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Enantioselective Construction of Spirooxindole-Fused Cyclopenta[c]chromen-4-ones Bearing Five Contiguous Stereocenters via a Stepwise (3+2) Cycloaddition

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Abstract. The bifunctional quinine-catalyzed stepwise (3+2) cycloaddition for the enantioselective construction of cyclopenta[c]chromen-4-ones spirooxindole-fused is developed. The reactions of 3-homoacylcoumarins and alkylidene oxindole electrophiles generate aforementioned spirooxindole-chromenone adducts bearing five contiguous stereocenters, of which one is the spiro all-carbon quaternary stereocenter in high yields (up to 99%) with excellent stereoselectivities (up to >20:1 dr and 99% ee). This methodology was investigated for three different alkylidene oxindole electrophiles and could also be practically demonstrated on a gram scale. Mechanistic investigations revealed that the (3+2) cycloaddition for the enantioselective synthesis of spirooxindole-fused cyclopenta[c]chromen-4-ones is proceeding via a stepwise reaction pathway.

Keywords: spiro compounds; cyclopenta[*c*]chromen-4ones; stepwise (3+2) cycloaddition; organic catalysis; 3homoacylcoumarins

The spirooxindole skeleton has immense importance in modern organic chemistry because of its prevalence in both natural products and biologically molecules.^[1] Consequently, active intensive investigation regarding their synthesis has been going on recently.^[2] Although various elegant methods have been documented for the synthesis of these privileged motifs,^[3] contrastingly, the methods to access spirooxindole scaffolds bearing an all-carbon quaternary spiro-stereocenter on the cyclopentane ring are underdeveloped.^[4] The key challenge en route to chiral spirooxindole is formation of multiple stereocenters with a quaternary spiro-stereocenter in highly enantioselective manner. More importantly, enantioselective methods for the generation of spirocyclopentane oxindoles which forms the core of many potent drugs are very scarce.^[5] On the other

hand, coumarin derivatives such as cyclopentanefused coumarins are considered as important motifs in medicinal chemistry and feature in many alkaloids and sesquiterpenes.^[6] The fusion of spirooxindole and coumarin would give rise to new templates which may hold potential for drug discovery based on the individual medicinal strength of spirooxindole- and coumarin-based drugs.

Our group has long been working toward the development of novel organocatalytic reactions in generating complex molecular architectures.^[7] In 2018, we reported a quinine-derived bifunctional thiourea-catalyzed concerted (3+2) cycloaddition reaction for the highly stereoselective synthesis of five membered coumarin/indanedione-fused spirocyclopentanes bearing four contiguous stereocenters.^[8] Inspired from our previous work, we were keen on developing a (3+2) cycloaddition reaction for spirooxindole scaffolds, utilizing 3homoacylcoumarin and alkylidene oxindole electrophiles. The supposed cycloaddition reaction would lead to less explored hybrid scaffolds that comprise both the privileged moieties and also bear five contiguous stereocenters, including a quaternary spiro-stereocenter. In this context, we report a bifunctional quinine derivative-catalyzed, highly enantioselective (3+2) cycloaddition reaction for the generation of complex spirooxindole-fused cyclopenta[c]chromen-4-ones in high yields and excellent enantioselectivities.



Figure 1. Chiral Catalysts Screened for the Reaction.

Table 1. Optimization of Reaction Conditions.^[a]

