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#### RESEARCH ARTICLE

## Combined process of cyclohexyl cyclohexanecarboxylate synthesis from cyclohexanol and CO catalyzed by the $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2\text{-PPh}_3\text{-}p\text{-toluenesulfonic acid}$ system

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### Abstract

**Objectives.** To study the possibility of combining acid-catalytic cyclohexanol dehydration and alkoxy carbonylation of the formed cyclohexene with cyclohexanol and carbon(II) oxide in a single reactor in order to achieve high yields of the target cyclohexyl cyclohexanecarboxylate product using the  $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2\text{-PPh}_3\text{-}p\text{-toluenesulfonic acid}$  catalytic system.

**Methods.** The combined process took place in a toluene medium in a periodic steel reactor designed to operate at elevated pressure, equipped with a glass insert, a magnetic stirrer, and a sampler, as well as gas input and discharge devices. The reaction mass with the components of the catalytic system was placed in a glass reactor inside a steel autoclave. The reaction mass samples obtained during the combined process were analyzed by gas-liquid chromatography with a flame ionization detector.

**Results.** The possibility of combining cyclohexanol dehydration catalyzed by  $p\text{-toluenesulfonic acid monohydrate}$  and formed cyclohexene alkoxy carbonylation with cyclohexanol and CO during catalysis by the  $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2\text{-PPh}_3\text{-}p\text{-toluenesulfonic acid}$  system in a single reactor was demonstrated. Under mild conditions (temperature 110°C; CO pressure 2.1 MPa), the target product yield reached 64.8% in 5 h. However, the combined process is complicated by the formation of a cyclohexanecarboxylic acid by-product formed as a result of the cyclohexyl cyclohexanecarboxylate hydrolysis and the cyclohexene hydroxycarbonylation.

**Conclusions.** The reactions of intramolecular acid-catalytic cyclohexanol dehydration and formed cyclohexene alkoxy carbonylation catalyzed by the  $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2\text{-PPh}_3\text{-}p\text{-toluenesulfonic acid}$  system can be combined in a single reactor.  $p\text{-Toluenesulfonic acid}$  can simultaneously act as a catalyst for the cyclohexanol dehydration and a co-catalyst of the palladium–phosphine system of cyclohexene alkoxy carbonylation. The involvement of cyclohexene, representing a product of reversible cyclohexanol dehydration, in the alkoxy carbonylation reaction is a factor in shifting the dehydration reaction equilibrium towards the formation of cyclohexene. Cyclohexanecarboxylic acid is a by-product of the proposed combined process. A factor in the reduction of target product yield is water formed as a result of cyclohexanol dehydration due to the involvement of the latter in the hydrolysis reaction and the course of the cyclohexene hydroxycarbonylation.

**Keywords:** combined process, alcohol dehydration, alkene alkoxy carbonylation, palladium–phosphine system, strong protonic acid

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## НАУЧНАЯ СТАТЬЯ

# Совмещенный процесс синтеза циклогексилциклогексанкарбоксилата из циклогексанола и CO, катализируемый системой $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2\text{-PPh}_3\text{-}n\text{-толуолсульфокислота}$

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## Аннотация

**Цели.** Изучение возможности совмещения в одном реакторе реакций кислотнокаталитической дегидратации циклогексанола и алкоксикарбонилирования образующегося циклогексена циклогексанолам и оксидом углерода (II). Установление возможности достижения высоких выходов целевого продукта – циклогексилциклогексанкарбоксилата – в мягких условиях при катализе системой  $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2\text{-PPh}_3\text{-}n\text{-толуолсульфокислота}$ .

**Методы.** Совмещенный процесс изучался в среде толуола в периодическом стальном реакторе, рассчитанном на работу при повышенном давлении, снабженном стеклянной вставкой, магнитной мешалкой, пробоотборником, устройствами ввода и сброса газов. Реакционная масса с компонентами каталитической системы помещалась в стеклянный реактор внутри стального автоклава. Отбираемые в ходе совмещенного процесса пробы реакционной массы анализировали методом газо-жидкостной хроматографии с пламенно-ионизационным детектором.

