Scientific paper

Carbon Nanotube-Supported Butyl 1-Sulfonic Acid Groups as a Novel and Environmentally Compatible Catalyst for the Synthesis of 1,8-Dioxo-octahydroxanthenes

Keveh Parvanak Boroujeni,1,* Zahra Heidari1 and Reza Khalifeh2

1 Department of Chemistry, Shahrekord University, P.O. Box 88186-34141 Shahrekord, Iran
2 Department of Chemistry, Shiraz University of Technology, Shiraz, Iran

* Corresponding author: E-mail: parvanak-ka@sci.sku.ac.ir
Tel.: +0098-38-32324401; fax: 0098-38-32324419

Received: 25-01-2016

Abstract

A novel multiwalled carbon nanotube catalyst with –SO3H functional groups was easily prepared from its starting materials and used as an efficient heterogeneous catalyst for one-pot Knoevenagel condensation, Michael addition, and cyclodehydration of 5,5-dimethyl-1,3-cyclohexanedione (dimedone) with various aromatic aldehydes. Using this method, 1,8-dioxo-octahydroxanthenes were obtained in excellent yields at room temperature. The present method is superior in terms of reaction temperature, reaction time, easy work-up, high yields, and ease of recovery of catalyst.

Keywords: Nanocatalyst; Heterogeneous catalysis; 1,8-Dioxo-octahydroxanthene; Aldehyde; 5,5-Dimethyl-1,3-cyclohexanedione

1. Introduction

Recently, carbon nanotubes (CNTs) have been considered as good supports for homogeneous and heterogeneous catalysts.1–3 When compared to other commonly used supports in heterogeneous catalysis, CNTs present the advantage of extraordinary electrical, thermal, and mechanical strength characteristics, resistance to chemical attack in acidic and basic media, high surface areas, and low cost. They are cylindrically shaped and their surface can be modified with various functional groups, which can be used as building blocks for covalent and noncovalent attachment of catalytic active species.

There is a widespread interest in the synthesis of xanthene derivatives owing to their diverse range of biological and therapeutic properties, such as anti-inflammatory,4 antiviral,5 and anticancer activities.6 Also, they were used as antagonists for the paralyzing action of zoxazolamine,7 fluorescent markers for the visualization of biomolecules,8 and photostable laser dyes.9 Among various derivatives of xanthene, 1,8-dioxo-octahydroxanthenes have aroused considerable interest. Synthesis of 1,8-dioxo-octahydroxanthenes is generally achieved by the condensation of dimedone with aldehydes. Several types of catalysts were introduced previously for this reaction, such as NaHSO4-SiO2 or silica chloride,10 polyphosphoric acid–SiO2,11 In(OTf)3,12 H2SO4,13 InCl3 or P2O5,14 ceric ammonium nitrate (CAN) under ultrasound irradiation,15 succinimide-N-sulfonic acid,16 CaCl2,17 Fe3O4 nanoparticles,18 CAN supported HY-zeolite,19 Fe3O4@SiO2–Imid-H2PMo12O40 nanoparticles,20 piperidine,21 Mg-Al hydroalcite,22 thiourea dioxide,23 and ZnO nanoparticles.24 Although these methods are suitable for certain synthetic conditions, there exist some drawbacks, such as low yields, high reaction temperature, long reaction times, tedious work-up, the formation of 2,2’-aryl-methylene bis(3-hydroxy-2-cyclohexene-1-one) derivatives due to competitive side reactions, and the use of unrecyclable, hazardous or difficult to handle catalysts. In view of this, utilizing eco-friendly and green catalysts for this useful reaction is in demand.

In a continuation of our recent work on synthesis and application of heterogeneous catalysts in organic reactions,25–28 herein we now report the synthesis of multiwalled carbon nanotube-supported butyl 1-sulfonic acid groups (MWCNT–BuSO3H) from the reaction of the salt...
form hydroxyl functionalized multiwalled carbon nanotube (MWCNT–OH) with 1,4-butane sultone followed by the reaction with HCl. MWCNT–BuSO₃H was used as a heterogeneous catalyst for one-pot Knoevenagel condensation, Michael addition, and cyclodehydration of dione with various aromatic aldehydes at room temperature (Scheme 1).

![Scheme 1](image)

Scheme 1. Synthesis of 1,8-dioxo-octahydroxanthenes using MWCNT–BuSO₃H.

