

A Merger of Relay Catalysis with Dynamic Kinetic Resolution Enables Enantioselective β -C(sp3)–H Arylation of Alcohols

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Bruno Lainer, Shuailong Li, Flora Mammadova, Pawel Dydio. A Merger of Relay Catalysis with Dynamic Kinetic Resolution Enables Enantioselective β -C(sp3)–H Arylation of Alcohols. Angewandte Chemie International Edition, 2024, 63 (35), pp.e202408418. 10.1002/anie.202408418. hal-04897921

HAL Id: hal-04897921 https://hal.science/hal-04897921v1

Submitted on 20 Jan 2025 $\,$

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Dual Catalysis Hot Paper

Angewandte

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How to cite: Angew. Chem. Int. Ed. 2024, 63, e202408418 doi.org/10.1002/anie.202408418

enantioenriched product

+ β -stereogenic centre formed

+ enantioenriched product

A Merger of Relay Catalysis with Dynamic Kinetic Resolution Enables Enantioselective β-C(sp³)–H Arylation of Alcohols

Bruno Lainer⁺, Shuailong Li⁺, Flora Mammadova⁺, and Paweł Dydio^{*}

Abstract: The conceptual merger of relay catalysis with dynamic kinetic resolution strategy is reported to enable regio- and enantioselective C(sp³)-H bond arylation of aliphatic alcohols, forming enantioenriched β -aryl alcohols typically with >90:10 enantiomeric ratios (up to 98:2 er) and 36-74% yields. The starting materials bearing neighbouring stereogenic centres can be converted to either diastereomer of the β -aryl alcohol products, with >85:15 diastereomeric ratios determined by the catalysts. The reactions occur under mild conditions, ensuring broad compatibility, and involve readily available aryl bromides, an inorganic base, and commercial Ru- and Pd-complexes. Mechanistic experiments support the envisioned mechanism of the transformation occurring through a network of regio- and stereoselective processes operated by a coherent Ru/Pddual catalytic system.

Relay catalysis can unlock otherwise challenging transformations,^[1] including formal $C(sp^3)-C(sp^3)$ bond metathesis,^[2] depolymerisation of polyethylene,^[3] or difficult cross-coupling and functionalisation reactions.^[4] In that context, we have developed a Ru-/Pd-dual relay for challenging regioselective arylation of primary aliphatic alcohols at unactivated β -C(sp³)–H bonds, occurring through transient more reactive aldehyde intermediates and forming β -aryl alcohol products as racemic mixtures (Figure 1a, top).^[5] In turn, Wang and co-workers have recently reported a Ru-/Pd-dual relay for enantioconvergent β -arylation of racemic α -aryl-ethanols, occurring through transient aryl methyl ketones and forming enantioenriched α , β -bisaryl-ethanol products without a stereogenic centre at the β -position (Figure 1a, bottom).^[6] However, enantioselective β -

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R

Can relay catalysis be integrated with dynamic kinetic resolution for transient aldehyde intermediates to enable

direct enantioselective β -arylation of alcohols?

facile racemisation

?

ArBr. base

(c) This work: Enantioselective β-arylation of alcohols

Figure 1. Context & the current work.

OH

arylation of alcohols remains unprecedented. In that case, the new stereogenic centre of the aldehyde (or ketone) intermediate, even if installed enatioselectively by a chiral Pd catalyst, undergoes facile racemisation under the reaction conditions^[7] resulting in the racemic product formation, thereby calling for a new strategy.

