

Electrochemical Iodoamination of Indoles Using Unactivated Amines

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Cite This: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1021/acs.orglett.0c03158>



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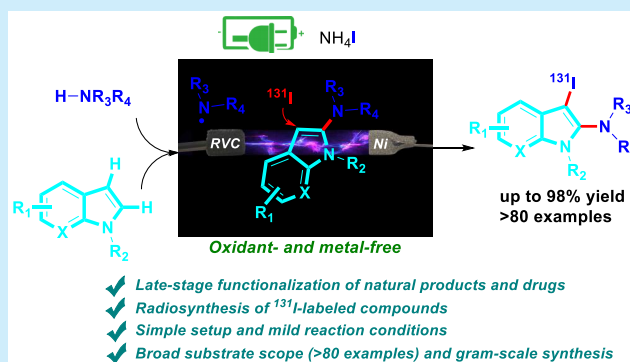


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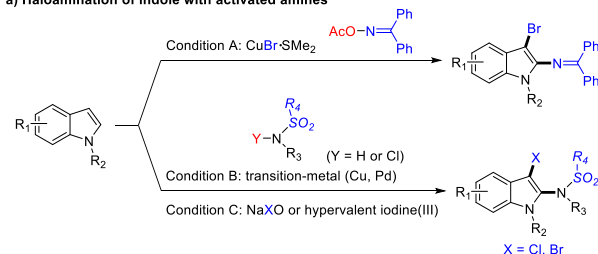
ABSTRACT: An environmentally friendly electrochemical approach for iodoamination of various indole derivatives with a series of unactivated amines, amino acid derivatives, and benzotriazoles (more than 80 examples) has been developed. This strategy was further applied in late-stage functionalization of natural products and pharmaceuticals and gram-scale synthesis and radiosynthesis of ^{131}I -labeled compounds. Fundamental insights into the mechanism of the reaction based on control experiments, density functional theory calculation, and cyclic voltammetry are provided.



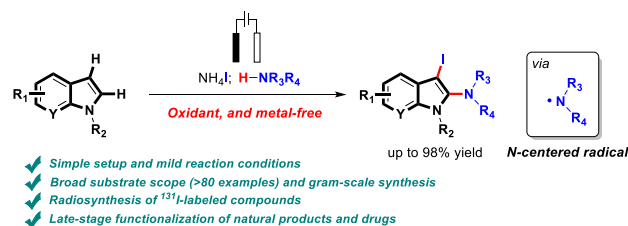
The indole scaffold is privileged structural motif that exists extensively in a wide range of natural products and pharmaceuticals, as well as agricultural chemicals.¹ The direct dual functionalization of indoles is of great interest to chemists because two functional groups can be introduced simultaneously. Specifically, the haloamination of indoles is synthetically attractive because the resulting haloaminated indoles are versatile synthetic blocks in both organic synthesis and biological applications due to their ability to readily facilitate further modification by the transformation of C3 halogen atoms. For instance, the Nicholas group described a copper-catalyzed bromoamination of indoles with oxime esters using a stoichiometric amount of CuBr .² Liu and Liang demonstrated a method for the chloroamidation of indoles with *N*-chlorosulfonamides by using a Pd/Cu -co-catalyst.³ Moriyama and Togo reported the bromoamination of *N*-pivaloylindole with bis(tosyl)imide (Ts_2NH) by using hypervalent iodine(III).⁴ Recently, Yu, Tan, and co-workers developed the chloroamidation of indoles with sulfonamides and NaClO under metal-free conditions.⁵ The concomitant introduction of a halogen and of a nitrogen functional group on indole derivatives has also been developed or observed with other strategies.⁶ Despite the considerable progress that has been made in this field, the existing protocols usually require stoichiometric quantities of oxidant, hypervalent iodines(III), or transition metals (Cu and Pd), all with limited functional group tolerance (Scheme 1a). Specifically, the direct iodoamination of indole derivatives with unactivated amines remains challenging. Since the discovery of the Hofmann–Löffler–Freitag reaction,⁷ it is well known that *N*-halo amines can readily undergo homolytic cleavage to form the corresponding *N*-centered radical species. In recent years,