2. Experimental

2.1. Materials and Methods

Chemicals were either prepared in our laboratory or were purchased from Merck and Fluka. Reaction monitoring and purity determination of the products were accomplished by GLC or TLC on silica-gel polygram SILG/UV₂₅₄ plates. Gas chromatography was recorded on Shimadzu GC 14-A. IR spectra were obtained by a Shimadzu model 8300 FT-IR spectrophotometer. ¹H NMR spectra were recorded on 400 MHz spectrometer in CDCl₃. The Leco sulfur analyzer was used for the measurement of sulfur in the catalyst. TGA was carried out on a Stanton Redcraft STA-780 with a 20 °C/min heating rate. SEM and TEM images were taken with a Hitachi S-3400N scanning electron microscope and a Philips CM10 transmission electron microscope, respectively. Melting points were determined on a Fisher–Jones melting-point apparatus.

2.2. Synthesis of Multiwalled Carbon Nanotubes

MWCNT and MWCNT–OH were prepared as reported in our previous work.¹

2.3. Synthesis of MWCNT–BuSO₃H

In a round bottomed flask (50 mL) equipped with a reflux condenser was added 1 g of the MWCNT–OH to an aqueous solution of sodium hydroxide (1 M, 10 mL) and the mixture was stirred at 60 °C for 12 h, filtered, washed with distilled water (20 mL), and dried at 80 °C overnight to give MWCNT–ONa. Then, 1,4-butane sultone (1.5 mL) was added to the obtained solid and the mixture was stirred at 100 °C for 24 h, filtered, washed with distilled water (20 mL), and dried at 80 °C overnight to give MWCNT–OBuSO₃Na. Afterwards, HCl (3 M, 10 mL) was added to MWCNT–OBuSO₃Na and the mixture was stirred at room temperature for 2 h, filtered, washed with distilled water (20 mL), and dried at 80 °C overnight to give MWCNT–BuSO₃H.

2.4. General Procedure for 1,8-Dioxy-octahydroxanthene Synthesis

A mixture of an aldehyde (2 mmol), dimedone (0.28 g, 2 mmol), MWCNT–BuSO₃H (0.066 g, 0.07 mmol), and ethanol (3 mL) was stirred for an appropriate time at room temperature. After completion of the reaction (monitored by TLC), the catalyst was filtered off and washed with ethanol (2 × 10 mL). Then, the filtrate was concentrated under reduced pressure and the crude product recrystallized from ethanol. All products are known compounds and were identified by comparison of their physical and spectral data with those of the authentic samples.

2.5. Representative Spectral Data of Some of the Obtained Compounds

3,3,6,6-Tetramethyl-9-phenyl-1,8-dioxo-octahydroxanthene (Table 1, entry 1). ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 1.01 (s, 6H, 2 CH₃), 1.14 (s, 6H, 2 CH₃), 2.19–2.48 (m, 8H, 4 CH₂), 4.80 (s, 1H, CH), 6.95–7.22 (m, 5H, ArH). IR (KBr) ν 2960, 2950, 1663, 1490, 1390, 1250, 850 cm⁻¹.

9-(4'-Nitrophenyl)-3,3,6,6-tetramethyl-3,4,5,6,7,9-hexahydro-1H-xanthene-1,8(2H)-dione (Table 1, entry 11). ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 1.05 (s, 6H, 2 CH₃), 1.16 (s, 6H, 2 CH₃), 2.20–2.50 (m, 8H, 4 CH₂), 4.88 (s, 1H, CH), 7.52–7.60 (d, 2H, ArH), 8.09–8.14 (d, 2H, ArH). IR (KBr) ν 2966, 2930, 2870, 1730, 1670, 1600, 1350, 1192, 860 cm⁻¹.

