

Asymmetric Synthesis of P-Stereogenic Secondary Phosphine-Boranes by an Unsymmetric Bisphosphine Pincer-Nickel Complex

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ABSTRACT: The first highly enantioselective catalytic synthesis of P-stereogenic secondary phosphine-boranes was realized by the asymmetric addition of primary phosphine to electron-deficient alkenes with a newly developed unsymmetric bisphosphine (PCP') pincer-nickel complex. Various P-stereogenic secondary phosphine-boranes were obtained in 57–92% yields with up to 99% ee and >20:1 dr. The follow-up alkylation upon P–C bond formation with alkyl halides provided a practical way to access P-chiral compounds with diverse functional groups.

P-stereogenic molecules are an important class of compounds, which not only are widely utilized as chiral ligands or organocatalysts for diverse asymmetric transformations,^{1–3} but also function as drugs and biological molecules.^{4–6} Thus, the synthesis of P-stereogenic compounds is of paramount importance. In particular, the development of privileged P-chiral phosphine ligands, such as CAMP, DIPAMP, Tangphos, QuinoxPhos, BIBPO, etc., opens up a new research area for achieving interesting asymmetric catalysis.^{7–27} Continuous efforts have been deployed to develop effective methodologies for the preparation of P-stereogenic tertiary phosphines.^{28–35} For example, the dynamic kinetic resolution of racemic secondary phosphines with alkyl or aryl halides affording P-chiral compounds has been investigated with chiral palladium,^{36–38} platinum,^{39–42} and ruthenium^{43,44} complexes as catalysts. In addition, catalytic asymmetric additions of racemic secondary phosphines to benzoquinones⁴⁵ or electron-deficient olefins^{46–48} have been also exploited to produce P-stereogenic phosphines.^{49–51} Compared to configurationally stable P-stereogenic tertiary phosphine, secondary phosphine is prone to racemization due to its low inversion barrier,⁵² which makes the synthesis of optically active secondary phosphine more difficult and challenging. The reported methods limit to the resolution of secondary phosphine chiral at phosphorus via recrystallization⁵³ or using chiral auxiliaries.^{10,28} Considering the importance of P-stereogenic secondary phosphines in serving as versatile building blocks for the divergent construction of chiral phosphorus ligands (Figure 1a)^{10,28–30,32} and transition metal complexes,^{54,55} new catalytic asymmetric strategies to the construction of P-stereogenic secondary phosphines are highly desirable. To the best of our knowledge, the direct preparation and application of P-chiral secondary phosphine via a catalytic process have not been reported.⁵⁶ To address the difficulties in chiral secondary phosphines synthesis and enrich the ligand portfolio for asymmetric catalysis, here we report for the first time the catalytic synthesis of P-stereogenic secondary phosphine-boranes with high enantio- and diastereoselectivities with a newly developed unsymmetric bisphosphine

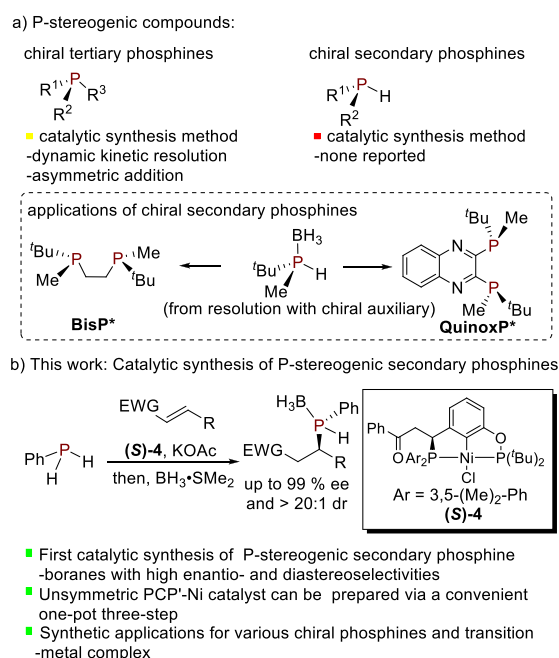


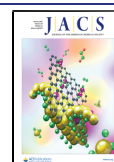
Figure 1. P-stereogenic phosphines.

(PCP') pincer-nickel complex (Figure 1b). The resulting chiral secondary phosphines are readily convertible into useful chiral phosphines ligands for asymmetric transformations.

