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#### Letter

# Enantioselective Hydroesterificative Cyclization of 1,6-Enynes to Chiral $\gamma$ -Lactams Bearing a Quaternary Carbon Stereocenter

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**ABSTRACT:** A palladium-catalyzed asymmetric hydroesterification-cyclization of 1,6-enynes with CO and alcohol was developed to efficiently prepare a variety of enantioenriched  $\gamma$ -lactams bearing a chiral quaternary carbon center and a carboxylic ester group. The approach featured good to high chemo-, region-, and enantioselectivities, high atom economy, and mild reaction conditions as well as broad substrate scope. The correlation between the multiple selectivities of such process and the *N*-substitutes of the amide linker in the 1,6-enyne substrate has been depicted by the crystallographic evidence and control experiments.

hiral  $\gamma$ -lactams play a significant role in a variety of bioactive compounds and are also regarded as a serviceable synthesis precursor of N-heterocyclic molecules due to the versatile transformation of the amide functional group.<sup>1</sup> Thus, a variety of catalytic asymmetric methods has been established toward preparing optically active  $\gamma$ -lactams.<sup>2</sup> The intrinsic effect of all-carbon quaternary stereocenter on biological characteristics, i.e., activity, metabolism, solubility, and hydrophobicity, endows its construction method with long-lasting research interest.<sup>3</sup> Owing to the congested circumstances, catalytic enantioselective creation of such a quaternary carbon center via a forming carbon-carbon bond is an imperative but quite challenging task.<sup>4</sup> In this context, despite significant progress in the enantioselective synthesis of chiral  $\gamma$ -lactams, only a few protocols could construct such a skeleton bearing an all-carbon quaternary stereocenter.<sup>5</sup>

Transition-metal-catalyzed stereoselective cycloisomerization,<sup>6</sup> reductive cyclization,<sup>7</sup> and hydrofunctionalizative cyclization<sup>8-10</sup> of 1,6-envnes provide an efficient and convenient access to five-membered (hetero)cycles. Especially, merging the hydrofunctionalization of unsaturated bond with the cyclization reaction manifests high bond-forming efficiency, rapid construction of complex molecules, and/or high atomic economy. Apart from the established asymmetric hydroboration-,<sup>8</sup> hydrosilylation-,<sup>9</sup> and hydrovinylation-cyclization,<sup>11</sup> to our knowledge, neither the nonasymmetric nor enantioselective hydrocarbonylation-cyclization process of dienes/ enynes has yet to be exploited.<sup>12</sup> Palladium-catalyzed hydroesterification reaction constitutes one of the ideal routes to prepare carboxylic acid derivatives from readily available feedstocks of unsaturated hydrocarbons, CO, and alcohols.<sup>13</sup> Compared with the well-established industrial application of nonasymmetric alkoxycarbonylation, the development of corresponding asymmetric variant is rather sluggish, probably due to the difficulty of simultaneously controlling the chemo-, regio-, and enantioselectivities under a nonbeneficial reaction temperature and high CO pressure.<sup>14</sup> Following our interest in catalytic asymmetric carbonylation<sup>15</sup> and cyclization<sup>16</sup> reactions, we envisioned integrating the challenging but rewarding alkoxycarbonylation with enyne cyclization reaction would offer a novel entry to chiral heterocyclic compounds containing both a carboxylic ester group and a quaternary carbon center with high efficiency of carbon–carbon/heteroatom bond formation.

Herein, we described the first palladium-catalyzed asymmetric hydroesterificative cyclization of 1,6-enynes (Scheme 1). The type of amide-tethered 1,6-enyne substrate, containing an internal alkyne and a terminal gem-disubstituted alkene, was investigated recently for the palladium-catalyzed nonasymmetric hydrohalogenation-cyclization to  $\delta$ -lactams by Poblador-Bahamonde and Lautens<sup>17</sup> as well as the cobalt-catalyzed enantioselective hydroboration-cyclization to chiral  $\gamma$ -lactams from the group of Ge.<sup>8a</sup> Generally, these hydrofunctionalizative cyclization processes start with the formation of metal hydride followed by the alkyne group addition and subsequent intramolecular insertion of the alkene unit into the formed metal–alkenyl intermediates to generate a metal–alkyl complex. In the previous studies, such species were trapped