Dynamic kinetic resolution (DKR),^[8] which capitalises on the fast racemisation of starting materials, is a strategy that enables to convert racemic starting materials into enatioenriched products. In that context, Zhou^[9] and List^[10] reported hydrogenation of racemic α -aryl aldehydes with H₂ as a reducing reagent to form enantioenriched β -aryl

Angew. Chem. Int. Ed. 2024, 63, e202408418 (1 of 6)

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alcohols in the presence of chiral Ru complexes and a strong base (Figure 1b). In turn, Berkowitz reported a biocatalytic protocol for the same transformation using alcohol dehydrogenase isozyme 10 from *Sulfolobus solfataricus* (Figure 1b).^[11]

We hypothesised that a conceptual merger of relay catalysis with dynamic kinetic resolution of racemic transient aldehyde intermediates could enable direct enantioselective β -arylation of aliphatic alcohols (Figure 1c). The reaction design separates the formation of the new stereogenic centre by the Pd-catalyst from the control of its stereochemistry imposed by the Ru-catalyst. In essence, the latter can differentiate between two transient interconverting enantiomeric aryl aldehyde intermediates and selectively reduce one of them to the target enantiomer of the product.

At the outset of these studies, we considered the critical kinetic conditions that must be met to favour the selective formation of enantiomer (R)-3 through the devised network of reactions starting from alcohol 1 and arvl bromide 2 (Scheme 1). First, alcohol 1 is reversibly oxidised to aldehyde ald-1 by a hydrogen-borrowing Ru complex.^[12] Then, ald-1 undergoes arylation with aryl bromide 2 by a Pd catalyst^[13] forming (R)-ald-3 and (S)-ald-3, which are in a dynamic equilibrium facilitated by a base.^[7] Last, (R)-ald-3 is selectively reduced to (R)-3 by the same Ru complex. To fulfil the envisioned scenario, the reduction of (R)-ald-3 must be significantly faster than that of (S)-ald-3 (condition 1), and racemisation of (S)-ald-3 must be faster than its reduction to alcohol (S)-3 (condition 2), satisfying the principles of DKR of racemic int-3.^[8] In addition, reversible oxidation of target (R)-3 must be slower than both oxidation of 1 (condition 3) and arylation of ald-1 (condition 4), thereby preventing the erosion of enantioenrichment of (R)-3.^[14] Importantly, the selection of the catalysts and the

envisioned productive network of reactions



Scheme 1. Reaction design merging relay catalysis with dynamic kinetic resolution of transient intermediates.

reaction conditions also needs to take into account plausible side processes (Figure S1). $^{\left[15\right] }$

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Initial exploration of the devised relay for the β -arylation of primary alcohols with aryl bromides using Ru catalysts developed by Zhou^[9] and List^[10] for enantioselective hydrogenation of racemic α -aryl aldehydes with H₂ and Pd catalysts for aldehyde arylation^[13c-e] resulted in the formation of β -aryl alcohols with low levels of enantioenrichment (up to ~70:30 enantiomeric ratio, er, see below). Control experiments indicated that, while these Ru catalysts are highly enantioselective for hydrogenation of racemic α -aryl aldehydes with H₂ as a reducing reagent, they are poorly selective for transfer hydrogenation of racemic α -aryl aldehydes with alcohols as reducing reagent,^[16] that is, the reactivity required for the devised relay shown in Scheme 1.

Upon evaluation of a range of different Ru and Pd complexes and conditions, we found that the model reaction of 1a (0.38 mmol) and 2a (0.25 mmol) formed preferentially aryl alcohol (R)-3aa in 93:7 enantiomeric ratio (er) and 59% NMR yield (51% isolated yield), in the presence of (S,S)-**Ru*-1** (5 mol %), Pd₂dba₃*CHCl₃/rac-btfm-garphos (L1; 1.25 mol%/ 5 mol%), and Cs₂CO₃ (1 mmol) in 1,4dioxane (2 mL) at 75°C for 16 h. Control experiments confirmed the importance of each element of the reaction conditions, as summarised in Figure 2. For instance, the replacement of Ru*-1 with Ru*-2, previously employed in enantioconvergent β -arylation of racemic α -aryl-ethanols,^[6] resulted in the formation of nearly racemic 3aa (48:52 er) in 68% yield (entry 3). In turn, the use of Ru*-3 or Ru*-4 reported by Zhou^[9] and List^[10] led to the formation of **3aa** in 51:49 to 71:29 er's and 15-89% yield (entries 4-5). Further, the use of Ru*-5, reported to be selective in many enantioselective hydrogen transfer reactions,[16] led to the formation of 3aa as a nearly racemic mixture, 45:55 er, in 78% yield (entry 6). In turn, when L1 was replaced with dppf (L2), rac-binap (L3), tBu₃P (L4), sphos (L5), or q-phos (L6), used previously in the arylation of $alcohols^{[5,6]}$ or aldehydes,^[13c-e] the reactions occurred in substantially diminished yields (entry 7-11). Lastly, a type of the Pd precursor, the base, solvent, and temperature proved also essential for the enantioselectivity and yield of the reaction (entries 12-16). Noteworthy, the use of Pd₂dba₃ in place of Pd₂dba₃-CHCl₃, irrespective of the supplier, led to diminished reproducibility of the reaction outcome.^[17]

