheme 1) in addition to serving as versatile synthetic intermediates in organic reactions, such as S_N2 reactions, cross-couplings, radical reactions, and organometallic chemistry.[4] Despite these attractive features, the preparation of brominated compounds still mainly relies on the use of highly reactive, toxic, hazardous, and corrosive elemental Br_2 in stoichiometric amounts under harsh conditions (Scheme 2a).[4c,5] A number of other reagents, such as Oxone, Selectfluor, $(NH_4)_2S_2O_4$, $PhI(OAc)_2$, and H_2O_2/O_2, have been implemented in order to use HBr, NaBr, KBr, and LiBr as

Scheme 1. Brominated Organic Compounds and Their Applications



Scheme 2. Methods for the Vicinal Dibromination of Alkenes and Alkynes



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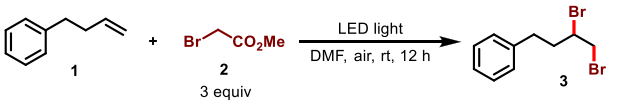
brominating sources through *in situ* oxidation of Br^- to Br^+.[6] Additionally, Morandi[6e] and Hilt[6d] recently employed electrochemical oxidation with dibromoethane and nBu_4NBr as the halogen source to dihalogenate alkenes. However, these methods also predominantly use stoichiometric amounts of the strongly oxidizing reagents to generate the bromonium cation (Br^+) and often require high temperatures that lead to the formation of unwanted byproducts.

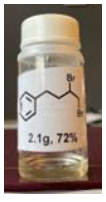
A few more efforts have been directed toward achieving dibromination of alkenes and alkynes by directly using electrophilic brominating reagents such as *N*-bromosuccinimide (NBS), 1,3-dibromo-5,5-dimethylhydantoin (DBDMH), and oxalyl bromide in the presence of catalysts such as thiourea, benzoic acid, triphenylphosphine oxide, iodobenzamide, and nitroxides.[7] Li and co-workers recently described a catalyst-free protocol for 1,2-dibromination of alkenes using DBDMH as a bromine source.[8] In 2011, Liu and co-workers reported 1,2-dihalogenation of alkynes with *N*-halosuccinimides.[9] Despite these significant improvements, dihalogenation of alkenes and alkynes with mild reagents under mild and neutral conditions is still a major challenge. Herein we report a simple α-bromoacetate as a convenient and nontoxic reagent for dibromination of alkenes and alkynes under mild and neutral reaction conditions (Scheme 2b). This reaction exploits the near-visible-light LED photoredox condition for the homolysis of the C−Br bond in α-bromoacetate to generate Br· as the brominating species.

During our studies on photoredox-catalyzed alkene carbobromination of 4-phenylbut-1-ene (**1**) with α-bromocarbonyls via a radical addition−radical pairing (RARP) mechanism,[10] we observed that exposure of the reaction to air completely shunned carbobromination and induced selective 1,2-dibromination (Table 1, entry 1). A control experiment in the absence of the photocatalyst (4-CzIPN) at 440 nm showed that the dibromination still proceeded in good yield (entry 2). Further experiments at different wavelengths of the LED light suggested that the reaction performed best at 370 nm (77 kcal/mol) (entries 2−4), suggesting that the reaction could potentially occur via direct photohomolysis of the C−Br bond

Table 1. Observation of Dibromination and Further Optimization of Reaction Parameters[a]



entry	modified conditions	yield of **3** (%)[b]
1	blue LED (440 nm), 2 mol % 4CzIPN	38
2	without 4CzIPN (440 nm)	40
3	370 nm LED	85 (72)
4	390 nm LED	75
5	370 nm LED, 2 equiv of **2**	65
6	370 nm LED, 4 equiv of **2**	82
7	370 nm LED, IPA	15
8	370 nm LED, H_2O, Acetone, THF, CH_3CN, Ethylene glycol, EtOH or MeOH instead of DMF	0
9	370 nm LED, IPA, 1 equiv of $(Br)_2CHCO_2Me$ instead of **2**	80
10	reaction in dark	0
11	370 nm LED, 1 equiv TEMPO	trace

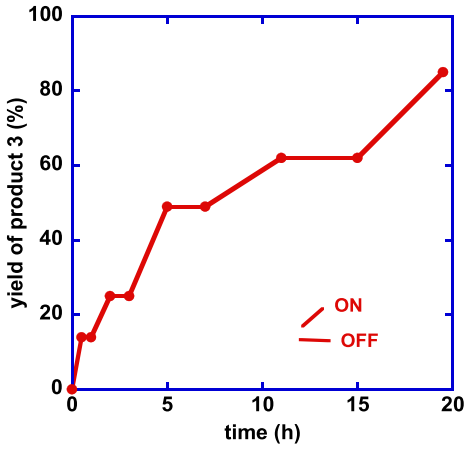


[a]Reactions were conducted at 0.10 mmol scale in 0.5 mL of solvent. [b]^1H NMR yields using tetrachloroethane as a standard. The isolated yield from a 10 mmol scale reaction is shown in parentheses.

by the LED light. Variation of the reaction parameters, such as the use of different solvents or numbers of equivalents of α-bromoacetate, suggested that 3 equiv of the brominating reagent in DMF at 370 nm wavelength was the optimal condition for dibromination (entries 5−8). α-Bromoacetate could also be replaced with 1 equiv of α,α-dibromoacetate to effect dibromination in a comparable yield (entry 9). The reaction can be conducted in gram-scale quantity (10 mmol), which afforded the product in 72% isolated yield (2.1 g) (entry 3).