Scheme 1. C–H Haloamination of Indoles

a) Haloamination of indole with activated amines



b) This work: Iodoamination of Indole with unactivated amines



significant advances have been made in the field of generating *N*-centered radicals for building ubiquitous structural units by using photo- and electrochemistry.^{8,10e,11d} Although considerable effort has been directed toward the development of

Received: September 22, 2020

these nitrogen radicals, most of them are viable on active amines, such as diarylamines,⁹ amides,¹⁰ *p*-methylbenzene sulfonamide derivatives,¹¹ etc., and using *N*-halo analogues of unactivated alkyl amines as *N*-centered radical precursors is still a paramount synthetic challenge.¹²

Compared to conventional chemical approaches, electrochemistry provides a green alternative for redox transformations and an environmentally friendly way to construct important organic molecules.¹³ In recent years, electrochemical generation of *N*-centered radicals has drawn much interest, and several efficient protocols have been developed.^{9,10,12e} The halogen-mediated amination of double bonds via an electron-driven process has also developed well.^{13i,j,14} Furthermore, the electrochemical halogenation of indoles is a known process.¹⁵ As part of our continuing pursuit of the discovery of new electrochemical methods,¹⁶ herein, we report an environmentally friendly electrochemical dual functionalization of indole derivatives with the formation of C–N and C–I bonds in one step. The *N*-centered radical intermediates were demonstrated as key intermediates in this process. Using this strategy, more than 80 dual-functionalized indole derivatives are constructed with high yields under mild conditions [metal- and oxidant-free (Scheme 1b)].

In the beginning of our investigation, 1-methylindole (**1a**) and morpholine (**2a**) were used for optimization studies. The desired yield of dual-functionalization product **4** (98%) was obtained by employing NH₄I as the electrolyte and a CH₃CN/DMSO (4:1) solvent, under a constant current of 12 mA under atmospheric conditions (Table 1, entry 1). Lower yields were

Scheme 2. Scope of Indoles^a

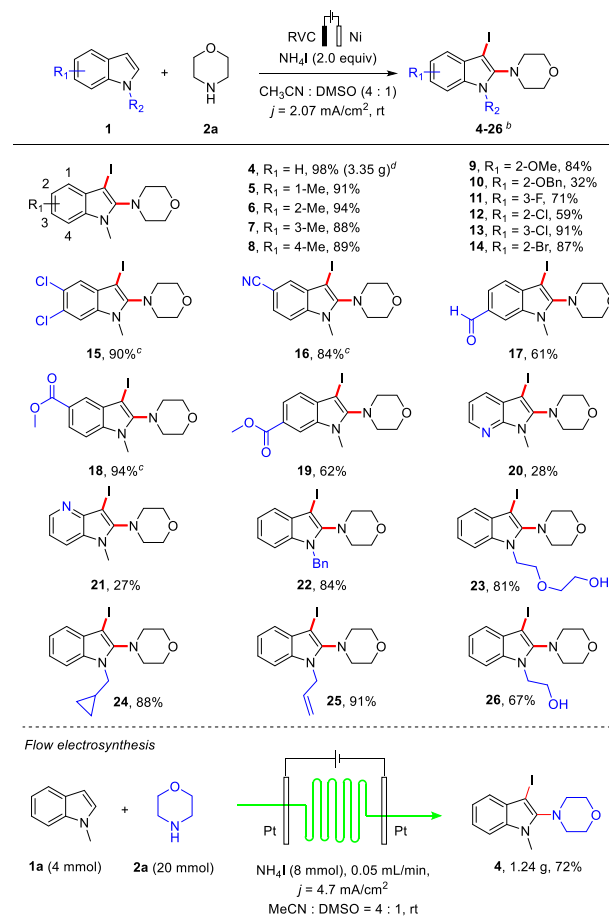


Table 1. Optimization of Reaction Conditions^a

| entry | variation from the "standard conditions" | yield ^b (%) |
|-------|--|------------------------|
| 1 | none | 98 |
| 2 | without DMSO | 76 ^c |
| 3 | without CH ₃ CN | 82 |
| 4 | RVC (+)Pt (–) instead of RVC (+)Ni (–) | 78 ^c |
| 5 | Pt (+)Ni (–) instead of RVC (+)Ni (–) | 87 |
| 6 | 8 mA instead of 12 mA | 71 ^c |
| 7 | 16 mA instead of 12 mA | 81 |
| 8 | without current | no reaction |