**Результаты.** Показана возможность совмещения в одном реакторе дегидратации циклогексанола, катализируемой моногидратом  $n\text{-толуолсульфокислоты}$ , и алкоксикарбонилирования образующегося циклогексена циклогексанолам и CO при катализе системой  $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2\text{-PPh}_3\text{-}n\text{-толуолсульфокислота}$ . В мягких условиях (температура 110 °C,

давление CO 2.1 МПа) выход целевого продукта достигал 64.8% за 5 ч. Установлено, что совмещенный процесс осложняется образованием побочного продукта – циклогексанкарбоновой кислоты – в результате гидролиза циклогексильного эфира циклогексанкарбоновой кислоты и гидроксикарбонилирования циклогексена.

**Выводы.** Реакции внутримолекулярной кислотнокаталитической дегидратации циклогексанола и алкоксикарбонилирования образующегося циклогексена, катализируемого системой  $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2\text{-PPh}_3\text{-}n\text{-толуолсульфокислота}$ , могут быть совмещены в одном реакторе.  $n\text{-Толуолсульфокислота}$  может одновременно выполнять функции катализатора дегидратации циклогексанола и сокатализатора палладий-фосфиновой системы алкоксикарбонилирования циклогексена. Вовлечение циклогексена – продукта обратимой реакции дегидратации циклогексанола – в реакцию алкоксикарбонилирования является фактором смещения равновесия реакции дегидратации в сторону образования циклогексена. Побочным продуктом предлагаемого совмещенного процесса является циклогексанкарбоновая кислота. Вода, образующаяся в результате дегидратации циклогексанола, является фактором снижения выхода целевого продукта, что обусловлено вовлечением последнего в реакцию гидролиза и протеканием реакции гидроксикарбонилирования циклогексена.

**Ключевые слова:** совмещенный процесс, дегидратация спирта, алкоксикарбонилирование алкена, палладий-фосфиновая система, сильная протонная кислота

**Для цитирования:** Севостьянова Н.Т., Баташев С.А., Родионова А.С. Совмещенный процесс синтеза циклогексилциклогексанкарбоксилата из циклогексанола и CO, катализируемый системой  $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2\text{-PPh}_3\text{-}n\text{-толуолсульфокислота}$ . *Тонкие химические технологии*. 2023;18(1):29–37. <https://doi.org/10.32362/2410-6593-2023-18-1-29-37>

## INTRODUCTION

The alkoxy carbonylation of alkenes with alcohols and CO represents an alternative one-step method for obtaining esters from available raw materials, as opposed to the traditionally implemented esterification of carboxylic acids with alcohols. CO is isolated from synthesis gas, which can be obtained not only from oil and natural gas, but also from coal, as well as biomass waste, thus potentially comprising a renewable raw material source. In the alkoxy carbonylation of alkenes, homogeneous palladium–phosphine catalytic systems are considered the most active and selective, since they make it possible to obtain target products, esters, under mild conditions in high yields [1–9]. As a rule, the only by-products produced in these reactions are isomeric esters. Thus, in the alkoxy carbonylation of alkenes catalyzed by palladium compounds, the principle of atom conservation is observed, which underlies the development of resource-saving, low-waste chemical technologies offering a high level of environmental safety.

However, in some cases, alkenes are less accessible reagents than the corresponding alcohols. Although alcohols can be used as carbonylation substrates to obtain carboxylic acids and esters, these reactions

take place under more severe conditions than the alkoxy carbonylation of alkenes. Thus, in industry, ethylene methoxy carbonylation is the first stage in the synthesis of methyl methacrylate according to *Lucite's* Alpha technology, catalyzed by a palladium–phosphine system using a mixture of CO and ethylene with a total pressure of 1.0 MPa at a temperature of 80°C [2, 3]. At the same time, the carbonylation of methanol in the industrial processes of Monsanto and Cativa, carried out with catalysis by rhodium and iridium catalysts, respectively, requires maintaining a temperature of 150–200°C and a CO pressure of 3–6 MPa [10].