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Scheme 1. Asymmetric Hydroesterification-Cyclization of Amide-Tethered 1,6-Enynes



by the reactive H-X (X = halide or -Bpin) substrate and converted into the corresponding lactams along with the active catalyst regeneration. In our protocol, CO was introduced to insert the palladium–alkyl complex, and the alcohol nucleophile was utilized to alcoholize the resulting palladium–acyl species (Scheme 1). A series of chiral carboxylic esters containing a  $\gamma$ -lactam skeleton and a quaternary carbon stereocenter were delivered. This approach proceeded under ambient reaction temperature and exhibited high bond construction efficiency and good functional group compatibility. By changing the *N*-substitutes of amide linker in the 1,6enynes substrate to adjust the stable spatially conformation around the active metal center, the chemo-, regio-, and enantioselectivities of this unprecedented process were controlled.

At the beginning of our studies, the palladium-catalyzed asymmetric hydroesterificative cyclization of p-toluenesulfonate (Ts-) protected 1,6-enynes 1a with CO and MeOH was chosen as the model reaction. After the optimization of the reaction conditions, the combination of Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub>, (S)-MeO-BIPHEP, and TsOH·H2O was used as the catalyst system, and this tandem process was conducted with 4 equiv of alcohol under 20 bar pressure of CO in a mixed solvent of toluene/ DCE (9/1) at room temperature (Scheme 2). The desired chiral  $\gamma$ -lactam 2a was isolated in excellent ee value and good yield, along with the presence of uncyclized alkyne carbonylation compound 3a (2a/3a = 74/36). Besides 3a, no other uncyclized isomer was detected. On the basis of the reaction pathway (Scheme 1), this result indicated the irreversible regioselective hydropalladation step of the alkyne unit in 1a with the active palladium-hydride catalyst determined the ratio of 2a/3a. The subsequent cyclization step via adding the Pd<sup>II</sup>- $C(sp^2)$  bond of Pd<sup>II</sup>-alkenyl intermediate onto the C=C bond of the alkene moiety is crucial to both chemoselectivity and enatioselectivity. In principle, such an insertion step could be adjusted by the relative spatial position between Pd<sup>II</sup>alkenyl and alkene moieties, which probably could be affected by the N-substitutes of the amide linker in the substrate. Therefore, a series of substitutes on the N-atom as well as other type of the linker were investigated. Both electrondonating and electron-withdrawing substituents on the phenyl ring of the sulphonyl group in the enyne exhibited an unnoticeable effect on the enantioselectivity but considerable influence on the distribution of the cyclization/uncyclization

Scheme 2. Effect of the N-Substituent of the Substrate<sup>a</sup>



a'(a) Reactions were run on 0.1 mmol scale. Yield and ratio of 2a/3a were determined by GC-FID using *n*-decane as an internal standard. Ee values were determined by HPLC analysis. Isolated yield. (b) ORTEP diagrams with thermal ellipsoids at the 50% probability level.

products (2a-2f). Replacing the sulphonyl group in the substrate by methyl (2g), phenyl (2h), hydrogen (2i), or aroyl (2j) group resulted in significantly low yield or trace amounts of wanted  $\gamma$ -lactams. When the tether was changed from the amide group to the corresponding protected amine unit (1k), the yield of cyclized product dropped significantly. These results suggested both the sulphonyl and carbonyl groups are essential to this carbonylation-cyclization reaction.

Because the configuration flipping of the amide linker between Z and E forms via C–N bond rotation in the enyne substrates is rather sluggish at such low reaction temperature,<sup>17</sup> the spatial conformation of these reactants might affect the ratio of 2/3 and the reaction stereoselectivity. To validate such a relationship, single crystals of the substrates (1a, 1h, and 1i– 1k) were cultivated and suitable for the X-ray diffraction characterization (Scheme 2). Seemingly, the close distance between the alkyne and the alkene moieties in the 1,6-enynes was beneficial to the chemoselectivity toward cyclized products.

