

TETRAHEDRON

# A Comparative Study of C2-Symmetric Bis(aziridine) Ligands in Some Transition Metal-Mediated Asymmetric Transformations

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#### Abstract:

A comparative study has been made of the performance of differently substituted C<sub>2</sub>-symmetric bis(aziridine) ligands in a variety of metal-mediated asymmetric reactions. The metals studied were osmium (dihydroxylation), palladium (allylic alkylation) and copper (cyclopropanation and aziridination), the ligands being chosen so as to allow evaluation of both electronic and steric effects. The electronic effects were most pronounced for complexes of palladium, which seem to bind rather loosely to this type of ligand. For the other metals, steric effects play a more important role. @ 1998 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

We have earlier reported [1a,b] on the use of C<sub>2</sub>-symmetric bis(aziridines) as chiral ligands in a variety of asymmetric transformations (both stoichiometric and catalytic) mediated by transition metals (Fig. 1). It was demonstrated [1b] that ligands with a two-carbon tether between the aziridine rings (presumably forming five-membered chelates) are much superior to the corresponding species with longer tether lengths, irrespective of the metal used.





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In this paper we present a comparative study of the performance of ligands **1a-d** in the reactions shown above. This set of ligands was chosen in order to study *electronic* (1a vs. 1b) and steric (1a vs. 1c, 1d) effects. The decision to study electronic effects of substituents was based on knowledge of the special bonding situation [2] in three-membered rings. Cromwell et al. [3a] have studied "hyperconjugative" stabilisation [3b] in 2,3-disubstituted aziridines and such effects should also be present in 1a, due to orbital interactions between the two phenyl moieties transmitted via the "bent" bonds of the three-membered ring. This effect is maximised when the planes of the aryl groups are arranged nearly perpendicular to the plane of the heterocyclic ring, *i.e.* when the  $\pi$ -orbital axis of the arene is parallel to the aziridine ring plane (Fig. 2, a). In our analysis, we have also taken into account the possible effect of an alternative hyperconjugative interaction upon the geometry at nitrogen, and concluded that overlap of the nitrogen lone-pair with the aromatic rings should increase as the nitrogen approaches planarity; this requires the  $\pi$ -orbital axis of the aryl groups to be arranged as shown in Fig. 2, b. This could in turn manifest itself in a lower barrier to pyramidal inversion [4] at nitrogen (since a planar nitrogen is involved in the transition state for the inversion) and we have found that this is indeed the case, by a comparison of the inversion barriers for 1a and 1c [5]. While the effects of substituents on *nitrogen* upon the barrier to aziridine N-inversion are well documented [4], the effects of substituents on *carbon* have not been widely appreciated, although a number of examples can be found [4].



The first reaction studied was the osmium-mediated dihydroxylation [6] of *trans*-stilbene, and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.	OsO <sub>4</sub> 1 (1 equiv.)			
Ph		Toluene, -78° C	Ph	
Ligand	Yield	ee %	Abs. conf.	
1 <b>a</b>	90	95	<i>S,S</i>	
1b	75	83	<i>S, S</i>	
1c	78	33	<i>S,S</i>	
<u>1d</u>	61	6	<i>S.S</i>	

For experimental procedure and determination of ee and absolute configuration see ref. [1b].

As far as steric effects are concerned, it is not surprising to note that the *ee* drops sharply as the phenyl groups on the ligand become further removed from the coordination site. Due to its very poor performance, ligand 1d was not considered for the catalytic

reactions discussed below. There is also a weak, but appreciable, electronic effect of ligand 1b (vide infra).

For palladium-catalysed asymmetric allylic alkylation [7], 1,3-diphenylpropenyl acetate has become the standard substrate for testing new ligands (Table 2). Our original ligand **1a** gives essentially complete asymmetric induction due to a striking deviation from square planar geometry of the intermediate  $\pi$ -allyl complex [7b]. However, the binding of this ligand to palladium is not particularly strong since the  $\pi$ -allyl species in the catalytic reaction decomposes quite readily in solution upon heating above 45° C.

Table 2.	QAc	Pd(0) (4 mol%) 1 (6 mol%)	Phr Ph	
Ph	Ph —	THF, 23° C		
Ligand	Yield %	ee %	Abs. conf.	
1a	89	> 99	R	
1b	N.R.	-	-	
1c	60	> 99	R	

For experimental procedure and determination of ee and absolute configuration see ref. [7b].

