## Asymmetric Synthesis

## Catalytic Asymmetric Addition of Diorganozinc Reagents to Pyrazole-4,5-Diones and Indoline-2,3-Diones

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**Abstract:** The catalytic enantioselective diorganozinc additions to cyclic diketones including pyrazolin-4,5-diones and isatins have been developed. In the presence of morpholine-containing chiral amino alcohol ligand, the corresponding chiral cyclic tertiary alcohols were produced in good to excellent yields (up to 97%) and enantioselectivities (up to 95% *ee*). The notable feature of this protocol includes its mild reaction conditions, Lewis acid additives free and broad functional group tolerance.

Chiral tertiary alcohols represent an important class of frameworks which has been widely exists in a variety of natural products and clinical pharmaceuticals.<sup>[1]</sup> Besides that, They are also a versatile family of chiral building blocks that are found wide application in synthetic organic chemistry.<sup>[2]</sup> Therefore, it is of great significance to develop asymmetric new methods for the synthesis of these compounds. In contrast to chiral secondary alcohols, the asymmetric construction of chiral tertiary alcohols remains a great challenge in asymmetric synthesis, due to the less reactive nature of precursors and the decreased enantioface differentiation between the two substituents at prochiral carbon center.<sup>[3]</sup> Nevertheless, various strategies towards the synthesis of these scaffolds have been disclosed in the last decades. Among them, the asymmetric nucleophilic additions to ketones using organometallic reagents represent one of the most straightforward methods for the production of chiral tertiary alcohols.<sup>[4]</sup> Diorganozinc reagents were considered as the reagents of choice due to the mild reaction condi-

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tions and good tolerance to many functionalities.<sup>[5]</sup> However, Lewis acid additives are often required for these transformations because of the lowered reactivity of ketones (Scheme 1 a).<sup>[6]</sup> In addition, the substrate scope is mainly limited to acyclic ketones(Scheme 1 b). Walsh's group reported the first catalytic asymmetric addition of organozinc reagents to cyclic ketones using bis(sulfonamide) diols as chiral ligand with Ti(O-*i*Pr)<sub>4</sub>.<sup>[7]</sup> Since then, little progress has been made in this area. Therefore, the development of effective protocols for the enantioselective diorganozinc addition to cyclic ketones is highly desirable.

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Scheme 1. Studies of asymmetric diorganozinc additions to aldehydes and ketones.

Chiral pyrazolones and their derivatives are a unique class of five membered heterocyclic compounds, which have been found diverse applications in medicinal, analytical and dye chemistry, as well as potential utility as chelating agents, photographic couplers and synthetic building blocks.<sup>[8]</sup> Great efforts have been devoted to the synthesis of these structural motifs.<sup>[9]</sup> However, the asymmetric version of these transformations, especially the use of pyrazolin-4,5-diones as a C-4 nucleophile, has been rarely studied (Scheme 2a). In 2018, Enders's group reported the first organocatalytic Friedel-Crafts reaction of pyrazole-4,5-diones with indoles, delivering the indolypyrazolone derivatives in medium to good enantioselectivies.<sup>[10]</sup> Later on, Mukherjee's group reported a direct organocatalytic asymmetric vinylogous aldol reaction of allyl ketones to pyrazole-4,5-diones.<sup>[11]</sup> In 2019, Wu reported a copper-catalyzed enantioselective alkynylation of pyrazole-4,5-diones with alkynes.<sup>[12]</sup> Very recently, Bhat's group developed an asymmetric [3+2] annulation between MBH carbonates derived from isatin and pyrazole-4,5-diones.<sup>[13]</sup> Inspired by previous reports on

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a) Previous work: asymmetric transformation of pyrazole-4,5-diones



b) This work: asymmetric diorganozic addition to cyclic  $\alpha$ -diketones



Scheme 2. Asymmetric transformation of pyrazolin-4,5-diones and isatins.

asymmetric nucleophilic addition to pyrazole-4,5-diones, we herein described an asymmetric addition of diorganozinc reagents to pyrazole-4,5-diones by the use of chiral amino alcohol ligand for the construction of optically pure tertiary alcohols (Scheme 2b). In addition, we extended this methodology to the asymmetric diorganozinc addition to isatin derivatives (Scheme 2b).