The objectives of this work were:

1) to study the possibility of combining in a single reactor (Fig. 1) acid catalytic dehydration of cyclohexanol (compound **1**, reaction (1)) and alkoxy carbonylation of the formed cyclohexene (compound **2**) with cyclohexanol and CO (reaction (2)) catalyzed by the  $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2\text{-PPh}_3\text{-}p\text{-толуолсульфонная кислота}$  (TsOH) system;

2) to establish the possibility of achieving high yields of the target product—cyclohexyl cyclohexanecarboxylate (CHCHC, compound **3**)—under mild conditions (Fig. 1) during catalysis by the indicated catalytic system.

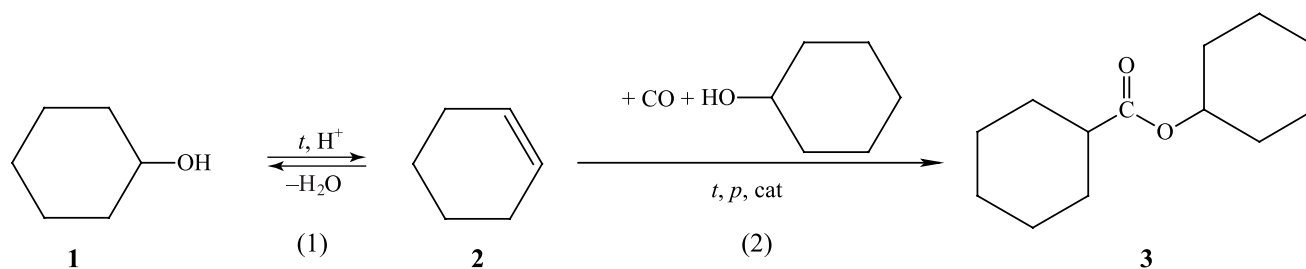


Fig. 1. Scheme for the synthesis of cyclohexyl cyclohexanecarboxylate.

The organization of processes based on the combination of two reactions in a single reactor is aimed at promoting the use of cheap and available raw materials, as well as avoiding the need to isolate and purify of the intermediate product, thus becoming a factor in reduced capital and energy costs during its subsequent implementation. As a result, the developed processes are characterized by increased efficiency, resource saving, and environmental safety.

The process under study (reactions (1), (2)) is a model one, since the alkoxy carbonylation of cyclohexene catalyzed by palladium–phosphine systems is not complicated by the formation of any by-products, including isomeric esters. The target product of this process, comprising CHCHC and other esters of cyclohexanecarboxylic acid, can be used as an additive to various types of fuels [11], an intermediate in the synthesis of medicinal substances [11, 12], plasticizers [13, 14], and components of cosmetics [15].

$\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2$  [4, 16],  $\text{PdCl}_2$  [6, 7], and  $\text{Pd}(\text{PPh}_3)_2\text{Cl}_2$  [17] are most often used as catalytic precursors in alkoxy carbonylation of alkenes. Previously, using  $\text{Pd}(\text{PPh}_3)_2\text{Cl}_2$  in combination with promoting additives  $\text{PPh}_3$  and  $\text{TsOH}$ , we obtained product **3** in the combined process under study with a yield of 86.8% in 320 min at a ratio of cyclohexanol and  $\text{TsOH}$  of 2.5 : 1.0 (mol). When this catalytic system was supplemented with the addition of sodium *p*-tosylate as a possible agent for binding water and generating in situ additional amounts of  $\text{TsOH}$ , the yield of the target product was more than 99% for the same time at a ratio of the amount of cyclohexanol and total amounts of  $\text{TsOH}$  and  $\text{TsONa}$  1.6 : 1.0 (mol) [18, 19]. However, for an industrially important process, it is desirable to achieve high yields of the target product in a shorter time with minimal use of various additives, as well as, if possible, without them. As shown earlier [17], the  $\text{Cl}^-$  anions of the catalytic precursor negatively affect the rate of alkoxy carbonylation. In this regard, at this stage