The introduction of a *p*-fluoro substituent (1b) [8] would be expected to further weaken the binding between palladium and the nitrogen lone pairs because of the inductive effect of fluorine. In practice, it was observed that ligand 1b did not promote any catalytic reaction. Attempted preparation of the putative intermediate (which was very simple [7b] for 1a) was not possible either. On the other hand, the benzyl substituted ligand 1c gave the same excellent level of asymmetric induction as 1a, and the preparation of the  $\pi$ -allyl palladium complex presented no problems. The complex has been characterised by NMR spectroscopy and the results of MM2 calculations are shown below. It is instructive to compare the structure with that of the complex from 1a.



MM2 calculated structure A (from ligand 1a)

MM2 calculated structure B (from ligand 1c)

The deviation from square planarity in B is slightly less than that in A, but the same type of argument as presented previously [7b,c] can be used to explain the absolute configuration obtained in the product (attack by the nucleophile at the sterically less

hindered and more electrophilic terminus of the  $\pi$ -allyl moiety) [7d]. Any inductive effect of the benzyl substituents would be expected to be opposite to that of the *p*-fluorophenyl group.

Ligand 1a induced moderate levels of enantioselectivity in the copper catalysed cyclopropanation [1b, 9] of styrene. Interestingly, in this case ligand 1b matched the performance of 1a almost exactly (Table 3) indicating that the copper complexes of 1a and 1b are much less sensitive towards electronic effects compared to the corresponding palladium species. Somewhat surprisingly, ligand 1c gave substantially higher levels of asymmetric induction. Using the model proposed by Pfaltz [9a] for the rationalisation of the stereochemical outcome of this type of reaction, it is not clear why the benzyl substituted derivative should be more efficient, but it must be borne in mind that the observed effect is dependent on only small differences in the free energy of activation.

Table 3.		Cu(I) (1 mol%) 1 (5 mol%)	EtO <sub>2</sub> C	
Ph		CHCl <sub>3</sub> , 0° C	Ph <sup>ww</sup>	
Ligand	Yield %	trans / cis	ee % (trans)	Abs. conf. (trans)
1a	82	3:1	60	1 <i>S</i> , 2 <i>S</i>
1b	60	3:1	58	1 <i>S</i> , 2 <i>S</i>
1c	73	3:1	90	1 <i>S</i> , 2 <i>S</i>

For experimental procedure and determination of ee and absolute configuration see ref. [1b].

Finally, copper catalysed aziridination[1b, 10] of styrene was studied using ligands 1a c. In contrast to the cyclopropanation reaction, there was now a marked difference between 1a and 1b. Another very interesting feature was the extremely poor performance of 1c; these results casts doubt on the proposal recently advanced by Jacobsen [11] who has suggested a close resemblance between the transition states for the cyclopropanation and aziridination processes. This point is under further investigation.

Table 4.	Cu(I) (5 1 (6 m	mol%) ol%)	NTs	
Ph	CH <sub>2</sub> Cl <sub>2</sub>	P, 0° C P	PH	
Ligand	Yield %	ee %	Abs. conf.	
1a	68	33	S	
1b	59	9	S	
1c	62	7	S	

For experimental procedure and determination of ee and absolute configuration see ref. [1b].

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, we have shown that easily available  $C_2$ -symmetric bis(aziridines) can act as ligands for a variety of transition metal-mediated asymmetric syntheses. The best results in terms of enantioselectivity (95 to >99% e.e.) were obtained for osmium-mediated asymmetric dihydroxylation and palladium-catalyzed allylic alkylation reactions. An *e.e.* of 90% was obtained for the copper-catalyzed cyclopropanation of styrene, while the corresponding aziridination reaction gave only 33%, at best. As could be expected, steric effects of the substituents on the aziridine ring carbons play an important role in determining reactivity and enantioselectivity, but we have also observed an interesting and unusual electronic effect of a *p*-fluorophenyl group, particularly in the reactions involving palladium complexes.