Initially, the asymmetric addition between pyrazole-4,5-dione 1 a and dimethylzinc 2 a was selected as the model reaction. First, the reaction was performed with 20 mol% of diamine ligand L1 in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> with 2 equivalent of Me<sub>2</sub>Zn at 0°C, the desired chiral tertiary alcohol product 3a could be obtained in moderate yield and low enantioselectivity (Table 1, entry 1). Changing the chiral ligand L1 to salen ligand L2 resulted in a better catalytic activity and stereoselectivity (entry 2). Inspired by the preliminary results, we turned our attention to the use of different chiral amino alcohol ligands for chiral induction. We observed that the reactions performed proceed smoothly to deliver the corresponding product in good to high yields, albeit with moderate enantioselectivities (entries 3-7). Among the amino alcohol ligand tested, morpholine-containing ligand L7<sup>14</sup> showed the best results in terms of yield and enantioselectivity (entry 7). Meanwhile, ligand loading had obvious effects on the reaction stereoselectivity. A dramatically decreased ee was observed with 10 mol% of ligand L7 (entry 8). Next, we investigated the reaction temperature and it was found that decreasing the temperature proved to be not beneficial for the stereoselective control (entries 9-10). Finally, we examined the effects of various solvents such as toluene, THF,  $Et_2O$  and ethyl acetate (EA), and the results indicated EA was the best solvent, affording the desired product in 95% yield and 95% ee (entries 11-14). It is important to note that reducing the amount



of  $Me_2Zn$  to 1.5 equivalent do not influence the yield and enantioselectivity of this reaction (entry 15).

With the optimal reaction conditions in hand, the scope of the enantioselective addition of diorganozinc reagents to various pyrazole-4,5-diones 1 was explored (Scheme 3). First, the reactions of 3-methyl pyrazole-4,5-diones with electron-donating group at 1-aryl proceeded smoothly to afford the chiral tertiary alcohols 3a-3d in excellent yields (90-94%) and enantioselectivities (90-95%), while product 3e was obtained in lower yield and stereoselectivity due to steric effect. In addition, slightly lower yield and ee (3 f-3 i, 88-91%, 81-88% ee) were generated when substrates bearing electron-withdrawing group at 1-aryl were applied. 3-ethyl pyrazole-4,5-dione with different substituents at 1-aryl also worked well in identical reaction conditions, affording the corresponding products 3j-3n in up to 92% yield and 94% ee. Next, other substituents at C3position of pyrazole-4,5-dione 1 such as isopropyl, tert-butyl and phenyl were examined, giving the corresponding prodCommunication doi.org/10.1002/chem.202005081





Scheme 3. Substrate scope of the asymmetric diorganozinc additions to pyrazole-4,5-dione 1. Reaction conditions: 0.2 mmol of 1, 1.5 equiv of 2, 20 mol% of L7, EA, 0 °C, 12–24 h.

ucts **3o–3q** in high yields (89–95%) and enantioselectivities (80–88%). Furthermore, alkyl analogues at C1-position were also tolerated in this reaction, although a relatively low *ee* were obtained (**3r-3u**, 82–90%, 83–86% *ee*). Finally, we tested the Et<sub>2</sub>Zn addition to prochiral ketone **1**. To our delight, the desired tertiary alcohols **3v–3x** bearing ethyl group could be obtained in moderated yield and enantioselectivity. Our repeated attempts to use other diorganozinc reagents were unsuccessful, only very low enantioselectivity could be generated (see details in Supporting Information). The chiral tertiary alcohols were assigned to the *S*-configuration, based on the X-ray analysis of the single crystal of product **3a**.

To further demonstrate the synthetic utility of this methodology, we extended the substrate scope to the synthesis of 3substituted-3-hydroxy-2-oxindoles, which is present in various natural products and biological compounds.<sup>[15]</sup> Arundaphine, convolutamydine C, maremycin B and paratunamide D are representative examples of a growing list of bioactive natural products.<sup>[15d]</sup> Especially, there are few methods for the catalytic asymmetric synthesis of chiral 3-hydroxy-3-methyl-2-oxindoles in previous report.<sup>[16]</sup> Shibashaki<sup>[16d]</sup> and Pedro's group<sup>[16e]</sup> reported the enantioselective addition of Me<sub>2</sub>Zn to isatins catalyzed by proline-derived aminodiol and  $\alpha$ -hydroxyamides ligand, respectively, and only moderate ee values were obtained. We performed the reaction between N-substituted isatins 4 and Me<sub>2</sub>Zn in the presence of DCM at -40 °C. Most of the isatin derivatives reacted smoothly with Me<sub>2</sub>Zn to afford the corresponding 3-hydroxy-3-methyl-2-oxindoles 5 in excellent yields with excellent enantioselectivities (Scheme 4). For example, either electron-donating or withdrawing group of the phenyl ring at N-aryl position were compatible under the optimized conditions to give the desired product 5a-5f in 90-97% yields and 91-94% ee. Other N-substituted electron-do-