EtO_2C $Cat. (20 mol%)$ $HHOPh$ $HHOPh$ $HHOPh$						
1a 2a				3aa (>20:1 dr)		
entry	catalyst	solvent	<i>t</i> (h) ^[b]	3aa (%) ^[c]	ee (%) ^[d]	
1	DABCO	CH_2Cl_2	12	99	rac	
2	Ι	CH_2Cl_2	12	59	20	
3	II	CH_2Cl_2	2	89	73 ^[e]	
4	III	CH_2Cl_2	2	86	96	
5	IV	CH_2Cl_2	2	93	98	
6	V	CH_2Cl_2	2	87	94	
7	VI	CH_2Cl_2	2	83	95 ^[e]	
8	VII	CH_2Cl_2	2	78	91 ^[e]	
9	IV	CHCl ₃	2	92	97	
10	IV	CH ₃ CN	2	73	95	
11	IV	THF	3	92	97	
12	IV	EtOAc	2	93	97	
13	IV	EtOH	5	67	82	
$14^{[f]}$	IV	CH_2Cl_2	6	93	98	
15 ^[g]	IV	CH_2Cl_2	12	93	98	

^[a] Unless otherwise specified, all the reactions were carried out using **1a** (0.1 mmol), **2a** (1.1 equiv) and catalyst (20 mol%) in the given solvent (0.5 mL) at 30 °C. ^[b] The

Table 2. Substrate Scope of (3+2) Cycloaddition Reaction.

indicated time after which no considerable improvement in the yield of **3aa** was observed. ^[c] Yield of the **3aa** was determined by ¹H NMR analysis of the crude reaction mixture using 1,3-dinitrobenzene as an internal standard. ^[d] Enantiomeric excess was determined by HPLC analysis on a chiral stationary phase. ^[e] Enantiomer of **3aa** was obtained. ^[f] Catalyst **IV** (10 mol%) was used. ^[g] Catalyst **IV** (5 mol%) was used.

Initially, the (3+2) cycloaddition reaction between 3-homoacylcoumarin (1a) and N-Boc protected methyleneindolinone (2a) was carried out with 20 mol% of 1,4-diazabicyclo[2.2.2]octane (DABCO) in CH₂Cl₂ at 30 °C. We were pleased to notice the formation of spiroxindole 3aa in 99% yield after 12 h (entry 1, Table 1). Encouraged by this result, we next examined a series of bifunctional hydrogen-bonding catalysts (entries 2-5). Among them (Figure 1), catalyst IV was found to be better interms of both yield and enantioselectivity (93% yield and 98% ee, entry 5). To test the influence of hydrogen-bonding activation, several other squaramide derivatives (entries 6-8) were screened (see Supporting Information for detailed optimization). Although all of them are found to effectively catalyze the (3+2)cycloaddition reaction, catalyst IV was still found to be superior. Interestingly, the pseudo enantiomeric catalyst VI also showed very good catalytic activity to afford the enantiomer of the product 3aa in good yield and high enantioselectivity (83% yield and 95% ee, entry 7). Having found the choice of catalyst, solvent screening was carried out (entries 9-13). While the solvents such as CHCl₃, CH₃CN, THF and EtOAc, provided comparable results, EtOH as solvent, afforded the product in relatively poor yield and ee, presumably due to the disruption of hydrogen-bonding between the catalyst and the substrates by the solvent. It is worthy to note that in all cases, the diastereoselectivity was found to be excellent (>20:1). Decreasing the catalyst loading also resulted in similiar yields and ee values, albeit after longer reaction times (entries 14 and 15). Thus, the optimal conditions for **3aa** were established with 5 mol% of catalyst IV and CH₂Cl₂ as the solvent at 30 °C (entry 15).



^[a] Unless otherwise specified, all the reactions were carried out using **1** (0.3 mmol), **2** (1.1 equiv) and catalyst **IV** (5 mol%) in CH₂Cl₂ (1.5 mL) at 30 °C. ^[b] Isolated yield. ^[c] Enantiomeric excess was determined by HPLC analysis on a chiral stationary phase. ^[d] Reaction was performed on a gram scale of **1a** (4 mmol, 1.05 g). ^[e] Catalyst **IV** (30 mol%) was used. ^[f] Diastereomeric ratio was 6:1. ^[g] Diastereomeric ratio was 10:1.