With the optimised conditions for the model reaction, we next investigated the performance of this cooperative reaction network with starting materials of different structures and electronic properties (Figure 3). We found that a range of *para*- and *meta*-substituted aryl bromides **2b–2k** bearing varied electron-withdrawing and electron-donating functional groups reacted effectively with isoamyl alcohol **1a**, forming enantioenriched alcohols **3ab–3ak** (89:11 to 96:4 er's, 35–65% yields). However, the reactions with *ortho*-substituted aryl bromides, such as **2l–2m**, were unproductive, presumably due to the increased steric hindrance. In turn, polycyclic aryl bromides, such as biphenyl **2n** and naphthyl **2o**, proved competent substrates in these reactions, forming **3an–3ao** in 90:10–93:7 er's and 48–56% yields. Finally, the reactions of **1a** with heteroaryl



entry	variation	er (S/R) ^a	yield of 3aa / % ^a
1	none	93:7	59 (51)
2	2.5 mol% Ru*-2	93:7	44
3	Ru*-2 instead of Ru*-1	48:52	68
4	Ru*-3 instead of Ru*-1	71:29	15
5	Ru*-4 instead of Ru*-1	51:49	89
6	Ru*-5 instead of Ru*-1	45:55	78
7	L2 instead of L1	86:14	15
8	L3 instead of L1	92:8	7
9	L4 instead of L1	-	<5
10	L5 instead of L1	79:21	15
11	L6 instead of L1	-	<5
12	Pd(OAc) ₂ instead of Pd ₂ dba ₃ *CHCl ₃	92:8	21
13	toluene instead of 1,4-dioxane	73:27	24
14	K ₃ PO ₄ (or DIPEA) instead of Cs ₂ CO ₃	-	<5
15	70 $^{\rm o}$ C instead of 75 $^{\rm o}$ C	96:4	51
16	80 $^{\circ}$ C instead of 75 $^{\circ}$ C	88:12	64



Figure 2. Reaction development. ^a Enantiomeric ratios (er's) were determined by supercritical fluid chromatography (SFC) with chiral stationary phase; spectroscopic yields determined by the ¹H NMR analysis with an internal standard; yield of isolated material reported in parentheses; the absolute configuration assigned based on the optical rotation.^[9]

bromides, such as benzothiophene 2p and benzofuran 2q, produced target 3ap-3aq in 93:7-97:3 er's and 43-49% yields, while the reactions with indoles 2r-2s formed low amounts of the target products.

Angew. Chem. Int. Ed. 2024, 63, e202408418 (3 of 6)