### **Experimental**

<sup>1</sup>H-NMR and <sup>13</sup>C-NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker AC-250 or a Varian XL-300 instrument (CDCl<sub>3</sub>/TMS). Mass spectra were recorded on a Finnigan MAT INCOS 50 instrument at 70 eV. IR spectra were recorded on a Perkin-Elmer 1600 FTIR instrument. Enantiomeric excess (*e.e.*) was determined by chiral HPLC using an OD-H column. Optical rotations were recorded on a Perkin-Elmer 241 polarimeter. Elemental analyses were performed by Mikroanalytisches Laboratorium, Institut für Physikalische Chemie, University of Vienna, Austria. and Mikro Kemi AB, Uppsala, Sweden. Toluene was dried over sodium hydride and distilled under nitrogen atmosphere. The synthesis of ligands **1a** [1b], **1c**, and **1d** [1c] has been described previously. Ligand **1b** was synthesised as shown below.



#### Synthesis of ligand 1b.

(i) McMurry coupling of *p*-fluorobenzaldehyde. Commercially available  $TiCl_3(DME)_{1.5}$  (50 g, 170 mmol) was placed under argon in a flame-dried 250 mL flask

equipped with a reflux condenser. Anhydrous DME (150 mL) was added, followed by lithium wire (3.5 g, 510 mmol) which had been cut into small pieces, etched with methanol and washed with pentane. The resultant black mixture was refluxed for 1.5 h before dropwise addition of neat p-fluorobenzaldehyde (5.36 g, 43 mmol). After 20 h of reflux, the mixture was allowed to cool to room temperature before being diluted with pentane (100 mL) and filtered through celite. Solid material remaining in the reaction flask was extracted with pentane (3 x 100 mL) and dichloromethane (100 mL), the extracts were filtered through celite, and the filter cake was washed with dichloromethane (200 mL). The combined organics were evaporated to dryness in vacuo and the residue was taken up in the minimum amount of dichloromethane before being filtered through a short plug of silica gel. Removal of the solvent in vacuo gave the trans alkene (2.7 g, 58%) as a crystalline solid (m.p. 133 -137°C) which could be used directly in the next step. For analysis, a small sample was purified by flash chromatography on silica gel, eluting first with hexane and then 1% ethyl acetate in hexane. Rf (EtOAc-hexane, 1:19) 0.41. <sup>1</sup>H NMR: 7.46 (4 H, m), 7.06 (4 H, m), 6.99 (2 H, s). <sup>13</sup>C NMR: 162.4 (d, JCF 244 Hz), 133.3, 127.9 (d, JCF 12.5) 127.2, 115.6 (d, JCF 18.8). IR (KBr): 2924, 1896, 1601, 1506, 1234, 968, 838. Anal. Calc. for C14H10F2: C, 77,77%; H, 4.66. Found: C, 77.56; H, 4.73.

(ii) Sharpless Asymmetric Dihydroxylation. Commercially available AD-mix  $\beta$  (11.3 g) was dissolved in a mixture of tert-butanol (40 mL) and water (40 mL) and cooled with stirring to 0°C before addition of methanesulfonamide (0.77 g, 8.1 mmol) and the alkene from above (1.75 g, 8.1 mmol). The reaction mixture was allowed to reach room temperature slowly and was then stirred for 20 h before addition of Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>3</sub> (12.13 g, 96.3 mmol). The resultant mixture was stirred for 45 min, and dichloromethane (50 mL) was added. The phases were separated and the aqueous phase was extracted with dichloromethane (3 x 50 mL). The combined organic phases were washed with 2 M KOH solution (40 mL) and dried over MgSO<sub>4</sub>. After removal of the solvents, the residue was purified by flash chromatography (20 - 80% ether in pentane) to give the chiral 1,2-diol (3.68 g, 91%) as a crystalline solid (m.p. 82 - 83°C). Rf (EtOAc-hexane, 1:1) 0.45. <sup>1</sup>H NMR: 6.99 - 6.81 (8 H, m), 4.49 (2 H, s), 3.56 (2 H, bs). <sup>13</sup>C NMR: 162.3 (d, JCF 250), 135.3 (d, JCF 3), 128. 5 (d, JCF 6.3), 115.0 (d, JCF 19), 78.5. IR (KBr): 3373, 2932, 1893, 1607, 1514, 1237, 989, 860, 835. Anal. Calc. for C14H12F2O2: C, 67.20; H, 4.83. Found: C, 67.05; H, 4.90. [ $\alpha$ ]D +76.8 (c 1.0, CH2Cl2).