Having the optimized conditions in hand, we set out to investigate the substrate scope of the (3+2)cycloaddition reaction with respect to both the substrates (Table 2). Initially, the scope of 3homoacylcoumarin 1 bearing various R^1 and R^2 groups were tested. In general, all the tested substrates 1 reacted smoothly with 2a to give the products 3aa-3ha in high yields and excellent enantioselectivites, regardless of their electronic nature. Notably, the substrate **1d** bearing a $R^1 = Me$ substitution, afforded 3da in relatively lower yield, although excellent enantioselectivity was maintained. Additionally, the substrate **1h** with $R^2 = 5$ -OH substitution on the coumarin ring required higher loading of the catalyst (30 mol%) to result corresponding product **3ha**. This further demonstrates that the hydrogen-bonding between the substrate and the catalyst has great influence on the reaction. Next, various alkylidene oxindole esters 2 bearing different \mathbf{R}^3 and \mathbf{R}^4 groups were tested for the reaction with **1a**. Substrates bearing Me and *t*-Bu esters, such as **2b** and 2c, also afforded corresponding products 3ab and 3ac with excellent enantioselectivities. Furthermore, the effect of various R⁴ substituents on the aromatic ring of oxindole esters was also investigated. It was delightful to observe the formation of corresponding products 3ad-3ag in excellent yields and enantioselectivities, regardless of the nature and position of the substitution. The substrate with a strong electron-withdrawing group, such as **2h** (\mathbb{R}^4 = 5-NO₂), also furnished the desired product 3ah in 75% yield and 94% ee, albeit with moderate diastereomeric ratio (6:1). Finally, for the generality of the reaction, substrates with other *N*-protecting groups, such as methyl, benzyl and acetyl groups were also investigated. All the substrates were tolerated well in the reaction to afford the corresponding products **3ai-3ak**, albeit requiring much longer reaction times. These substrates were furnished with lower yields and diastereoselectivities when compared to those of the substrates bearing a *N*-Boc substitution. It is worth noting that the reaction for **3aa** could be performed on a gram scale with similar efficiency.

After successful application of alkylidene oxindole esters 2 in (3+2) cycloaddition reaction, we wish to explore the utility of alkylidene oxindoles bearing a ketone group. Accordingly, the substrate 4a was examined with 1a under the optimized conditions (see Supporting Information for detailed optimization). Although the same catalytic system (catalyst IV) was effective in delivering 5aa bearing five contiguous stereocenters, the catalyst loading had to be doubled in CH₂Cl₂ (0.1 M) to obtain the optima.



Scheme 1. Optimal Conditions for 5aa.

Examination of the substrate scope with respect to both the substrates 1 and 4 revealed slightly lower yields for most of the products 5, when compared to the adducts 3 formed from 1 and 2, albeit with excellent ee values (Table 3). Again, the substrate 1d showed less reactivity towards 4a to afford adduct 5da in poor yield, along with formation of a diastereomer **5da'** in 2:1 ratio. It is worth noting that ee was still excellent and the diastereomer 5da' was easily separated by using flash chromatography and subsequently confirmed by X-ray analysis.^[9] The less reactive substrate **1h** bearing a $R^2 = 5$ -OH group was found to be unreactive after 48 h, even usage of higher loading of the catalyst (30 mol%). The low reactivity of the alkylidene oxindole ketone 4a compared to the alkylidene oxindole ester 2a could be the reason. Furthermore, substrates bearing different R⁵ and R⁶ groups on 4 also afforded the desired products 5ab-5af in good yields and excellent enantioselectivities under the optimized conditions. The alkylidene oxindole substrate bearing а heteroaryl substitution such as 4e (2-furyl) also afforded the corresponding product 5ae in good yield and excellent stereoselectivities (80% yield, >20:1 dr and 98% ee). In addition, the preparative utility of cycloaddition reaction, was this (3+2)also demonstrated by performing a gram scale reaction for **5aa** under the same conditions.

Table 3. Substrate Scope of **5**.