^aReaction conditions: RVC anode (100 PPI, 1.2 cm × 1.0 cm × 1.0 cm), foamed Ni cathode (1.0 cm × 1.0 cm), constant current of 12 mA (*j* = 2.07 mA/cm²), **1a** (0.2 mmol), **2a** (0.6 mmol), NH₄I (0.4 mmol), solvent (5.0 mL), undivided cell, air, room temperature, 18 h. RVC is reticulated vitreous carbon. ^bIsolated yield. ^cIodination product **3** was obtained as a byproduct.

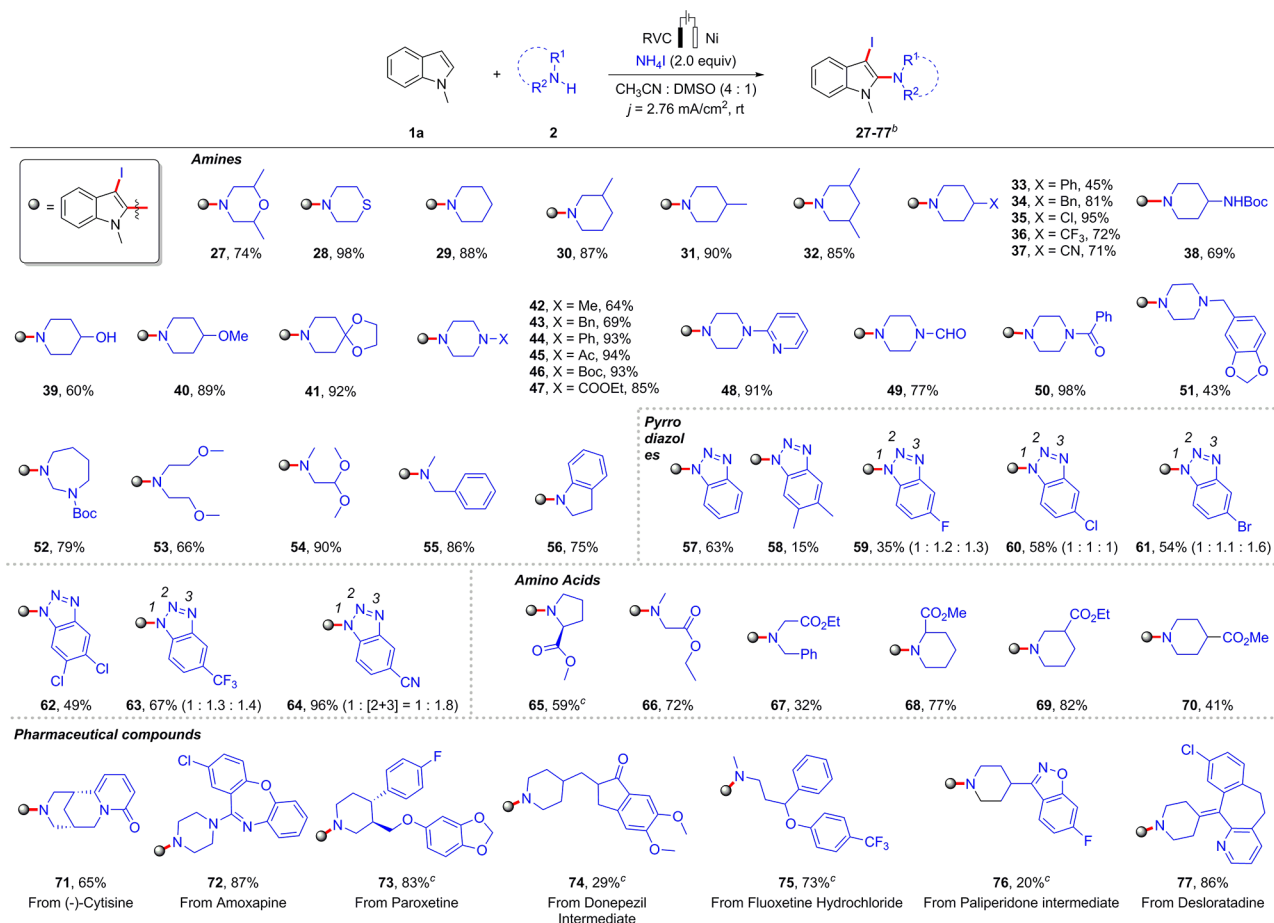
observed without the mixed solvent (Table 1, entries 2 and 3). When a reticulated vitreous carbon (RVC) anode or a nickel foam cathode was replaced, the efficiency of transformation was lower (Table 1, entry 4 or 5, respectively). Decreasing or increasing the current had a minimal effect on the facilitation of transformation (Table 1, entry 6 or 7, respectively). Electricity is indispensable for the reaction (Table 1, entry 8).