of the study of the possibility of implementing the combined process of dehydration and alkoxy carbonylation,  $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2$  was used in combination with the addition of promoters:  $\text{PPh}_3$ , one of the most active monophosphines, and  $\text{TsOH}$ , representing one of the strong organic acids previously used in the alkoxy carbonylation of cyclohexene [16–21].

## EXPERIMENTAL

The combined process was studied in a toluene medium in a periodic steel reactor designed to operate at elevated pressure, equipped with a magnetic stirrer, a sampler, and gas inlet and outlet devices. The reaction mass with the components of the catalytic system  $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2$ ,  $\text{PPh}_3$  and *p*-toluenesulfonic acid monohydrate  $\text{TsOH} \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$  was placed in a glass reactor inside a steel autoclave. During the experiments, the temperature was maintained at 110°C, the CO pressure was 2.1 MPa, and the initial concentrations of cyclohexanol and components of the catalytic system were:  $C_0(\text{C}_6\text{H}_{11}\text{OH}) = 0.50 \text{ M}$ ,  $C_0(\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2) = 2.0 \cdot 10^{-3} \text{ M}$ ,  $C_0(\text{PPh}_3) = 2.0 \cdot 10^{-2} \text{ M}$ ,  $C_0(\text{TsOH} \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}) = (0.14\text{--}0.28) \text{ M}$ . A detailed experimental technique is described in [16].

Samples of the reaction mass taken during the combined process were analyzed by gas–liquid chromatography on a Crystallux 4000M chromatograph (*SPF Metakhrom*, Russia) with a flame ionization detector and an argon carrier gas (carrier gas flow rate 1.0 mL/min; flow division 1 : 60). The evaporator and detector temperatures were 300°C and 320°C, respectively. Separation of the components of the reaction mixture was carried out in an Optima-5 capillary column (*Macherey-Nagel*, Germany) 30 m × 0.32 mm in size with a film thickness of 0.35 μm in the temperature programming mode: in the range of 120–220°C, the heating rate was 20 deg/min, in the range of 220–280°C, the heating rate is 8 deg/min, the isothermal regime is 280°C for 2.5 min. Peak areas were calculated

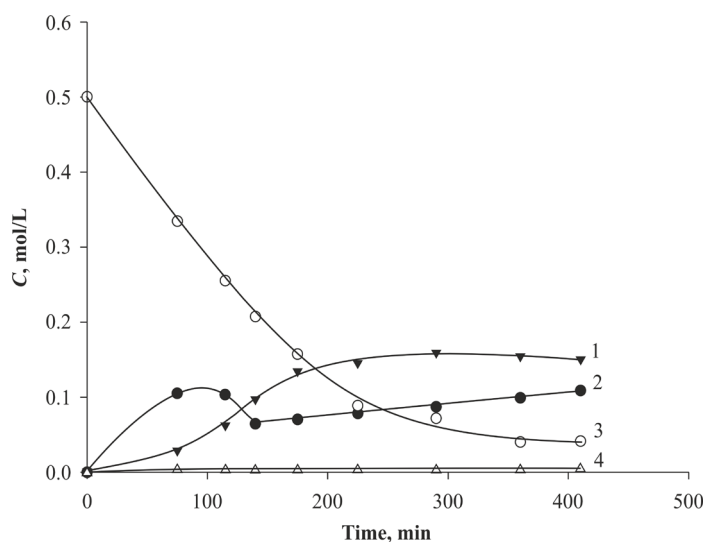
using the NetChrom V 2.1 program (*SPF Metachrom*, Russia). Peaks in chromatograms were identified by retention time by comparison with the retention times of standard samples of substances. The concentrations of substances **1–3** and cyclohexanecarboxylic acid (by-product **4**) were calculated by the internal standard method, which was *o*-xylene. The internal standard was introduced at a constant concentration into a solution of cyclohexanol in toluene before the start of the experiment.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the results of the analysis of samples of the reaction mass, it can be seen that cyclohexene is formed as an intermediate product of the studied combined process. Along with the main product, the formation of by-product **4** was recorded.

