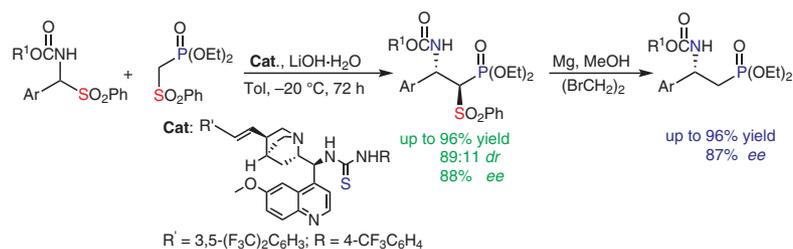


# Sulfonyl as a Traceless Activation Group for Enantioselective Mannich Reaction Catalyzed by Thiourea to Access Chiral $\beta$ -Amino-phosphonates

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**Abstract** An efficient enantioselective Mannich reaction of *N*-protected  $\alpha$ -sulfones with  $\beta$ -benzenesulfonyl phosphonates was developed by using a chiral cinchona alkaloid-derived thiourea as a catalyst. This method was used to obtain a series of chiral  $\alpha$ -sulfonyl- $\beta$ -aminophosphonates in yields of up to 96% with 89:11 dr and 88% ee. These compounds were further transformed into  $\beta$ -aminophosphonates or chiral azetidines with various functional groups by a Horner–Wadsworth–Emmons/aza-Michael addition reaction sequence.

**Key words** amidosulfones, aminophosphonates, asymmetric synthesis, Mannich Reaction, thioureas, organocatalysis

$\beta$ -Aminophosphonates are isosteres of carboxylates that have a high resistance to enzymatic hydrolysis and show good bioactivity in biological and pharmaceutical chemistry.<sup>1</sup>  $\beta$ -Aminophosphonates are widely present in natural products,<sup>2</sup> and they have potential applications in the synthesis of inhibitors of human renin and calpain I, and as anti-HIV agents. The development of methods for the synthesis of chiral  $\beta$ -aminophosphonic acid and its derivatives is therefore of interest to synthetic chemists, and many efficient approaches to the construction of these compounds have been established.<sup>3</sup>

Developed methods include synthesis from natural amino acids, asymmetric Michael addition of phosphites to nitroolefins, and asymmetric hydrogenation of  $\beta$ -amidophosphonates. There are no reports of asymmetric Mannich reactions of methyl phosphonate with imines or their precursors as efficient methods for producing chiral  $\beta$ -aminophosphonic acid derivatives, especially those that cannot be obtained from proteinogenic amino acids. This may be because the low acidity of the  $\alpha$ -hydrogen atom of a phosphonate means that a strong base is needed for deprotonation, which can make asymmetric synthesis difficult. Johnston's

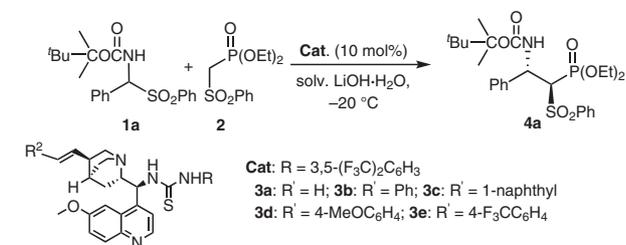
group<sup>3f</sup> reported that the introduction of an electron-withdrawing group ( $\text{NO}_2$ ) at the  $\alpha$ -position of a phosphonate enhances the acidity of its  $\alpha$ -hydrogen, permitting asymmetric Mannich reactions with imines to give a series of chiral  $\alpha,\beta$ -diaminophosphonic acid derivatives. The sulfone group is an efficient electron-withdrawing group, and we hypothesized that it might be used to activate the  $\alpha$ -hydrogen atom of a phosphonate by enhancing its acidity, permitting an asymmetric Mannich reaction to occur under moderate basic conditions.