We conducted further experiments to understand the reaction mechanism. The dibromination reaction does not proceed in the dark (Table 1, entry 10 and Scheme 3) or in the

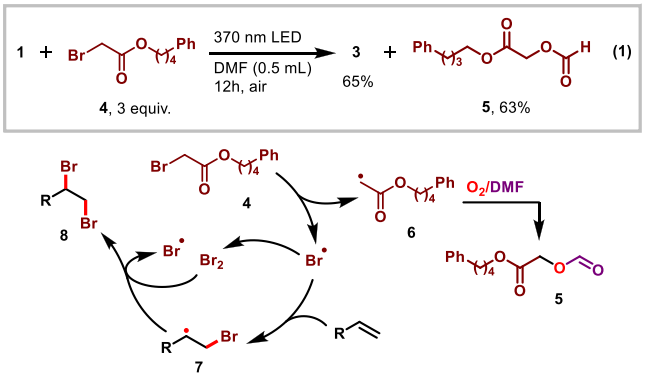
Scheme 3. Light On−Off Experiments



presence of a radical source, such as 2,2,6,6-tetramethylpiperidin-1-oxyl (TEMPO) (entry 11), indicating that the reaction evokes radical intermediates but does not involve chain propagation for dibromination. Most importantly, we were able to isolate and fully characterize a formate product **5** generated upon trapping of the carbon-centered radical with O_2/DMF when 4-phenylbutyl α-bromoacetate (2 equiv) was used as a brominating source (Scheme 4, eq 1). This observation confirms the direct homolysis of the C−Br bond in α-bromoacetate by the 370 nm LED light.

On the basis of our mechanistic experiments, we propose a plausible reaction mechanism as outlined in Scheme 4. The reaction is initiated by the homolytic cleavage of the C−Br bond in α-bromoacetate under irradiation with 370 nm LED light, thereby leading to the formation of Br· and the

Scheme 4. Proposed Reaction Mechanism



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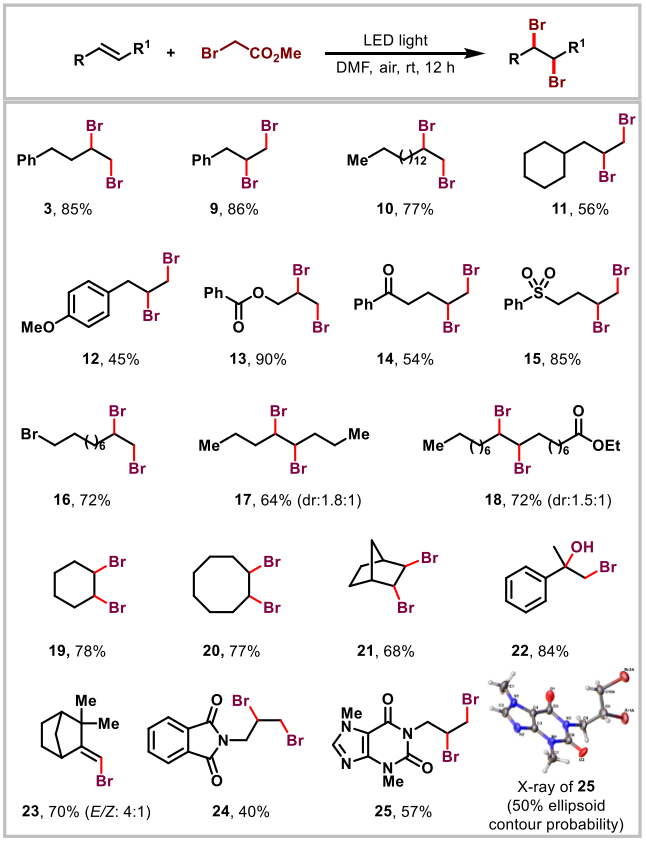
acylmethyl radical (·CH_2CO_2Me). Br· then adds to an alkene, generating *sec*-C·, which either recombines with another Br· or abstracts a Br atom from molecular Br_2 formed upon the combination of two Br·. The acylmethyl radical is captured by molecular oxygen and DMF to generate 2-(formyloxy)acetate **5**.