At the onset of our study, we envisioned that our previously developed bisphosphine (PCP) pincer-palladium ((S,S)-1)⁵⁷ would be capable of controlling the stereochemistry of the

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addition of phenylphosphine to enones by the chiral C2 symmetric-type palladium complex. When **1a** reacted with H₂PPh in the presence of (S,S)-**1** under −60 °C, the desired P–C bond formation product **2a** was obtained in 72% yield after BH₃ protection, but to our disappointment, poor enantio- and diastereoselectivity was observed (Table 1, entry 1), which

Table 1. Catalytic Synthesis of P-Stereogenic Secondary Phosphine-Boranes with PCP Pincer-Pd/Ni Complexes^a

(S,S)-**1** (M = Pd, Ar = Ph, X = Cl)
 (S)-**2** (M = Ni, Ar = Ph, X = Cl)
 (S)-**3** (M = Ni, Ar = 3,5-(Me)₂-Ph, X = Cl)
 (S)-**4** (M = Ni, Ar = 3,5-(Me)₂-Ph, X = OAc)
 (S)-**5** (M = Ni, Ar = 3,5-(Me)₂-Ph, X = OAc)
 (S)-**6** (M = Ni, Ar = 3,5-(Me)₂-Ph, X = OAc)

entry	catalyst	solvent	T (°C)	yield (%) ^b /dr ^c	ee of the major and minor product (%) ^d
1 ^e	(S,S)- 1	DCM	−60	72 (1:1)	13/7
2	(S)- 2	DCM	−60	84 (1:1)	59/54
3	(S)- 3	DCM	−60	75 (5:1)	70/24
4	(S)- 4	DCM	−60	80 (13:1)	94/−
5 ^e	(S)- 5	DCM	−60	78 (13:1)	94/−
6 ^e	(S)- 6	DCM	−60	0	n.a.
7	(S)- 4	MeOH	−60	70 (2:1)	40/32
8	(S)- 4	CHCl ₃	−60	60 (4:1)	89/56
9	(S)- 4	THF	−60	18 (1:1)	44/17
10	(S)- 4	DCM	−40	82 (13:1)	94/−
11	(S)- 4	DCM	−20	82 (12:1)	90/−
12 ^e	(S)- 4	DCM	−40	0	n.a.
13	none	DCM	−40	0	n.a.

^aReaction conditions: enone **1a** (0.20 mmol) and phenylphosphine (0.30 mmol) with chiral catalyst (1.0 mol %) and KOAc (10 mol %) in DCM (1.4 mL) at the indicated temperature for 12 h under nitrogen atmosphere. ^bIsolated yield. ^cdr value shown in parentheses determined by crude ¹H NMR. ^dee value determined by HPLC. ^eNo KOAc. n.a. = no analysis.

is a sharp contrast to the high ee obtained with HPPH.⁵⁷ It is speculated that compared with diphenylphosphine, H₂PPh has a smaller size, and the rotation around Pd–P bond will be easier when it is bound to the Pd catalyst. We wondered if unsymmetric PCP' pincer-metal complexes bearing two different neutral P and P' donors in a larger size will be more flexible and effective for optimization of the catalyst and improvement of the stereoselectivity in the current reaction. Therefore, we designed and synthesized PCP' pincer metal complexes containing phenyl-bridged phosphine–phosphinite ligand with a stereogenic carbon center based on our reported method with (S,S)-**1** as the catalyst.⁵⁷ The corresponding enantiopure Pd/Ni complexes (S)-**2**–**4** was obtained via a convenient one-pot three-step reaction (see Supporting Information). Encouragingly, when our newly developed Pd complex (S)-**2** bearing a PPh₂ and a larger OP'Bu₂ group combined with KOAc were applied to this system, the reaction proceeded in 59% ee, albeit with low dr (entry 2). A modification of the catalyst by changing the center metal to nickel provided **2a** in 70% ee and 5:1 dr (entry 3). Further optimization of the ligand by replacing the Ph ((S)-**3**) with a

3,5-(Me)₂-Ph ((S)-**4**) substituent improved the enantio- and diastereoselectivity to 94% ee and 13:1 dr (entry 4). With OAc anion (S)-**5** displayed similar catalytic activity compared to (S)-**4** (entry 5). In contrast, a cationic complex (S)-**6** did not catalyze the reaction (entry 6). This hydrophosphination is sensitive to the temperature and solvent, and the best results were obtained by using DCM at −40 °C (entries 7–11). Control experiments verified that both catalyst and base are essential for product formation (entries 12 and 13).