In continuation of our longstanding research efforts in phosphonate chemistry,<sup>4</sup> we developed a complementary method for the synthesis of chiral  $\beta$ -aminophosphonic acid derivatives. We investigated the asymmetric Mannich reactions of sulfonyl phosphonates with *N*-protected  $\alpha$ -sulfones, through formation of imines in situ in the presence of a base and a chiral thiourea catalyst.<sup>5</sup> A series of chiral  $\alpha$ -sulfone  $\beta$ -aminophosphonates were obtained, from which the sulfonyl moiety could be removed smoothly by reduction.<sup>6</sup> These compounds were further transformed to furnish chiral azetidines with various functional groups through sequential Horner–Wadsworth–Emmons reaction and aza-Michael addition. Here, we report our alternative strategy in which a sulfonyl group is used as a traceless activation group to obtain chiral  $\beta$ -aminophosphonates with good enantioselectivities and diastereoselectivities.

After conducting initial trials, we examined the reaction of the *N*-protected  $\alpha$ -amidosulfone **1a** with the  $\beta$ -benzenesulfonyl phosphate **2** as a model reaction. In the presence of  $\text{LiOH}\cdot\text{H}_2\text{O}$  as a base, the chiral thioureas **3a–e** were screened as catalysts at a 10 mol% loading in toluene at  $-20^\circ\text{C}$  (Table 1). Catalysis with chiral thiourea **3a** gave the desired product **4a** smoothly in 83% yield with 79:21 dr and 74% ee (Table 1, entry 1). On the basis of this result, we modified the catalyst structure by introducing a phenyl group at the 11-position to give catalyst **3b**, which gave the same stereocon-

trol and maintained the enantioselectivity and diastereoselectivity of the product (entry 2). When the substituent at the 11-position was enlarged to naphthyl (**3c**), the enantioselectivity of the product increased slightly to 80% ee (entry 3). The results obtained by using catalysts **3d** and **3e** showed that the electronic effect of the substituents on the phenyl at the 11-position markedly affected the performance of the catalyst. The presence of an electron-donating methoxy substituent on the phenyl group (**3d**) resulted in a low product yield (27%) and low enantioselectivity (68% ee) (entry 4). An electron-withdrawing CF<sub>3</sub> substituent on the phenyl group at the 11-position (**3e**) gave the best results, providing a 93% yield and 83% ee (entry 5). Catalyst **3e** was therefore used to further optimize the solvent (entries 5–10) and the reaction temperature (entries 11 and 12). The results showed that toluene was the best solvent and –20 °C was the optimal temperature.

**Table 1** Catalytic Enantioselective Mannich Reaction under Various Conditions<sup>a</sup>



Entry	Catalyst	Solvent	Yield <sup>b</sup> (%)	dr <sup>c</sup>	ee <sup>d</sup> (%)
1	<b>3a</b>	toluene	83	79:21	74
2	<b>3b</b>	toluene	74	78:22	74
3	<b>3c</b>	toluene	78	79:21	80
4	<b>3d</b>	toluene	27	79:21	68
5	<b>3e</b>	toluene	93	80:20	83
6	<b>3e</b>	PhEt	91	79:21	83
7	<b>3e</b>	PhCl	76	78:22	67
8	<b>3e</b>	THF	35	78:22	4
9	<b>3e</b>	CH <sub>2</sub> Cl <sub>2</sub>	37	79:21	16
10	<b>3e</b>	MeCN	67	79:21	0
11 <sup>e</sup>	<b>3e</b>	toluene	98	79:21	79
12 <sup>f</sup>	<b>3e</b>	toluene	28	79:21	86

<sup>a</sup> Reaction conditions: **1** (0.12 mmol), **2** (0.1 mmol), catalyst (10 mol%), LiOH·H<sub>2</sub>O (0.14 mmol), solvent (1.0 mL), –20 °C, 48 h.

<sup>b</sup> Isolated yield.

<sup>c</sup> Determined by <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy.

<sup>d</sup> Determined by chiral HPLC.