A wide variety of indole derivatives with different substituents were examined under optimized conditions (Scheme 2). The indoles with different substituents, including

^aStandard conditions. ^bIsolated yields. ^cWith 10.0 equiv of morpholine. ^dGram-scale synthesis.

alkyl (5–8), alkoxy (9 and 10), halogen (11–15), cyan (16), aldehyde (17), and ester (18 and 19) groups, had been successfully applied to the reaction, giving the iodoamination products in good to excellent yields. The reaction was also successful with heteroaryl indoles, including 7-aza-*N*-methylindole **20** and 4-aza-*N*-methylindole **21**, though with a decreased yield. The *N*-substituted indole derivatives with different groups, such as benzyl (**22**), 2-ethoxyethan-1-ol (**23**), cyclopropylmethyl (**24**), allyl (**25**), and hydroxy (**26**) groups, were well tolerated, producing the corresponding products in high yields. Furthermore, the success of gram-scale synthesis via either a batch protocol (3.35 g, 98% yield) or flow chemistry (1.24 g, 72% yield) provided promising results for further applications in industry.

Next, a large variety of amines were explored under similar conditions by using a constant current of 16 mA. As described in Scheme 3, the reaction displayed a broad scope with amines, and high to excellent yields were achieved (>98% yield). 2,6-Dimethylmorpholine (**27**) and thiomorpholine (**28**) could react smoothly with 1-methylindole **1a**. We also evaluated a wide range of piperidine (**29–41**) and piperazine (**42–51**) derivatives, which are the most prevalent *N*-heterocycles in pharmaceuticals and often used as links in drug modifications. The mild reaction conditions were compatible with various functional groups, including halide, hydroxy, aldehyde, cyan, amide, ether, and ester groups, which are sometimes troublesome in the classical coupling method.

Scheme 3. Scope of Amines^a

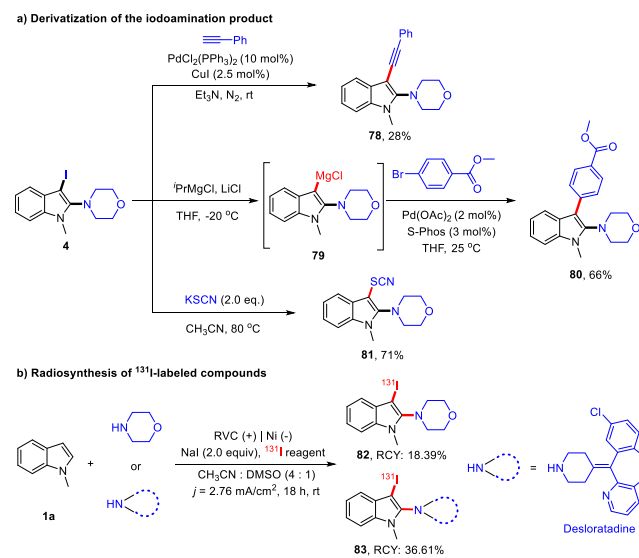
^aStandard conditions with a constant current of 16 mA ($j = 2.76 \text{ mA/cm}^2$). ^bIsolated yields. ^cReaction performed with 2.0 equiv of Na₂CO₃.