^[a] Unless otherwise specified, all the reactions were carried out using **1** (0.2 mmol), **4** (1.1 equiv) and catalyst **IV** (10 mol%) in CH₂Cl₂ (2 mL) at 30 °C. ^[b] Isolated yield. ^[c] Enantiomeric excess was determined by HPLC analysis on a chiral stationary phase. ^[d] Reaction was performed on a gram scale of **1a** (3.8 mmol, 1.0 g). ^[e] Reaction was performed on 0.4 mmol scale. ^[f] Diastereomeric ratio of **5da** and **5da'** was 2:1. ^[g] Catalyst **IV** (30 mol%) was used. n.r. = No reaction with the recovery of **1h** and **4a**.

Next, several control experiments have been performed to investigate the mechanism. The reaction of the alkylidene oxindole ester 2a and the catalyst IV has been examined in CH₂Cl₂ at 30 °C for 12 h. E/Z-isomerization was observed by the analysis of ¹H NMR spectrum, and the ratio of E/Z-isomers of alkylidene oxindole ester 2a was 90:10. Furthermore, subsequent addition of 3-homoacylcoumarin (1a) to the reaction mixture furnished the desired product **3aa** in 90% yield and lower enantioselectivity (85%) ee) after 15 h. Interestingly, the reaction of the alkylidene oxindole ketone 4a with the catalyst IV shows no E/Z-isomerization in CH₂Cl₂ after 12 h, and further treatment with 3-homoacylcoumarin 1a afforded the desired product 5aa in 75% yield and 97% ee which is almost similar ee as standard condition (Scheme 2). It could be understood that the reaction of *E*-isomer of **2a/4a** with **1a** provides the desired products 3aa and 5aa with high ee values, but the enantioselectivity of the product 3aa has been diminished by the formation of Z-isomer of 2a.



Scheme 2. Isomerization of 2a/4a with Catalyst IV.

Generally, the (3+2) cycloaddition could proceed either via a concerted pathway or a stepwise double Michael cascade pathway. Based on the absolute configurations of products 3aa/5aa, we have constructed possible reaction models in the concerted reaction pathway for formation of 3aa/5aa from Eisomer of 2a/4a and 1a in presence of the catalyst. But we could not find the exact configurations of 3aa/5aa from that of the possible proposed concerted product. Instead, the epimer of the desired product (epi-3aa/5aa) should observed in the concerted pathway (Scheme 3). Notably, even the exact configuration of proposed concerted product provided from the Z-isomer of 2a/4a with 1a is contradictory to the results in control experiments (Scheme 2). Therefore, one of the possibilities of formation of the aforementioned products from *E*-isomer in (3+2)cycloaddition via a concerted pathway is ruled out. Next, we have considered (3+2) cycloaddition reaction through a stepwise double Michael cascade reaction pathway to lead the desired products from the *E*-isomer of **2a/4a** and **1a**.

Based on all these results and the absolute configurations of products, a plausible reaction mechanism is presented in Scheme 3. Initially, chiral catalyst **IV** activates the 3-homoacylcoumarin **1a** by deprotonation to provide a conjugate acid-base pair with H-bonding interactions. The first Michael addition from the Re face attack of **1a** to the Re face of the alkylidene oxindole ester **2a** or ketone **4a** provides the Michael adduct **A**. The squramide NH group of **IV** forms the hydrogen bonding with the carbonyl group of Michael adduct **A**. The H-bonding interactions along with the steric hindrance would lead to the favorable confirmer of the Michael adduct A to provide 3aa/5aa with observed configurations. Subsequently, second Michael addition of oxindole with its *Re* face to the *Si* face of coumarin to afford 3aa/5aa in good yields with high enantioselectivities.



Scheme 3. Plausible Mechanism for 3aa and 5aa.



Scheme 4. Optimal Conditions for 7aa.