Having established the optimal reaction conditions and possible reaction mechanism, we then began to evaluate the generality of the protocol (Table 2). The reaction proceeds

Table 2. Substrate Scope for Dibromination of Alkenes[a]

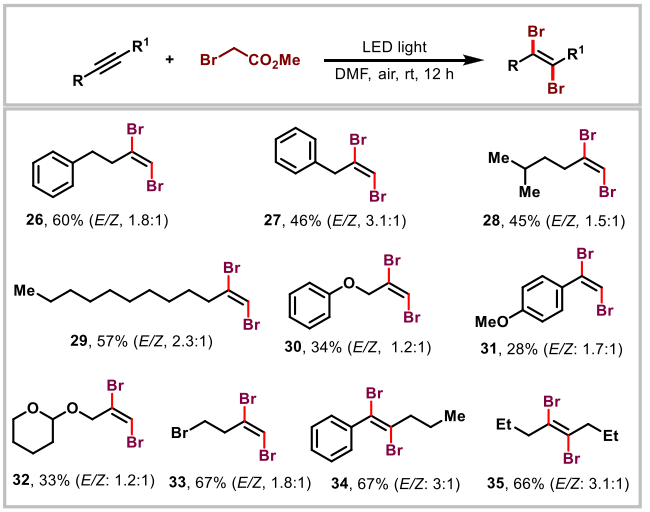


[a]Reactions were run at 0.50 mmol scale in 2.5 mL of DMF unless stated otherwise. The percentage numbers are the yields of isolated products.

well with both unfunctionalized and functionalized unactivated alkenes and tolerates a diverse set of functional groups, such as aryl, ester, ketone, methoxy, and sulfonyl, affording the dibrominated products **3** and **9**–**18** in good yields. The reaction is also compatible with alkenylalkyl bromides, in which the alkene was dibrominated to give tribromoalkane **16** without affecting the native bromo group. Internal alkenes contained in linear, monocyclic, and bicyclic motifs are also readily dibrominated in good yields (**17**–**21**). The reaction is also compatible with allylic substrates, as indicated by the dibromination of *N*-allylphthalimide (**24**). However, reactions with styrenes and sterically congested alkenes generated bromohydrin (**22**) and vinyl bromide (**23**) instead of dibrominated products, potentially due to reaction with O_2 or H_2O and dehydrobromination, respectively. To our delight, alkenes studded in a heterocyclic natural product, the alkaloid theobromine, also proved to be viable substrates for dibromination (**25**). The structure of the dibrominated theobromine derivative was also confirmed by single-crystal X-ray crystallography. While the dibromination of acyclic internal alkenes proceeded with low diastereoselectivity, the cyclic dibrominated products were generated as single diastereoisomers.

The reaction conditions are also applicable for the dibromination of alkynes, as demonstrated in Table 3. A

Table 3. Substrate Scope for Dibromination of Alkynes[a]



[a]Reactions were run at 0.50 mmol scale in 2.5 mL of DMF unless stated otherwise. The percentage numbers are the yields of isolated products.

variety of terminal and internal alkynes bearing aryl, alkyl, methoxy, phenoxy, and alkoxypyran were readily dibrominated, affording the desired products **26**–**35** in moderate to good yields. The dibrominated products with both the terminal and internal alkynes were generated in moderate ratios of *E* and *Z* isomers.

In summary, we developed a simple method for vicinal dibromination of unactivated alkenes and alkynes under irradiation with a 370 nm LED light using α-bromoacetate as a mild and safe brominating agent.[11] The reaction tolerates sensitive functional groups like esters, ketones, and alkyl bromides and works well with both terminal and internal alkenes and alkynes. α-Bromoacetate could prove to be an excellent brominating agent in bromination chemistry under near-visible light since it is readily available, inexpensive, nontoxic, and stable for handling and transportation. In addition, since this new dibromination protocol enables generation of Br·/Br_2 in small potions sustained over time, there is a low risk of producing unwanted side products in the reaction.

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Data Availability Statement

The data underlying this study are available in the published article and its Supporting Information.

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.orglett.4c01778.

Experimental procedures, mechanistic studies, X-ray crystallographic data for compound **25** (CCDC

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2353921), characterization data, and NMR spectra for new products (PDF)

Accession Codes

CCDC 2353921 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif, or by emailing data_request@ccdc.cam.ac.uk, or by contacting The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1EZ, U.K.; fax: +44 1223 336033.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Corresponding Author

Ramesh Giri − *Department of Chemistry, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802, United States;* orcid.org/0000-0002-8993-9131; Email: rkg5374@psu.edu

Authors

Harshvardhan Singh − *Department of Chemistry, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802, United States*

Supuni I. N. Hewa Inaththappulige − *Department of Chemistry, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802, United States*

Raj K. Tak − *Department of Chemistry, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania 16802, United States*

Complete contact information is available at: https://pubs.acs.org/10.1021/acs.orglett.4c01778

Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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(11) A version of this work was deposited in the ChemRxiv preprint server (see: DOI: 10.26434/chemrxiv-2024-f7t09).