Other N-heterocycles with seven- and five-membered rings were also well tolerated (**52** and **56**). To our delight, this transformation was not limited to cyclic systems; acyclic dialkyl amines were also suitable, as demonstrated by the successful formation of **53–55**. Various benzotriazoles also proved to be tolerable, giving iodoamination products in good to excellent yields, whereas the benzotriazoles with electron-donating groups usually gave lower yields (**57–64**). Introducing different amino acids is a popular strategy in medicinal chemistry and is aimed at balancing the biocompatibility of lead compounds. We were pleased to see that the amino acid derivatives were also suitable for this strategy (**65–70**).

The broad substrate scope of the method, as well as the promising functional group compatibility, encouraged us to further evaluate its application in late-stage functionalization of natural products and bioactive molecules (**71–77**). (–)-Cytisine underwent electrochemical iodoamination to afford **71** in 65% yield. Amoxapine and paroxetine were efficiently functionalized in excellent yields to afford **72** (87% yield) and **73** (83% yield), respectively. The Donepezil intermediate, Fluoxetine, and the Paliperidone intermediate underwent functionalization in moderate to high yields (**74–76**, respectively). Electrochemical iodoamination has been achieved on Desloratadine, affording **77** in 86% yield.

To further evaluate the potential of this method, the derivatization of iodoamination products was extended. As shown in Scheme 4, Sonogashira coupling of **4** with

Scheme 4. Derivatization of the Iodoamination Product and Radiosynthesis

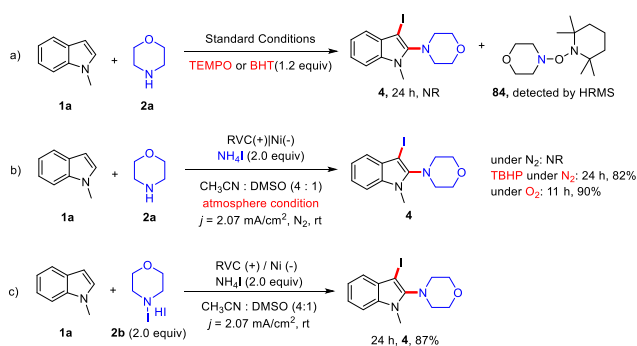


phenylacetylene gave product **78** in an acceptable yield. Coupling of **4** with bromobenzene via Grignard reagent produced **80** in good yield. Furthermore, sulfurcylation of **4** can be performed easily to give **81** in 71% yield. As ¹³¹I is one of the most important radioisotopes in the radiopharmaceut-

ical industry,¹⁷ we further explored application of this strategy to the radiosynthesis of ¹³¹I-labeled compounds. To our delight, ¹³¹I-labeled products **82** and desloratadine analogue **83** could be easily prepared by using this electrochemical iodoamination protocol with 18.4% and 36.7% radiochemical yields, respectively (the radiochemical yield was determined by radio-TLC).