After exploring the effect of the N-substitute of the enyne substrate on the multiple selectivities for the tandem methoxycarbonylation-cyclization, we therefore began the evaluation of reaction conditions. The standard reaction was carried out with 1a, CO (20 bar), and MeOH (4.0 equiv) using 2.5 mol % Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub>, 3 mol % L1, and 24 mol % PTSA-

H<sub>2</sub>O as the catalyst at room temperature (for details see Supporting Information (SI), Table S1). With the optimized reaction conditions in hand, the substrate scope and functional group compatibility for this catalytic asymmetric hydroesterfication-cyclization of 1,6-enynes were studied. First, the substituents on the alkyne moiety of 1 were varied and the desired chiral  $\gamma$ - lactams (2l-2aa) were afforded in reasonable to good yields with high enantioselectivity using the suitable chiral bidentate phosphine ligand and Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub> as the catalyst system (Table 1). The aryl group attached to the triple bond of the substrate bearing both electron-rich (2l-2o) and electrondeficient substituents (2r-2w) at the *para-*, *ortho-*, or *meta*position was suitable for this conversion, giving slightly lower yields with the same level of ee value. A variety of functional groups, such as methoxy (2m), halide (2r-2t), nitrile (2u),





<sup>*a*</sup>Reaction conditions: 1 (0.2 mmol),  $Pd(OAc)_2/L1/PTSA \bullet H_2O$ (2.5/3/24 mol %), CO (20 bar), MeOH (0.8 mmol, 4 equiv), toluene/DME (1.8/0.2 mL), rt, 12 h. <sup>*b*</sup>Pd(OAc)\_2 (5 mol %), L2 (6 mol %). <sup>*c*</sup>Pd(OAc)\_2 (5 mol %), L1 (6 mol %). <sup>*d*</sup>L4 instead of L1. <sup>*c*</sup>ORTEP diagram with thermal ellipsoids at the 50% probability level. <sup>*f*</sup>Pd(OAc)\_2 (5 mol %), L3 (6 mol %), and reaction temperature was 10 °C.

ester (2v), trifluoromethyl (2w), and piperonyl (2x), were well-tolerated with up to 95% ee without significantly compromising the yield under slightly modificated reaction conditions. Besides aryl and 2-naphthyl (2q) units, heteroaromatic rings, including 2-thienyl and 2-furyl groups (2y, 2z), were also compatible and high ee value with reasonable to moderate yields was obtained. In addition, the enyne substrate with aliphatic methyl substitute at the terminus of the alkyne (2aa) was also smoothly transformed into the wanted  $\gamma$ -lactam in 50% yield with 82% ee using chiral phosphine ligand L3 instead of L1. When the enyne (1ab) bearing tertiary butyl substituent at the terminus of the alkyne was used as the substrate, no substrate conversion was obtained.

We next turned our attention to investigating the influence of the substituted alkene moiety of the enyne on this tandem cyclized alkoxycarbonylation (Table 2). Replacing the methyl





<sup>a</sup>Reaction conditions: 1 (0.2 mmol),  $Pd(OAc)_2/L1/PTSA \bullet H_2O$ (2.5/3/24 mol %), CO (20 bar), R'OH (0.8 mmol, 4 equiv), toluene/DME (1.8/0.2 mL), rt, 12 h. <sup>b</sup>L4 instead of L1. <sup>c</sup>Pd(OAc)\_2 (5 mol %), L2 (6 mol %).