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We also found that a range of structurally varied alcohols are effective substrates for the title reaction, with enantioenrichment of the product depending on the size of the γ -substituents of the starting material (Figure 3). Specifically, 1b-1f bearing cyclohexyl, tetrahydropyran, piperidine, or cyclopentyl rings next to the reacting β -C(sp³)–H bond reacted with 2a to form products 3ba-3fa with enantioselectivity and yields, similar to those for the model reaction for alcohol 1a bearing isopropyl group (84:16-95:5 er's and 54-70% yields vs. 93:7 er and 59% yield). In sharp contrast, the reaction for 1g bearing a cyclopropyl ring, which is less bulky than isopropyl or any other rings,^[18] produced 3ga with lower enantioselectivity (70:30 er, 60% yield), similar to that of the product formed in the reaction for least bulky linear alcohol 1h, forming 3ha with 75:25 er's and 72 % yield. In line with the influence of γ -branching on the enantiocontrol, the reaction of 1i containing large diphenylmethyl moiety with 2a led to 3ia with excellent enantioselectivity (98:2 er, 54 % yield), while the reaction of 1j containing smaller benzyl group produced 3ja with moderate selectivity (74:26 er, 71% yield). Lastly, 1k containing naphthyl ring and 11 with tert-butyl group proved challenging starting materials; the former reacted to form **3**ka bearing β , β -bisaryl alcohol with modest stereoselectivity (61:39 er, 55 % yield), presumably due to the difficulty in differentiating between naphthyl and phenyl groups, while the latter formed only traces of 3la (<5%), most likely due to too large steric hindrance imposed by thy bulky tert-butyl group.

Bolstered by these results, we studied the β -arylation of alcohols containing neighbouring stereogenic centres and their influence on the stereocontrol of the product (Figure 4). We found that in the case of β -citronellol 1m, a natural acyclic monoterpenoid bearing a stereogenic centre in γ -site, (S)-1m and (R)-1m can be selectively converted to any of four possible stereoisomers by selecting the starting material and a suitable enantiomer of Ru*-1 complex. Specifically, the reaction of (R)-1m and 2x formed either 3mx in 85:15 diastereomeric ratio (dr) and 74% yield with (R,R)-Ru*1 or 3mx' in 85:15 dr and 65% yield with (S,S)-Ru*1. In turn, (S)-1m reacted with 2x, forming either ent-**3mx** in 85:15 dr and 70 % yield with (*S*,*S*)-**Ru*****1** or ent-**3mx**' in 87:13 dr and 58% yield with (R,R)-Ru*1. Similarly, dihydronopol 1n, a bicyclic terpene derivative, reacted with 2e to form either 3ne or 3ne' as the major diastereomer, depending on the chirality of Ru*-1 (90:10 dr and 50% yield or 86:14 dr and 40% yield, using and (R,R)-Ru*-1 or (S,S)-Ru*-1, respectively). These examples showcase the ability of the method to construct chiral building blocks containing multiple stereogenic centres with precise stereocontrol over the new stereogenic centres by the catalysts used.

Finally, we performed a series of experiments in support of the envisioned mechanism of the transformation (Figure 5). Specifically, the model reaction of 1a and 2b in the presence of (S,S)-Ru*-1 and Pd complex with enantiomerically pure either (R)-L1 or (S)-L1 resulted in the formation of the same (R)-3aa as the major enantiomer with comparable er's, while the replacement of (S,S)-Ru*-1 with racemic



Communication





Figure 3. Scope of (hetero) aryl bromides and achiral alcohols. Enantiomeric ratios (er's) were determined by supercritical fluid chromatography (SFC) with chiral stationary phase; due to the volatility of some products, both spectroscopic and isolated yields (in parenthesis) are reported; the absolute configuration determined by x-ray crystallography, by comparison of the optical rotations with those reported in the literature,^[9,19] or assigned by analogy (see the SI). ^a The opposite enantiomer of the product formed preferentially by using (*R*,*R*)-**Ru***-1 instead of (*S*,*S*)-**Ru***-1.

Ru*-1 furnished nearly racemic products (Figure 5a). These data demonstrate that the chiral Ru complex primarily determines the stereochemistry of the product. In turn, the experiments with enantioenriched intermediate (R)-ald-3aa (83:17 er) added to the reaction of 1c and 2a under otherwise standard conditions resulted in the formation of either (R)-3aa or (S)-3aa, as the major enantiomer, depending on the presence of either (S,S)-Ru*-1 or (R,R)-Ru*-1 (Figure 5b). These results illustrate that the aryl aldehyde intermediates do readily racemise under reaction conditions, and one enantiomer is selectively reduced to the alcohol with stereochemistry determined by the chiral Ru complex. Moreover, the reaction of racemic ald-3aa and *n*-octanol (1h) as a hydrogen donor in the presence of (S,S)-Ru*-1 and a base furnished enantioenriched (R)-3aa in 93:7 er and