9-(4-Methoxyphenyl)-3,3,6,6-tetramethyl-3,4,5,6,7,9-hexahydro-1H-xanthene-1,8(2H)-dione (Table 1, entry 4). ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 1.06 (s, 6H, 2 CH₃), 1.14 (s, 6H, 2 CH₃), 2.19–2.48 (m, 8H, 4 CH₂), 3.80 (s, 3H, OCH₃), 4.72 (s, 1H, CH), 6.83–6.91 (d, 2H, ArH), 7.20–7.23 (d, 2H, ArH). IR (KBr) ν 2960, 2948, 1668, 1200, 1192, 795 cm⁻¹.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Preparation of MWCNT–BuSO₃H

A chemical vapour deposition (CVD) method was used for the synthesis of MWCNT.¹ In order to develop hydroxyl groups on the MWCNT surface, the carbon nanomaterials were submitted to a heat treatment in synthetic air flow (10 mL/min) at 500 °C for 2 h.¹

The synthetic routes for the MWCNT–BuSO₃H are shown in Scheme 2. At the first stage, MWCNT–OH was treated with NaOH to form the MWCNT–ONa. In the second step, MWCNT–BuSO₃H was prepared from the reac-
tion of MWCNT–ONa with 1,4-butane sultone followed by the reaction with HCl. The resulting black solid was analyzed by elemental analysis to quantify the percentage loading of the sulfonic acid groups by measuring the sulfur content, giving 0.98 mmol sulfonic acid moiety per gram. The acidic sites loading in MWCNT–BuSO$_3$H obtained by means of acid-base titration was found to be 1.05 mmol/g.$^{25}$

3. 2. Characterization of MWCNT–BuSO$_3$H

FT-IR spectra of the MWCNT–OH and MWCNT–BuSO$_3$H are presented in Figure 1. As can be seen in the spectrum of MWCNT–BuSO$_3$H new peaks appeared at 1120, 1150, 1190, and 1230 cm$^{-1}$, which can be assigned to S=O stretching vibration.$^{25,26}$

The thermogravimetric analyses (TGA) of MWCNTs, before and after the functionalization processes, are provided in Figure 2. The TGA curves of MWCNT–OH and

---

**Figure 1.** FT-IR spectra of MWCNT–OH (A) and MWCNT–BuSO$_3$H (B).

**Figure 2.** TGA curves of MWCNT–OH (A) and MWCNT–BuSO$_3$H (B).

**Figure 3.** SEM photographs of MWCNT–OH (a) and MWCNT–BuSO$_3$H (b).
MWCNT–BuSO₃H displayed a weight loss around 100 °C which is corresponding to the loss of the physically adsorbed water. In the case of MWCNT–BuSO₃H, the second weight loss started at about 180 °C and is mainly assigned to the decomposition of the alkyl-sulfonic acid groups. In TGA curves of MWCNT–OH and MWCNT–BuSO₃H the last weight losses at about 570–640 °C were likely due to the degradation of MWCNTs.

An attempt was made to investigate the morphology of the MWCNTs using scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and transmission electron microscopy (TEM). From SEM photographs of MWCNT–OH and MWCNT–BuSO₃H (Figure 3), it is obvious that the MWCNTs are well distributed and no amorphous carbon is detected. In the TEM photograph of MWCNT–BuSO₃H (Figure 4 (B)), it can be seen that the CNTs do not suffer damage after the functionalization and anion-exchange processes and that there are small particles affixed on the surface of MWCNT due to functionalization processes.

3.3. Catalytic Activity of MWCNT–BuSO₃H

In order to explore the catalytic activity of MWCNT–BuSO₃H, we studied the synthesis of 1,8-dioxo-octahydroxanthenes by the reaction of aldehydes with dimedone. Initially, to optimize the reaction conditions, we tried to convert benzaldehyde to 3,3,6,6-tetramethyl-9-phenyl-1,8-dioxo-octahydroxanthene with dimedone at different conditions and various molar ratios of substrates. The best results were obtained at room temperature and a molar ratio of benzaldehyde:dimedone:MWNT–BuSO₃H of 1:2:0.07. Then, under optimal conditions, a wide variety of substituted benzaldehydes (containing both electron withdrawing and donating groups) and 1-naphthaldehyde were treated with dimedone to give the corresponding products in high to excellent yields (Table 1, entries 1–13). Acid sensitive substrates, such as thiophene-2-carbaldehyde and cinnamaldehyde gave the corresponding products without generation of polymeric by-products under the present reaction conditions (entries 14, 15). In the case of substituted benzaldehydes, the 2-substituted isomer (entries 8, 9, 12) was less reactive than the 4-substituted isomer, probably due to the increased steric hindrance. It is noteworthy that no competitive side reactions such as the formation of 2,2′-aryl-methylene bis(3-hydroxy-2-cyclohexene-1-one) derivatives were observed in these transformations.