Typical curves for consumption of cyclohexanol (starting compound **1**) and accumulation of cyclohexene (intermediate product **2**), as well as cyclohexanecarboxylate (target product **3**) and cyclohexanecarboxylic acid (by-product **4**), are shown in Fig. 2.

Table below shows the results of the experiments performed with varying the concentration of TsOH and the constancy of the remaining parameters of the system. It can be seen that an increase in the TsOH concentration from 0.140 to 0.200 M was accompanied by an increase in the yield of target product **3** from 17.2% (0.043 M) to 64.0%



**Fig. 2.** Curves of reagent consumption and accumulation of intermediate, target and by-products in the combined model process at  $C(\text{TsOH}) = 0.280 \text{ M}$ : 1 – product **3** accumulation; 2 – intermediate product **2** accumulation; 3 – reagent **1** consumption; 4 – product **4** accumulation.

(0.160 M). An increase in the initial concentration of TsOH to 0.28 M led to a reduction in the time to reach the maximum yield of product **3** (64.8%) to 5 h. The total concentration of free cyclohexene and cyclohexene entered in carbonylation reaction with the formation of products **3** and **4** increased with an increase in the concentration of TsOH.

**Table.** Results of experiments on varying the concentration of TsOH as a component of the  $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2\text{-PPh}_3\text{-TsOH}$  catalytic system of the combined model process of the cyclohexanol dehydration and the resulting cyclohexene alkoxy carbonylation

| Experiment number | $C(\text{TsOH}), \text{M}$ | Time*, min | $C(1), \text{M}$ | $C(2)**, \text{M}$ | $C(3), \text{M}$ | $C(4), \text{M}$ | $C(2)***, \text{M}$ |
|-------------------|----------------------------|------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1                 | 0.140                      | 450        | 0.355            | 0.045              | 0.043            | 0.004            | 0.092               |
| 2                 | 0.200                      | 450        | 0.143            | 0.034              | 0.160            | 0.003            | 0.197               |
| 3                 | 0.250                      | 420        | 0.112            | 0.058              | 0.160            | 0.004            | 0.222               |
| 4                 | 0.280                      | 290        | 0.073            | 0.091              | 0.162            | 0.004            | 0.257               |

\*Time to reach the highest concentration of the product **3**.

\*\*Concentration of free cyclohexene.

\*\*\*Total concentrations of free cyclohexene and cyclohexene entered in carbonylation reactions with the formation of products **3** and **4**.



The formation of cyclohexanecarboxylic acid is apparently due to the presence of water in the reaction mass, which is released in reaction (1) and enters into the reactions of hydroxycarbonylation of cyclohexene (Fig. 3, reaction (3)) and hydrolysis of CHCHC (Fig. 4, reaction (4)).

Reaction (4) can be catalyzed by the strong protic acid TsOH. Hydroxy- and alkoxy-carbonylation reactions can be catalyzed by the same systems, including a palladium precursor, an organophosphine, and a strong protic acid [23, 24]. At the same time, most researchers rely on the hydride mechanism for both reactions [4–9, 16, 17, 20–24].