Scheme 4. Substrate scope of the asymmetric dimethylzinc additions to *N*-substituted isatin 4. Reaction conditions: 0.2 mmol of 4, 2.0 equiv of 2, 20 mol % of *ent*-L7, DCM,  $-40^{\circ}$ C, 20–36 h.

nating groups, such as 1-naphthyl, benzyl, ethyl, et al were also tolerated in this reaction, providing diverse 3-hydroxy-3-methyl-2-oxindoles 5g-5l in excellent yield and high enantio-selectivities. However, when the protecting group was electron-withdrawing group such as acetyl, the product 5m was obtained in moderate yield, albeit with high *ee*. The absolute configuration of **5** was determined by comparison to reported literature.<sup>[16e]</sup>

Next, the effect of substitution on the benzene ring of *N*-phenyl protected isatins **4** was evaluated (Table 2). In general, electron-donating group at different position on the benzene ring afforded the desired products in higher enantioselectivities in comparison with the electron-withdrawing group (entries 1–6). Very importantly, we observed that other diorganozinc reagents such as  $Et_2Zn$  and  $nBu_2Zn$  were also tolerated in this reaction, although a slightly lower yields and enantioselectivities were obtained (entries 7–10).

In order to understand the mechanism of this reaction, a non-linear effect (NLE) study was conducted. The enantiopurities of the products were evaluated using various chiral amino ligands **L7** with 20%, 40%, 60% and 80% *ee*, respectively, and a (+)-NLE was observed in this study (see detailed results in Supporting Information). Based on the previous report<sup>[6f,17]</sup> and the NLE studies, we proposed a plausible catalytic mechanism of this reaction. As shown in Scheme 5, amino alcohoL**L7** is deprotonated to form a zinc aminoalkoxide species which could further coordinates to pyrazole-4,5-diones **1**. In addition, another molecular of Me<sub>2</sub>Zn might coordinate with oxygen atom, resulting in a *si*-face attack of Me<sub>2</sub>Zn through a six-membered transition-state. The outcome of the diorganozinc addition of

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mined by HPLC.



Table 2. S substitute	Substrate scop d isatin <b>4</b> . <sup>[a]</sup>	oe of th	e asymme	tric diorganozino	additions to
R		R <sub>2</sub> Zn	ent-L7 (20 DCM, -40	$\xrightarrow{\text{mol}\%)} \mathbb{R}^{1} \mathbb{I}^{1}$	R <sup>2</sup> OH
	4	2a			5
Entry	R <sup>1</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	R	Yield [%] <sup>[b]</sup>	<i>ee</i> [%] <sup>[c]</sup>
1	5-Me	Ph	Me	<b>5 n</b> , 95	90
2	5-OMe	Ph	Me	<b>5 o</b> , 92	88
3	5,7-Me <sub>2</sub>	Ph	Me	<b>5 p</b> , 96	92
4	5-F	Ph	Me	<b>5 q</b> , 92	89
5	5-Cl	Ph	Me	<b>5 r</b> , 95	76
6	6-Cl	Ph	Me	<b>5 s</b> , 90	87
7	Н	Bn	Et	<b>5 t</b> , 75	80
8	6-Cl	Bn	Et	<b>5 u</b> , 77	79
9	5-OMe	Bn	Et	<b>5 v</b> , 72	69
10	Н	Ph	<i>n</i> Bu	<b>5 w</b> , 62	70
[a] Reactio	on conditions: 0°C, 20–36 h.	0.2 mm [b] Isola	ol of <b>4</b> , 2.0 ted vields.	equiv of <b>2</b> , 20 m	ol% of <i>ent-</i> L7, s were deter-



Scheme 5. Plausible transition state for the diorganozinc addition to pyrazole-4,5-diones.

isatins **4** could also be explained by the similar transition model.

In conclusion, the asymmetric additions of diorganozinc reagents to cyclic ketones including pyrazole-4,5-diones and substituted isatins were achieved without any additives. In the presence of a chiral amino alcohol ligand **L7** under mild conditions, a wide range of highly functionalized tertiary alcohol products with pyrazolone and 2-oxindole motifs could be obtained in excellent yields (up to 97% yield) and high to excellent enantioselectivities (up to 95% *ee*). This methodology provides an efficient approach for the asymmetric addition of diorganozinc reagents to the challenging cyclic ketones. Studies toward clarifying the detained reaction mechanism are under way in our laboratory.

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## **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

**Keywords:** chiral amino alcohol • diorganozinc addition • indoline-2,3-diones • pyrazole-4,5-diones

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