(iii) To a solution of the diol from above (0.537 g, 2.14 mmol) in dichloromethane (20 mL) under argon was added p-toluenesulfonic acid (5 mg, 0.03 mmol) followed by trimethyl orthoacetate (0.32 mL, 2.57 mmol). After 1 h, TLC (ethyl acetate - hexane, 1:1) indicated complete reaction and the volatiles were removed in vacuo. <sup>1</sup>H NMR analysis of the crude product indicated that the expected cyclic orthoacetate was the only product formed. The crude product was dissolved with stirring under argon in dichloromethane and trimethylsilyl chroride (0.38 mL, 2.99 mmol) was added. The course of the reaction was monitored by TLC (ethyl acetate - hexane, 1:9) which indicated essentially complete conversion after 3 h at room temperature. The volatiles were removed in vacuo and the residue was dissolved in

methanol (20 mL) followed by addition of potassium carbonate (0.59 g, 4.28 mmol). The resultant mixture was stirred at room temperature for 20 h, filtered, and the solvents were removed in vacuo. The residue was partitioned between ethyl acetate (50 mL) and brine (20 mL), the phases were separated, and the organic phase was washed with saturated aqueous ammonium chloride (20 mL) and brine (20 mL). After drying over MgSO4, the organic phase was evaporated to dryness and the residue was purified by flash chromatography (ethyl acetate - hexane) to yield the desired trans epoxide (0.33 g, 66% based on the diol) as a crystalline solid (m.p. 102 - 105°C). Rf (EtOAc- hexane, 1:9) 0.55. <sup>1</sup>H NMR: 7.39 - 7.28 (4 H, m), 7.08 (4 H, m), 3.83 (2 H, s). <sup>13</sup>C NMR: 162.8 (d, JCF 250), 132.7 (d, JCF 6.3), 127.1 (d, JCF 6.3), 115.5 (d, JCF 19), 62.2. IR (KBr): 3002, 1899, 1773, 1605, 1514, 1453,

1228, 862, 822. Anal. Calc. for C14H10F2O: C, 72.41; H, 4.34. Found: C, 72.33; H, 4.44.  $[\alpha]_D$  +219.3 (c 1.01, CH2Cl2). (This material was shown to be of >98% e.e. by chiral HPLC (Chiralcel OD-H column) after a control experiment with the racemic *trans* epoxide prepared by standard mCPBA epoxidation of the alkene from the McMurry coupling reaction described above.)

(iv) The epoxide from above (1.63 g, 7.02 mmol) was dissolved with stirring under nitrogen in refluxing THF (3 mL). The source of heat was removed briefly and ethylenediamine (250 µL, 3.72 mmol) was added dropwise. The resultant mixture was stirred at reflux for 65 h and the volatiles were removed in vacuo. <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopic analysis of the residue indicated only minor amounts of unreacted epoxide. The crude product was taken up in THF (25 mL) and triphenylphosphine (2.44 g, 9.3 mmol) was added with stirring under nitrogen at room temperature. The resultant mixture was cooled to 0°C and diethyl azodicarboxylate (1.46 mL, 9.3 mmol) was added. The mixture was allowed to reach room temperature and was stirred for 16 h before being partitioned between ether and water. The organic phase was washed with water, then with brine, dried over MgSO4, and evaporated to dryness to give a residue which was purified by flash chromatography (40% ether in pentane) followed by two recrystallisations from hexane (23 mL). There was obtained 0.770 g (42% based on the epoxide) of ligand 1b as an analytically pure crystalline solid (m.p. 135.5 - 136°C). Rf (EtOAc -hexane, 1:3) 0.48. <sup>1</sup>H NMR: 7.20 (8 H, bm), 7.00 (8 H, bm), 3.09 (4H, bs), 2.40 (4 H, m). <sup>13</sup>C NMR: 162.9 (d, JCF 250), 131.3 (b), 127.5 (b), 115.1 (d, JCF 19), 52.5, 49.5 (b), 45.3 (b). (Some of the signals in both the  $^{1}$ H and  $^{13}$ C NMR spectra are broadened at room temperature due to slow pyramidal inversion at nitrogen.) IR (KBr): 3448, 3069, 2982, 2952, 2851, 1896, 1604, 1509, 1229, 1209, 839, 756. Anal. Calc. for C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>24</sub>F<sub>4</sub>N<sub>2</sub>: C, 73.76; H, 4.95. Found: C, 73.87; H, 5.09. [α]D -91.0 (c 1.0, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>).

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