Under the optimized conditions (Table 1, entry 10), the hydrophosphination of a wide variety of enones with H₂PPh was then investigated using complex (S)-**4** as the catalyst (Figure 2). Both electron-withdrawing (F, Cl, and Br) and

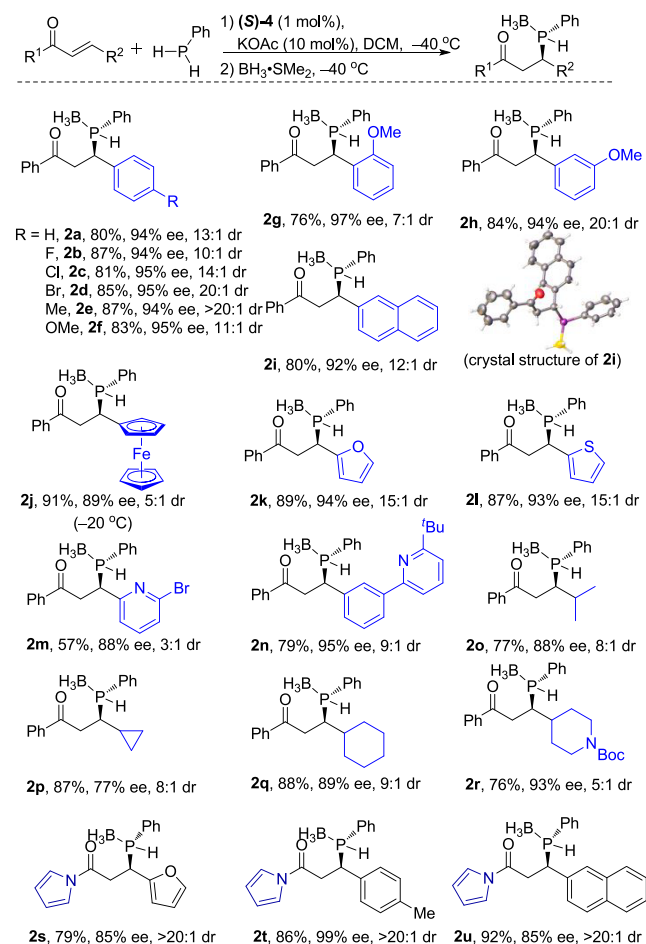


Figure 2. Substrate scope. An X-ray crystal structure⁵⁹ of **2i** was obtained to assign the absolute configuration of the products (see the Supporting Information).

electron-donating (Me and OMe) substituents attached to β-aryl α,β-unsaturated phenyl ketone substrates were tolerated, and all of them furnished high enantioselectivities and good diastereoselectivities (**2b**–**2f**). With substituents at the ortho-position or meta-position, the reaction proceeded well and provided the products in good yields with up to 97% ee and >20:1 dr (**2g** and **2h**). The β-naphthyl and β-ferrocenyl enones were also appropriate substrates for the current catalytic system (**2i** and **2j**). In the cases of β-heteroaryl species such as β-furyl, β-thienyl, β-pyridyl enones that may bind to the nickel center through the heteroatom, good stereocontrol could still be achieved (**2k**–**2n**). In addition, the enones bearing an alkyl

group in the β position such as i Pr (**2o**), cyclopropyl (**2p**), cyclohexyl (**2q**), and hetero-cyclohexyl (**2r**) afforded high levels of stereoselectivities. Gratifyingly, α,β -unsaturated *N*-acylpyrroles are also suitable substrates for this transformation under standard conditions (**2s–2u**).⁵⁸

Upon scaling up the hydrophosphination reaction of β -naphthyl enone in the presence of 2 mol % of PCP' pincer-nickel catalyst (**S**)-**4**, 1.12 g of product **2i** (99% yield, 92% ee, 12:1 dr) were obtained, displaying the robust nature of this reaction. The obtained P-stereogenic secondary phosphine is present as a useful precursor for the conversion into chiral tertiary phosphines (**3a–3e**) and bisphosphine compounds (**3f** and **3g**) with moderate to high yields by the reaction of optically active **2i** and alkyl halides in the presence of NaHMDS under -78°C (Figure 3).⁶⁰