Having successfully extended the scope of alkylidene oxindole electrophiles, we further tested the applicability of benzylidene oxindoles in the (3+2) cycloaddition reaction. Accordingly, *E*-benzylidene oxindole **6a** was tested for the reaction with **1a**. However, our previous choice of the catalyst **IV** was not efficient. Therefore, further detailed optimization studies had to be carried out (see Supporting Information). Subsequently, the optimal yield of the adduct **7aa** (99% yield, >20:1 dr, 90% ee) was obtained when **1a** and **6a** (1.2 equiv) were reacted in the presence of the catalyst **VIII** (20

mol%) in CH₃CN (0.2 M) as solvent at 30 °C in 9 h (Scheme 4).

Again, substrates 1 and 6 possessing different substitutions were examined for their applicability. In general, all reactions resulted in good to excellent yields and good enantioselctivites irrespective of nature of the substrates and position of the substitution (Table 4). Substrates bearing different R^1 and R^2 groups on 1 reacted well with **6a** to provide the corresponding products 7aa-7ka in 63-99% yields and 73-90% ee values. The substrate **1h** ($R^2 = 5$ -OH) well tolerated with **6a** to furnish also the corresponding product 7ha in 63% yield and 90% ee. Notably, the benzylidene oxindole 6f bearing an ortho-OH substituent was found to be unreactive. Delightfully, the substrate bearing the naphthyl (6g) group also furnished the corresponding product 7ag in good yield and selectivity, albeit requiring longer reaction time. In addition, the substrate **6h** bearing a furyl group was tolerated to afford the desired product **7ah** in relatively lower yield and

enantioselectivity. Furthermore, a gram scale preparation of **7aa** was found to be equally efficient.

Table 4. Substrate Scope of 7.^[a,b,c]



^[a] Unless otherwise specified, all the reactions were carried out using **1** (0.2 mmol), **6** (1.2 equiv), catalyst **VIII** (20 mol%) in CH₃CN (1 mL) at 30 °C. ^[b] Isolated yield. ^[c] Enantiomeric excess was determined by HPLC analysis on a chiral stationary phase. ^[d] Reaction was performed on a gram scale of **1a** (3.8 mmol, 1.0 g). n.r. = No reaction with the recovery of **1a** and **6f**.

То investigate the differentiation between products enantioselectivities of desired from alkylidene oxindole carbonyl derivatives 2/4 and benzylidene oxindole derivatives 6, we have performed crucial control experiments. The reaction of benzylidene oxindole (6a) and catalyst VIII in CH₃CN provided the ratio of *E*/Z-isomers of **6a** in 80:20 within 9 h. Furthermore, addition of 3homoacylcoumarin (1a) to the reaction mixture furnished the desired product 7aa with 73% ee which is lower than that obtained in the standard condition (Scheme 5). It was found that the predominating factor for the diminished enantiomeric ratios of the final products 7 in comparison with 3 and 5, is the isomerization ability of their benzylidene oxindole derivatives 6. In the presence of chiral catalyst, isomerization of alkylidene oxindole ester 2 and ketone 4 derivatives to their Z-isomers are much slower than the benzylidene oxindole derivatives 6.



Scheme 5. Isomerization of 6a with Catalyst VIII.

The removal of Boc group from **3aa**, **5ea** and **7ea** was conducted smoothly by treatment with TFA in CH₂Cl₂ at 30 °C to result the corresponding products **8aa**, **9ea** and **10ea** in high yields without erosion of enantioselectivity (Scheme 6). The absolute configurations of products **3**, **5** and **7** were established by single crystal X-ray diffraction analysis of the corresponding Boc-deprotected compounds **8-10**.^[9]



Scheme 6. Deprotection of Compounds 3aa/5ea/7ea.