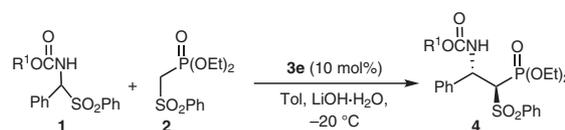
<sup>e</sup> Reaction at –10 °C.

<sup>f</sup> Reaction at –30 °C.

The effect of substituent R<sup>1</sup> as part of the N-protecting group of the α-sulfone was then explored. Boc (R<sup>1</sup> = *t*-Bu, **1d**) and Cbz (R<sup>1</sup> = Bn, **1f**), which are typical and widely used

N-protecting groups, gave only moderate enantioselectivities of 63% and 45% ee, respectively (Table 2, entries 4 and 6). When the size of R<sup>1</sup> was decreased from *t*-Bu in Boc to *i*-Pr (**1e**), the enantioselectivity of the product decreased from 63% to 46% ee (entry 5). In contrast, when the steric hindrance of R<sup>1</sup> was increased by changing R<sup>1</sup> from *t*-Bu to C(Me)<sub>2</sub>Et (**1c**), the product enantioselectivity increased significantly to 78% ee (entry 3). The best result was achieved when R<sup>1</sup> was further increased in size by changing it to C(Me)<sub>2</sub>-*i*-Pr (**1b**; entry 2). The novel CO<sub>2</sub>C(Me)<sub>2</sub>-*i*-Pr group was therefore the best N-protecting group and this was used for further substrate development.

**Table 2** Effect of Various N-Protecting Groups on the Enantioselective Mannich Reaction Catalyzed by **3e**<sup>a</sup>



Entry	Substrate	R <sup>1</sup>	Product	Yield <sup>b</sup> (%)	dr <sup>c</sup>	ee <sup>d</sup> (%)
1	<b>1a</b>	C(Me) <sub>2</sub> - <i>t</i> -Bu	<b>4a</b>	93	80:20	83
2	<b>1b</b>	C(Me) <sub>2</sub> - <i>i</i> -Pr	<b>4b</b>	91	85:15	85
3	<b>1c</b>	C(Me) <sub>2</sub> Et	<b>4c</b>	98	88:12	78
4	<b>1d</b>	<i>t</i> -Bu	<b>4d</b>	93	90:10	63
5	<b>1e</b>	<i>i</i> -Pr	<b>4e</b>	95	92:8	46
6	<b>1f</b>	Bn	<b>4f</b>	98	87:13	45

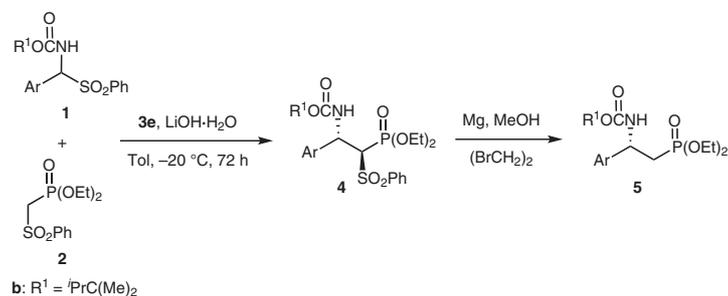
<sup>a</sup> Reaction conditions: **1** (0.12 mmol), **2** (0.1 mmol), **3e** (10 mol%), LiOH·H<sub>2</sub>O (0.14 mmol), toluene (1.0 mL), –20 °C, 48 h.

<sup>b</sup> Isolated yield.

<sup>c</sup> Determined by <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy.

<sup>d</sup> Determined by chiral HPLC.