Based on current understandings of the acid catalysis of alcohol dehydration and the hydride mechanism of alkoxy-carbonylation, a further increase in  $C_0(\text{TsOH} \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O})$  can be expected to lead to an increase in the combined CHCHC synthesis rate [16]. However, from the point of view of the industrial implementation of the process, a further increase in the concentration of  $\text{TsOH} \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$  seems unlikely due to high concentrations of strong protic acids in the reaction mass being undesirable due to corrosion of steel equipment. Therefore, research should be continued in the direction of determining the optimal conditions for the combined process to ensure the achievement of high yields of CHCHC without increasing the concentration of a strong protic acid. One of these approaches involves the use of organodiphosphines, which are more active promoters than monophosphines for palladium catalysts of alkoxy-carbonylation [1, 16].

## CONCLUSIONS

The possibility of combining intramolecular acid catalytic dehydration of cyclohexanol and alkoxy-carbonylation of the resulting cyclohexene during catalysis by the  $\text{Pd}(\text{OAc})_2\text{-PPh}_3\text{-}p\text{-toluenesulfonic acid}$  system has been established. In the combined process carried out,  $p\text{-toluenesulfonic acid}$  simultaneously served as a catalyst for the dehydration of cyclohexanol and as a cocatalyst for the palladium–phosphine system of cyclohexene alkoxy-carbonylation. Due to the involvement of cyclohexene—a product of the reversible cyclohexanol dehydration reaction—in the alkoxy-carbonylation reaction, the equilibrium of the dehydration reaction was shifted towards the formation of cyclohexene; as a result, the total conversion of cyclohexanol reaching 85%. Further studies of the combined process should be carried out in the direction of finding optimal conditions that ensure the achievement of high yields of CHCHC without increasing the concentration of strong protic acid.

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## Authors' contributions

**N.T. Sevostyanova** – concept of the study, the idea of organizing the combined process, the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained, and writing of the text of the article.

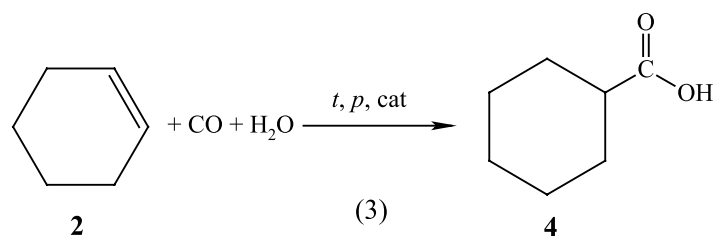


Fig. 3. Scheme for hydroxycarbonylation of cyclohexene.

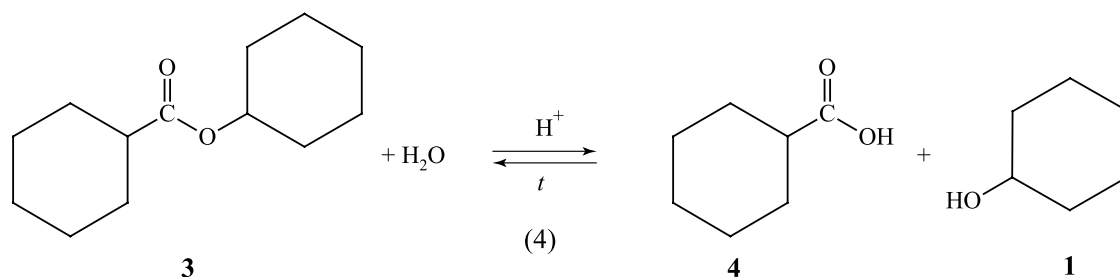


Fig. 4. Scheme for the hydrolysis of cyclohexyl cyclohexanecarboxylate.

**S.A. Batashev** – chromatographic analysis of the reaction mass, analysis and interpretation of the data obtained, and participation in writing the text of the article.

**A.S. Rodionova** – experimental studies of the combined process with sampling the reaction mass, calculation

on the results of experiments, and participation in writing the text of the article.

*The authors declare no conflicts of interest.*

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