To the best of our knowledge synthesis of 1,8-dioxooctahydroxanthenes from the reaction of aldehydes with dimedone at room temperature is rare. Most of the reported methods need high temperatures or the use of an additional energy (ultrasound or microwave).

Following these results, we further investigated the potential of MWCNT–BuSO₃H for the synthesis of tetrahydrobenzo[a]xanthen-11-ones through condensation of aldehydes, dimedone, and 2-naphtol at room temperature with ethanol as the solvent. We observed that tetrahydrobenzo[a]xanth-11-ones were obtained in moderate yields after long reaction times. However, when the reactions were carried out in refluxing ethanol the desired products were obtained in high yields at very short reaction times in the presence of 0.05 mmol of catalyst (Scheme 3). In comparison with the other catalysts employed for the synthesis of tetrahydrobenzo[a]xanthen-11-ones, MWCNT–BuSO₃H showed a higher catalytic activity in terms of shorter reaction time and higher yields.

As shown in Table 1 (entries 10, 11), the aromatic aldehydes with electron withdrawing groups reacted very well at faster rate compared with aromatic aldehydes substituted with electron releasing groups. This observation can be rationalized on the basis the mechanistic details of the reaction (Scheme 4). The aldehyde is first activated by MWCNT–BuSO₃H. Nucleophilic addition of dimedone to the activated aldehyde followed by the loss of H₂O generates intermediate I, which is further activated by MW-

Figure 4. TEM photographs of MWCNT–OH (a) and MWCNT–BuSO₃H (b).
CNT–BuSO₃H. Then, the 1,4-nucleophilic addition of a second molecule of dimedone on the activated intermediate I, in the Michael addition fashion, affords the intermediate II, which undergoes intramolecular cyclodehydration to give the 1,8-dioxo-octahydroxanthene. The electron withdrawing groups present on the aromatic aldehyde in the intermediate I increase the rate of 1,4-nucleophilic addition reaction because the alkene LUMO is at lower energy in their presence compared with the aldehydes possessing electron donating groups.³³

The reusability of the MWCNT–BuSO₃H was also determined. MWCNT–BuSO₃H recovered after the reaction showed similar activity as the fresh catalyst.

### Table 1: Synthesis of 1,8-dioxo-octahydroxanthenes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Aldehyde</th>
<th>Time (min)</th>
<th>Yield (%)</th>
<th>mp (°C) (lit.)ref.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Benzaldehyde</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>201–203 (204–205)⁴⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4-Methylbenzaldehyde</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>210–215 (213–215)⁴⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4-Isopropylbenzaldehyde</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>201–203 (203–206)⁴⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4-Methoxybenzaldehyde</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>240–243 (242–244)²²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3-Methoxybenzaldehyde</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>163–165 (162–165)¹¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>4-Hydroxybenzaldehyde</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>243–245 (249–251)⁴⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4-Chlorobenzaldehyde</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>228–231 (231–233)³⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2-Chlorobenzaldehyde</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>226–228 (224–226)³³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2,4-Dichlorobenzaldehyde</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>249–253 (248–250)¹¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4-Cyanobenzaldehyde</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>222–225 (218–220)³³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>4-Nitrobenzaldehyde</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>225–227 (223–224)⁴⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2-Nitrobenzaldehyde</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>260–263 (259–261)¹²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1-Naphthaldehyde</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>235–237 (232–234)¹²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Thiophene-2-carbaldehyde</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>162–164 (161–162)⁴⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Cinnamaldehyde</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>179–181 (177–178)³³</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Isolated yield,  ⁣ All products are known compounds and were identified by comparison of their melting points and ¹H NMR and FT-IR data with those of the authentic samples.

---

**Scheme 3.** Synthesis of tetrahydrobenzo[a]xanthen-11-ones using MWCNT–BuSO₃H.

**Scheme 4.** Suggested mechanism for the preparation of 1,8-dioxo-octahydroxanthenes.
tion can be washed with EtOH and used again at least six times without any noticeable loss of catalytic activity (Figure 5).