Once we had optimized the reaction conditions, we investigated the substrate scope. Various α-amidosulfones **1** were used in the catalytic asymmetric Mannich reaction (Table 3).<sup>7</sup> The reaction proceeded smoothly irrespective of whether there was an electron-withdrawing or an electron-donating group on the phenyl ring of the α-amidosulfone (Table 3, entries 1–11), and it gave the corresponding chiral α-sulfonyl-β-aminophosphonates in good to excellent yields with moderate to good stereoselectivities. The effect of the substituent pattern on the phenyl ring was then examined. A substituent at the *meta*-position decreased the enantioselectivity (entries 3, 5, and 10). Disubstituted α-amidosulfones with two substituents on the phenyl ring were suitable for this reaction (entries 12–14). α-Amidosulfones derived from 2-naphthyl and piperonyl aldehydes also gave good yields and high enantioselectivities (entries 15 and 16). It was difficult to separate the diastereomers of **4** by silica gel chromatography; consequently, therefore the diastereomeric ratios of **4** were determined by means of <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy. Because we intended to use the sulfonyl group as a traceless activation group, the mixtures of

**Table 3** Asymmetric Mannich Reactions of Various  $\alpha$ -Amidosulfones Catalyzed by **3e**<sup>a</sup> and Subsequent Desulfonylation Reactions<sup>b</sup>

Entry	Ar	Product	Yield <sup>c</sup> (%)	dr <sup>d</sup> (%)	ee <sup>e</sup> (%)	Product	Yield <sup>c</sup> (%)	ee <sup>e</sup> (%)
1	Ph	<b>4ba</b>	91	85:15	85	<b>5ba</b>	81	84
2	2-FC <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub>	<b>4bb</b>	94	82:18	83	<b>5bb</b>	96	83
3	3-FC <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub>	<b>4bc</b>	96	85:15	64	<b>5bc</b>	84	65
4	4-FC <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub>	<b>4bd</b>	92	83:17	83	<b>5bd</b>	80	82
5	3-ClC <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub>	<b>4be</b>	86	84:16	59	<b>5be</b>	57	61
6	4-ClC <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub>	<b>4bf</b>	93	76:24	77	<b>5bf</b>	60	76
7	2-F <sub>3</sub> CC <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub>	<b>4bg</b>	83	78:22	76	<b>5bg</b>	96	75
8	3-MeC <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub>	<b>4bh</b>	93	83:17	86	<b>5bh</b>	87	85
9	4-MeC <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub>	<b>4bi</b>	94	88:12	87	<b>5bi</b>	69	86
10	3-MeOC <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub>	<b>4bj</b>	94	85:15	81	<b>5bj</b>	67	81
11	4-MeOC <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub>	<b>4bk</b>	95	86:14	87	<b>5bk</b>	94	86
12	3,4-(Cl) <sub>2</sub> C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>3</sub>	<b>4bl</b>	82	68:32	48	<b>5bl</b>	77	49
13	3,4-(Me) <sub>2</sub> C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>3</sub>	<b>4bm</b>	88	89:11	88	<b>5bm</b>	87	87
14	2-Cl-4-MeC <sub>6</sub> H <sub>3</sub>	<b>4bn</b>	87	79:21	73	<b>5bn</b>	83	72
15	2-naphthyl	<b>4bo</b>	92	85:15	80	<b>5bo</b>	93	80
16	piperonyl	<b>4bp</b>	88	84:16	87	<b>5bp</b>	82	86

<sup>a</sup> Reaction conditions: **1** (0.12 mmol), **2** (0.1 mmol), **3e** (10 mol%), LiOH·H<sub>2</sub>O (0.14 mmol), toluene (1.0 mL), -20 °C, 72 h.

<sup>b</sup> Reaction conditions: Mg turnings (30 equiv), 1,2-dibromoethane (50  $\mu$ L), anhyd MeOH (0.1 mmol/mL).

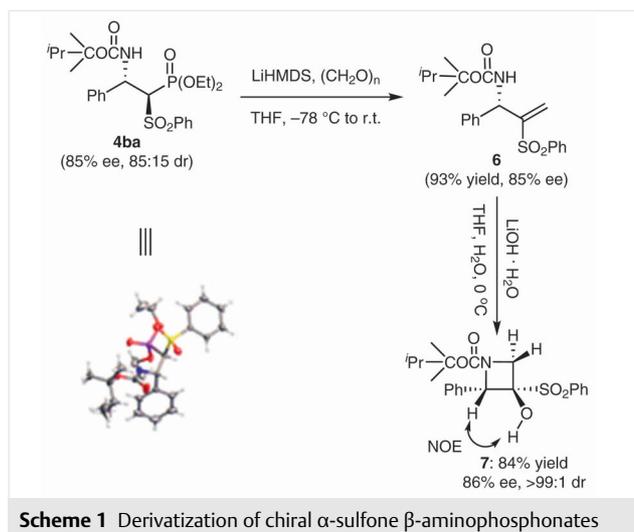
<sup>c</sup> Isolated yield.