In conclusion, we have developed a bifunctional stepwise derivative-catalyzed quinine (3+2)cycloaddition reaction for the generation of complex spirooxindole adducts in high yields (up to 99%), good to excellent diastereoselectivities (up to >20:1 dr) and excellent enantioselectivities (up to 99% ee). Apart from bearing five contiguous stereocenters, including a spiro all-carbon quaternary stereocenter, the products also incorporate a biologically active spirooxindole moietv well as as cyclopenta[c]chromen-4-one core which are core structures of many natural products. Different Michael acceptors such as alkylidene oxindole esters ketones and benzylidene oxindoles were investigated for the substrate scope of this stepwise (3+2)cycloaddition reaction. In addition, the reaction could be performed on a gram scale with similar efficacy. The mechanistic investigations proved that this is \overline{a} (3+2)cycloaddition reaction via a stepwise Michael/Michael cascade pathway instead of concerted pathway. We have found that 3homoacylcoumarin as 1,3-dipole precursor proceeds the stepwise (3+2) cycloaddition reaction with unsymmetrical alkylidene oxindole electrophiles whereas a concerted (3+2) cycloaddition has been reported with symmetric indandione alkylidenes.^[8] Further studies regarding the application of 3homoacylcoumarin in other organocatalytic reactions are underway in our laboratory.

Experimental Section

Typical procedure for the synthesis of spirooxindolefused cyclopenta[c]chromen-4-ones 3: A capped glass vial equipped with a magnetic stir bar was charged with 1 (0.3 mmol), 2 (1.1 equiv), catalyst IV (9.4 mg, 5 mol%) and CH₂Cl₂ (1.5 mL) and stirred at 30 °C. The progress of the reaction was monitored by TLC and ¹H NMR data analysis. After the completion of reaction, 1N HCl (5 mL) was added and extracted with CH₂Cl₂ (2x3 mL). The combined organic extracts were dried over anhydrous Na₂SO₄ and concentrated in *vacuo* and the crude residue was subjected to flash column chromatography over silica gel (hexanes/EtOAc) to afford pure spirooxindole-fused cyclopenta[c]chromen-4-ones 3. Typical procedure for the synthesis of spirooxindolefused cyclopenta[c]chromen-4-ones 5: A capped glass vial equipped with a magnetic stir bar was charged with 1 (0.2 mmol), 4 (1.1 equiv), catalyst IV (12.6 mg, 10 mol%) and CH₂Cl₂ (2.0 mL) and stirred at 30 °C. The progress of the reaction was monitored by TLC and ¹H NMR data analysis. After the completion of reaction, the reaction mixture was concentrated in *vacuo* and the crude residue was subjected to flash column chromatography over silica gel (hexanes/EtOAc) to obtain pure spirooxindole-fused cyclopenta[c]chromen-4-ones 5.

Typical procedure for the synthesis of spirooxindolefused cyclopenta[c]chromen-4-ones 7: A capped glass vial equipped with a magnetic stir bar was charged with 1 (0.2 mmol), 6 (1.2 equiv), catalyst VIII (13.1 mg, 20 mol%) and CH₃CN (1.0 mL) and stirred at 30 °C. The progress of the reaction was monitored by TLC and ¹H NMR data analysis. After the completion of reaction, the reaction mixture was concentrated in *vacuo* and the crude residue was subjected to flash column chromatography over silica gel (hexanes/EtOAc) to obtain pure spirooxindole-fused cyclopenta[c]chromen-4-ones 7.

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- [9] See Supporting Information for crystal data of compounds **5ac** (CCDC 1962249), **8aa** (CCDC 1948942), **9ea** (CCDC 1911409), **10ea** (CCDC 1893243) and **5da'** (CCDC 1959572). It is worth noting that the stereo-configuration of **5da'**is different from that of the proposed concerted product *epi-***5da**.

COMMUNICATION

Enantioselective Construction of Spirooxindole-Fused Cyclopenta[c]chromen-4-ones Bearing Five Contiguous Stereocenters *via* a Stepwise (3+2) Cycloaddition

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Spirooxindole-fused cyclopenta[c]chromenones
 Can be scaled up
 Five contiguous stereocenters including a quaternary spiro-stereocenter