To gain insight into the mechanistic details, control experiments and cyclic voltammetry (CV) analysis were conducted (for more details, see Figures S4, S5, and S8). When TEMPO or BHT as a radical inhibitor was subjected to the reaction, no reaction took place with concomitant detection of TEMPO adduct **84**, indicating that the N-centered radical intermediate was formed during this process (Scheme 5a). Only a trace of product **4** was formed under a N₂

Scheme 5. Control Experiments



atmosphere without O₂ (Scheme 5b). Desired product **4** can be established in high yield under O₂ conditions (O₂ balloon at 1 atm) or with additive TBHP under a N₂ atmosphere (for more details, see the Supporting Information).^{18,19} To further elucidate the mechanism that is responsible for this electrochemical iodoamination, **2b** was directly subjected to reaction and gives **4** with 87% yield in 24 h (Scheme 5c). The results of the CV experiment showed that the oxidative peak potential for the mixture of NH₄I and morpholine ($E_{p/2}$ = 0.81 and 1.17 V vs Ag/AgCl), which was similar to that of **2b** ($E_{p/2}$ = 0.85 and 1.16 V vs Ag/AgCl), was significantly lower than those of **1a** and **2a** [$E_{p/2}$ = 1.41 and 1.24 V vs Ag/AgCl, respectively (Figure S8)]. These experimental observations provide evidence for the formation of highly reactive intermediate **2b** in this electrochemical protocol. Moreover, the DFT calculations demonstrate that the N-centered radical could be easily formed by the homolysis of **2b** (ΔG = 23.7 kcal/mol, at the B3LYP/Def2-SVP level of theory).

On the basis of the mechanistic results presented above, the proposed mechanism is depicted in Figure 1. This electrochemical iodoamination reaction is initiated by oxidation of the iodide ion at the anode, which leads to the formation of iodine (Figure 1). Then, key intermediate **2b** can be generated in situ as morpholine reacts with iodine. N-Centered radical species **I** is generated by homolysis of a weak N–I bond of **2b**, followed by radical addition to the indole at position 2 to afford radical intermediate **II**.^{9a,c,11c,20} Radical intermediate **II** is trapped by superoxide radical HO₂[•] to furnish intermediate **III**,²¹ which can be easily converted to amination product **V** under standard conditions. As an alternative pathway, radical intermediate **II** can also be oxidized at the anode to form carbocation **IV**.²¹ Meanwhile, O₂ was oxidized at the anode to form O₂^{•−}, which abstracts a hydrogen atom from intermediate **IV** to produce

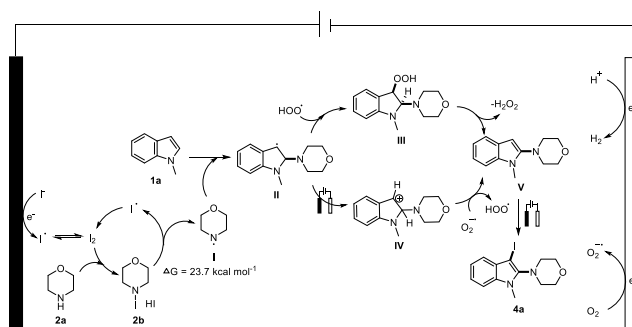


Figure 1. Proposed mechanism.

amination product **V**. Finally, iodination amination product **V** furnishes the desired dual-functionalization product.

In summary, an efficient electrochemical approach was developed for dual functionalization of indoles with a series of unactivated amines. The approach generates a variety of useful iodoamination products with good tolerance of functional groups under mild electrochemical conditions. Mechanism studies demonstrated that the N-centered radical intermediate was formed readily in this process. The success of gram-level synthesis and radiosynthesis of ¹³¹I-labeled compounds, as well as the potential of late-stage functionalization, provides promising results for further applications in industrial settings and medicinal chemistry. Further synthetic application research, as well as the application of ¹³¹I-labeled compounds, is ongoing in our laboratory.

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.orglett.0c03158>.

General procedures, analytical data, NMR spectra, and DFT calculation data (PDF)

Accession Codes

CCDC 2006856 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge via www.ccdc.cam.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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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors acknowledge the National Natural Science Foundation of China (21602142) and the Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities. The authors thank the Xiaoming Feng laboratory (SCU) for access to equipment and Yuqiao Zhou (SCU) for X-ray structural analysis. The authors thank Chuanqin Xia (SCU) and Huawei Cai (SCU) for radiochemical analysis. The authors also thank the comprehensive training platform of the Specialized Laboratory in the College of Chemistry at Sichuan University for testing of compounds.

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