<sup>d</sup> Determined by <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy.

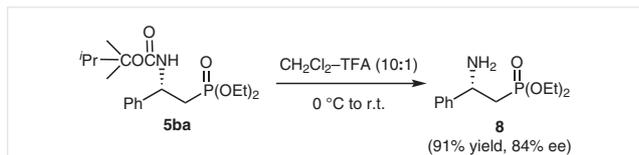
<sup>e</sup> Determined by chiral HPLC.

products **4** were treated with magnesium filings and 1,2-dibromoethane in anhydrous methanol to achieve smooth reductive desulfonylation<sup>7</sup> and transformation into the corresponding  $\beta$ -aminophosphonates **5** with retention of the optical purity.

To further demonstrate the potential use of the  $\beta$ -aminophosphonate products **4** (Scheme 1), **4ba** was treated sequentially with LiHMDS and (CH<sub>2</sub>O)<sub>*n*</sub>. The Horner–Wadsworth–Emmons reaction proceeded smoothly to give the asymmetric aza–Morita–Baylis–Hillman (aza–MBH)-equivalent product **6** of the  $\alpha,\beta$ -unsaturated sulfone. Compound **6** was further transformed into the chiral azetidine **7** by an aza–Michael reaction in the presence of LiOH·H<sub>2</sub>O (Scheme 1).<sup>8</sup>

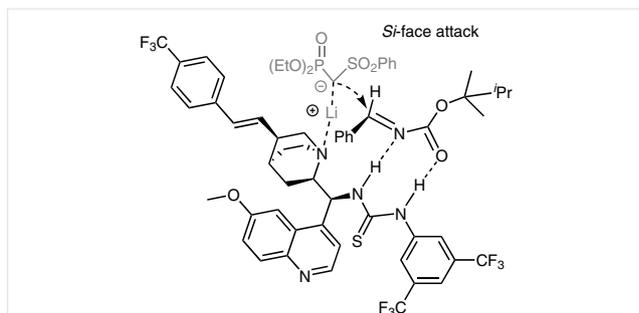


The sulfonyl moiety can be used as a potential functional group in the production of various azetidines containing fluorine, allyl, or olefin substituents.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the N-protecting group  $\text{CO}_2\text{C}(\text{Me})_2$ -*i*-Pr in **5** was removed smoothly in a similar manner to that used for removing Boc, to give **8** in good yield without racemization (Scheme 2).



**Scheme 2** Removal of the novel N-protecting group

The absolute configuration of **4ba** was unambiguously determined to be *S,S* by means of X-ray crystal analysis,<sup>10</sup> and the configurations of the other products were deduced accordingly. Based on the stereochemical outcome, we propose the possible transition-state model shown in Figure 1. The thiourea activates the imine by two hydrogen-bonding interactions with the nitrogen atom and the oxygen atom of the carbonate, respectively. The deprotonated anion of the  $\beta$ -benzenesulfonyl phosphate is directed by coordination with the tertiary nitrogen atom through its counterion, i.e., lithium. Nucleophilic addition from the *Si* face of the imine then leads to the observed favored product. The definite reason why substituents at the 11-position of the catalysts affect the catalytic performance is unclear. The absolute configuration of the new stereogenic center in **7** was confirmed by using NOESY, which showed a correlation between the benzyl proton and the hydroxy proton.