65% yield. The experiment illustrates that dynamic kinetic resolution by the Ru complex is independent of the Pdcatalyzed arylation (Figure 5c). Finally, when the model reaction was monitored over an extended period, we observed two distinct phases that can be attributed to the kinetic and thermodynamic regimes controlling the stereochemistry of the product (Figure 5d). In the productive phase, lasting ~24 h, we observed a steady formation of product **3aa** with a constant ~93:7 er (kinetic product). However, in the subsequent phase, starting >24 h, when the formation of **3aa** was essentially completed, the enantioenrichment began to deteriorate toward the racemic mixture (thermodynamic product), in accordance with the DKR mechanism and the reversibility of the hydrogen borrowing processes. Altogether, the results of these experiments are

Communication



Figure 4. Stereodivergent reactions for chiral alcohols. ^a Standard conditions are shown in Figure 3. Diastereomeric ratios (dr's) were determined by ¹H NMR analysis; due to the volatility of some products, both spectroscopic and isolated yields (in parenthesis) are reported.

in line with the envisioned relay catalysis incorporating dynamic kinetic resolution of transient aldehyde intermediates to control the regio- and enantioselectivity of the overall transformation.

Overall, the work presented here introduces a new multicatalytic strategy for challenging regio- and stereoselective functionalisation of molecules at their otherwise unreactive positions. The method rests on the merger of hydrogen borrowing catalysis - temporarily activating starting materials, with C-H functionalisation catalysis - modifying activated intermediates, and dynamic kinetic resolution catalysis - controlling the stereochemistry of the products formed. The study illustrates the capacity of orchestrating the reactivities of multiple catalysts that mediate multiple parallel processes occurring under the same conditions. In a broader sense, the study reveals the potential of relay catalysis that seamlessly merges multiple catalytic processes connected through common intermediates into productive coherent systems.



Stereochemistry of Pd/L1 complex has nearly no infuence on the enantioselectivity of the reaction.

Angewandte

3aa

94:6 er, 47%

91:9 er. 38%

~50:50 er, 55%

~50:50 er. 48%

Chemie

b. Reduction of enantioenriched aldehyde interm. under the reaction conditions

a. Influence of stereochemistry of Ru*-1 and Pd/L1 on the reaction

OН

1a

standard

conditions^a

catalysts:

(S,S)-Ru*-1, Pd/(S)-L1

(S,S)-Ru*-1, Pd/(R)-L1

rac-Ru*-1, Pd/(S)-L1

rac-Ru*-1, Pd/(R)-L1





Kinetic and thermodynamic regimes: - Productive phase (~24 h): a steady formation of 3aa with a constant ~93:7 er (kinetic product)

- Unproductive phase (>24 h): no formation of 3aa with enantioenrichment deteriorating toward the racemic mixture (thermodynamic product)

Figure 5. Mechanistic experiments. ^a Standard conditions are shown in Figure 3, racemic L1 used, unless noted otherwise.



Acknowledgements

We acknowledge funding from the European Research Council (ERC-StG-804106), the Fondation Jean-Marie Lehn, the French National Research Agency (ANR LabEx "Chemistry of Complex Systems" ANR-10-IDEX-0002, and a PhD fellowship for B.L. under contract ANR-17-EURE-0016), and the Morrell Fund, Yusuf Hamied Department of Chemistry. We thank D. Lichosyt (University of Strasbourg) for preliminary studies of Ru-/Pd- dual relay using rac-btfmgarphos, and A. Bond (University of Cambridge) for X-ray crystallography.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available in the supplementary material of this article.

Keywords: C–H bond functionalisation · relay catalysis · dynamic kinetic resolution · enantioselective reactions · transition metal catalysis

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Manuscript received: May 3, 2024

Accepted manuscript online: May 27, 2024

Version of record online: July 10, 2024