To show the merit of the present work in comparison with the other results reported in the literature, we compared results of MWCNT–BuSO₃H with selected previously known protocols in the synthesis of 1,8-dioxo-octahydroxanthenes (Table 2). As can be seen in addition to having the general advantages attributed to the solid catalysts, MWCNT–BuSO₃H has a good efficiency compared to many of other reported catalysts in the synthesis of 1,8-dioxo-octahydroxanthenes.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, we synthesized a novel multiwalled carbon nanotube catalyst with –SO₃H functional groups.

This reusable heterogeneous acid catalyst preserved high catalytic activity for the synthesis of 1,8-dioxo-octahydroxanthenes. Easy preparation and handling of the catalyst, easy workup, high selectivity, excellent yields, short reaction times, and mild reaction conditions are the obvious advantages of the present method.

5. Acknowledgement

We gratefully acknowledge the partial support of this study by the Shahrekord University and the Shiraz University of Technology Research Council, Iran.

6. References

6. N. Mulakayala, P. V. N. S. Murthy, D. Rambabu, M. Aeluri,

![Figure 5. Recyclability of MWCNT–BuSO₃H (0.07 mmol) in the reaction of benzaldehyde (1 mmol) with dimedone (2 mmol) at room temperature. Reaction time 30 min.](image)

Table 2: Comparison of the efficiencies of a number of different reported catalysts with that of MWCNT–BuSO₃H in the reaction of benzaldehyde with dimedone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>Reaction conditions</th>
<th>Time (min)</th>
<th>Yield (%) a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Silica chloride, MeCN, reflux</td>
<td>360</td>
<td>93&lt;sup&gt;10&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Polyphosphoric acid–SiO₂, neat, reflux</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>92&lt;sup&gt;11&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>In(OTF)&lt;sub&gt;3&lt;/sub&gt;, toluene, reflux</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>85&lt;sup&gt;12&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>H₂SO₄, water, 70–80 °C</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>90&lt;sup&gt;13&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>InCl₃, solvent-free, 100 °C</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>83&lt;sup&gt;14&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>CAN under ultrasound irradiation, 2-propanol, 50 °C</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>98&lt;sup&gt;15&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Succinimide-N-sulfonic acid, solvent-free, 80 °C</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>92&lt;sup&gt;16&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>CaCl₂, DMSO, 85–90 °C</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>85&lt;sup&gt;17&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Fe₃O₄ nanoparticles, solvent-free, 100 °C</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>89&lt;sup&gt;18&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>CAN supported HY-zeolite, solvent-free, 80 °C</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>88&lt;sup&gt;19&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Fe₃O₄@SiO₂–Imid-H₃PMo₁₂O₄₀, EtOH, reflux</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>82&lt;sup&gt;20&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mg-Al hydrotalcite, H₂O or EtOH, reflux</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>85&lt;sup&gt;22&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Thiourea dioxide, H₂O, 50–60 °C</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>96&lt;sup&gt;23&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>ZnO, H₂O, reflux</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>94&lt;sup&gt;24&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>MWCNT–BuSO₃H, EtOH, r.t.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

aIsolated yield.
Povzetek

Iz ustreznih izhodnih snovi smo enostavno pripravili nov katalizator sestavljen iz vešstenskih ogljikovih nanocevk z -SO₃H funkcionalnimi skupinami. Uporabili smo ga kot učinkovit heterogeni katalizator za enolono Knoevenaglovo kondenzacijo, Michaelovo adicijo in ciklodehidracijo 5,5-dimetil-1,3-cikloheksandiona (dimedona) z različnimi aro- 
matskimi aldehidi. S pomočjo te metode smo z odličnimi izkoristki pri sobni temperaturi pripravili serijo 1,8-diokso-ok-
tahidroksantenov. Predstavljena metoda je boljša od že znanih glede na mnoge reakcijske parametre: reakcijsko tempe-
matsko ali enolono Knoevenaglovo kondenzacijo, Michaelovo adicijo in ciklodehidracijo 5,5-dimetil-1,3-cikloheksandiona (dimedona) z različnimi ar-
matskimi aldehidi. S pomočjo te metode smo z odličnimi izkoristki pri sobni temperaturi pripravili serijo 1,8-diokso-ok-
tahidroksantenov. Predstavljena metoda je boljša od že znanih glede na mnoge reakcijske parametre: reakcijsko tempe-
raturo, reakcijski čas, postopek izolacije, izkoristek in ponovno uporabo katalizatorja.