**Figure 1** Proposed transition-state model

In conclusion, we have developed a highly efficient method for synthesizing  $\beta$ -aminophosphonates by an enantioselective Mannich reaction catalyzed by a chiral thiourea, combined with the use of a sulfonyl as a traceless group for activating the  $\alpha$ -hydrogen atom of a phosphonate.<sup>11</sup> An alternative method for obtaining aza-MBH products of  $\alpha,\beta$ -unsaturated sulfones and azetidines through a Horner-Wadsworth-Emmons reaction and sequential aza-Michael

addition was also established. A novel N-protecting group was also developed. Further exploration of the use of azetidines in organic synthesis is currently ongoing in our laboratory.

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## Supporting Information

Supporting information for this article is available online at <https://doi.org/10.1055/s-0036-1589156>.

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- (10) CCDC 1548198 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for compound **4ba**. These data can be obtained free of charge from The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre via [www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data\\_request/cif](http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif).
- (11) **Mannich Products 4 and Aminophosphonates 5; General Procedure**  
The N-protected  $\alpha$ -amido sulfone **1** (0.12 mmol, 1.2 equiv), **3e** (10 mol%), and LiOH·H<sub>2</sub>O (0.14 mmol, 1.4 equiv) were dissolved in toluene (1.0 mL) at –20 °C, and the mixture was stirred for 5 min.  $\beta$ -Benzenesulfonyl phosphate **2** (0.1 mmol, 1.0 equiv) was added at –20 °C, and the mixture was stirred for 72 h. The reaction was quenched with sat. aq NH<sub>4</sub>Cl, and the aqueous layer was extracted with EtOAc (3 × 30 mL). The organic phases were combined, dried (Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>), filtered, and concentrated under

reduced pressure. The crude product **4** was purified by chromatography [silica gel, EtOAc–PE].

1,2-Dibromoethane (50  $\mu$ L) was added to a mixture of product **4** and Mg turnings (30 equiv) in anhyd MeOH (0.1 mmol/mL) at 0 °C, and the mixture was stirred at r.t. for 11 h. The reaction was then quenched with sat. aq NH<sub>4</sub>Cl and the mixture was filtered. The aqueous layer was extracted with EtOAc. The organic phases were combined, dried (Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>), filtered, and concentrated under reduced pressure. The crude product was then purified by chromatography [silica gel, EtOAc–PE].

**Diethyl ((2S)-2-Phenyl-2-(((1,1,2-trimethylpropoxy)carbonyl)amino)ethyl)phosphonate (5ba)**

Prepared from **4ba** (32 mg, 0.060 mmol), Mg turnings (44 mg, 1.80 mmol), and 1,2-dibromoethane (50  $\mu$ L), as described above, as a colorless oil; yield: 19 mg (81%),  $[\alpha]_D^{25} + 13.7$  ( $c = 0.38$ , CH<sub>2</sub>–Cl<sub>2</sub>). HPLC: Chiralpak ID column [hexane–*i*-PrOH (80:20), flow rate: 0.5 mL/min,  $\lambda = 254$  nm]:  $t_{\text{minor}} = 25.6$  min,  $t_{\text{major}} = 29.8$  min. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 7.31$  (s, 4 H), 7.24 (s, 1 H), 5.81 (s, 1 H), 5.03 (s, 1 H), 4.03 (s, 2 H), 3.85 (d,  $J = 54.0$  Hz, 2 H), 2.42–2.13 (m, 3 H), 1.35 (s, 6 H), 1.28 (t,  $J = 6.0$  Hz, 3 H), 1.14 (s, 3 H), 0.93–0.73 (m, 6 H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (151 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 154.9$ , 142.3, 128.5, 127.3, 126.0, 84.8, 61.8 (d,  $J = 7.5$  Hz), 61.6 (d,  $J = 6.0$  Hz), 50.3, 36.2, 33.2 (d,  $J = 140.4$  Hz), 23.1, 23.0, 17.3, 16.3 (d,  $J = 6.0$  Hz), 16.2 (d,  $J = 6.0$  Hz). HRMS (ESI):  $m/z$  [M + Na]<sup>+</sup> Calcd for C<sub>19</sub>H<sub>32</sub>NNaO<sub>5</sub>P: 408.1916; found: 408.1918.