group by ethyl, *n*-butyl, or ether-containing aliphatics was able to deliver the corresponding lactams **2ac**-**2ad** or **2af**-**2ag** in moderate yields with high ee value. Besides normal aliphatic one, phenyl-, and benzyl-substituted substrates were also compatible to furnish the products **2ae** and **2ah**-**2aj** with excellent enantioselectivity and reasonable to good yields. Both electron-acceptor (**2ai**) and electron-donor (**2aj**) groups on the benzyl ring tethered to the alkene exhibited no effect on this reaction. Inspired by these results, the nucleophile sources for such transformation were examined, and the alcohol EtOH and "BuOH were also amenable to generate target products **2ak** and **2al** with 92% ee and slightly diminished yield. The substrate **1am** (R = H) without methyl substituent on the alkene was also investigated in the enantioselective methoxycarbonylative cyclization, which gave the desired product **2am** in 50% isolated yield with 69% ee value. Other types of nucleophiles, such as amine and thiol, were demonstrated to be not suitable in this hydrocarbonylation-cyclization reaction (**2an** and **2ao**). Substrates (**1ap** and **1aq**) including O- and Ctethered 1,6-enynes failed to undergo such asymmetric hydroesterificative cyclization reaction.

After exploring the substrate scope of the hydroesterification-cyclization of the enynes, gram-scale synthesis was carried out, and the  $\gamma$ -lactam **2a** was obtained in good yield and excellent enantioselectivity (Scheme 3A). The protecting

#### Scheme 3. Derivatization and Control Experiments<sup>a</sup>

(A) Gram-scale and derivatization of products





<sup>*a*</sup>Reaction conditions: (a) **2a** (0.1 mmol), SmI<sub>2</sub> (1.0 mL, 0.1 M in THF), THF (4 mL), rt, 10 min; (b) **2a** (0.1 mmol), RuCl<sub>3</sub>·*x*H<sub>2</sub>O (2 mol %), NaIO<sub>4</sub> (3 equiv), CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>/CH<sub>3</sub>CN/H<sub>2</sub>O (0.5/0.5/1.0 mL), rt, 1 h. The ratio of **7/8** was determined by GC-FID. The ratio of **10**/**11** was determined by <sup>1</sup>H NMR.

group -Ts in **2a** was easily removed by SmI<sub>2</sub> to give the corresponding chiral  $\gamma$ -lactam **4** in good yield and 92% ee. The chiral 2,3-pyrrolidinedione **5** could be readily obtained by oxidation of **2a** without diminishing enantiomeric excess, which could be further converted regioselectively to the  $\beta$ -amino acid derived *N*-carboxyanhydride according the reported reference.<sup>18</sup>

To probe the mechanism and disclose the role of the double bond in the enyne substrate on the reaction stereoselectivity for the palladium-catalyzed asymmetric hydroesterificationcyclization, control experiments using alkyne 6 and dienyne 9, bearing isobutyl or two isobutenyl groups, were carried out under identical reaction conditions (Scheme 3B). Replacing the isobutenyl group of 1a by an isobutyl group led to the carbonylation products of 7 and 8 with the ratio of 1:1 in high yield. The decreased regioselectivity with 6 as the substrate may be caused by the loss of the coordination of the alkene moiety in the enyne substrate to the palladium catalyst.<sup>8a</sup> With dienyne 9 as the substrate, cyclization/uncyclization products 10/11 with a ratio of 3/1 were afforded in high yield, wherein very low ee value of the lactam 10 was observed. These results suggested the alkene group of the enyne substrate plays a function to affect the site selectivity in the initial hydropalladation step, and the -Ts group is essential to the enantioselectivity.

In conclusion, the first palladium-catalyzed enantioselective hydroesterification-cyclization of amide-tethered 1,6-enynes was developed. Various chiral  $\gamma$ -lactams bearing all-carbon quaternary stereocenters with high ee value were synthesized efficiently under milder conditions. Changing the substituent on the amide tether of the enyne substrate could alter the relative spatial position between the alkyne and the alkene moieties, which was demonstrated to be critical to adjust the multiple selectivities of this reaction process.

# ASSOCIATED CONTENT

# Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.orglett.1c00952.

Experimental details, X-ray data, characterization data, and NMR spectra (PDF)

## **Accession Codes**

CCDC 2009853, 2010126, 2061495–2061498, and 2061500 contain the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge via www.ccdc.ca-m.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, UK; fax: +44 1223 336033.

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The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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