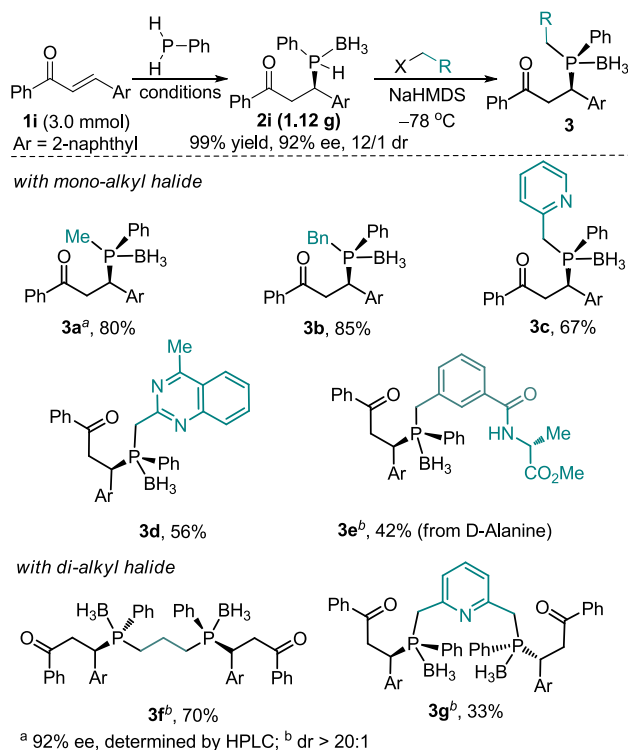


Figure 3. Synthetic transformations.

To further illustrate the utility of the present methodology, a bisenone **4** was reacted with H_2PPh in the presence of (**S**)-**4**, followed by BH_3 protection and methyl substitution to yield a bisphosphine **5** bearing four stereogenic centers in 99% ee (Figure 4). It is worth noting that this chiral bisphosphine compound was a useful ligand for the preparation of P-chiral pincer nickel complex, which was further verified as an effective catalyst in the asymmetric conjugate hydrophosphination, furnishing the desired product **6** in 93% yield with 94% ee (in toluene).

The proposed catalytic cycle for the nickel catalyzed asymmetric addition of H_2PPh to enones is illustrated in Figure 5. First, coordinated anion exchange forms the PCP'-Ni-OAc complex (**S**)-**5**. Second, transphosphination occurs between H_2PPh and (**S**)-**5**, which affords a nickel phosphido intermediate **A**^{61–63} (^{31}P NMR spectrum: δ (ppm) 200.78 (d, $J = 247.6$ Hz), 55.22 (d, $J = 245.4$ Hz), -57.0 (brs); see Supporting Information). Then, the nucleophilic phosphorus addition to the β -position of **1** generates a nickel phosphine

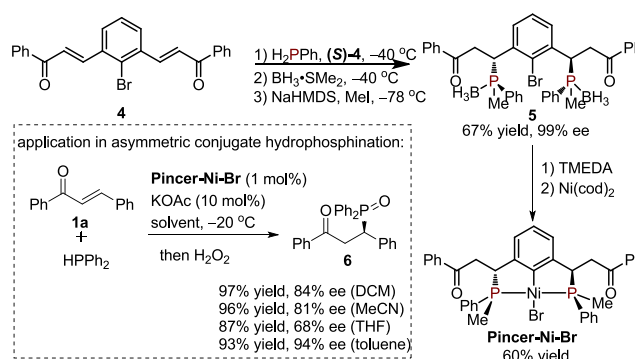


Figure 4. Synthetic approach to pincer-Ni-Br complex and its application.

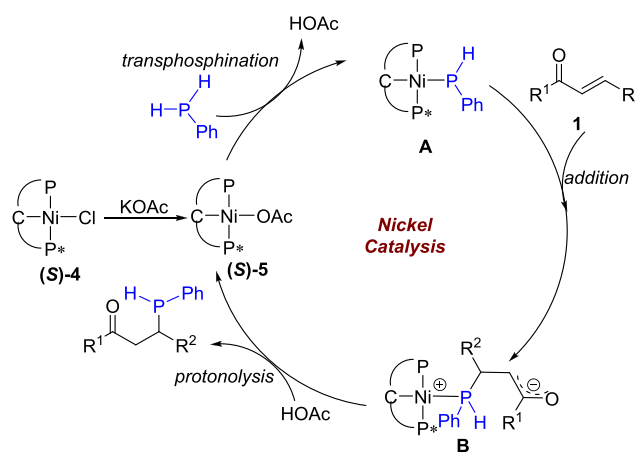


Figure 5. Proposed mechanism.

complex that bears a pendant anion **B**. Finally, the reaction of this nickel intermediate **B** with HOAc releases the product as well as regenerates active catalyst (**S**)-**5**. It is important to note that the product is unstable without protection and the racemization at phosphorus occurred when the temperature was raised, leading to the formation of two isomers with low diastereoselectivity (^{31}P NMR spectrum: δ (ppm) -22.0 (s), -29.0 (s); see Supporting Information).

The crystal structures of (**S**)-**2**, (**S**)-**3**, and (**S**)-**5** were determined by X-ray diffraction.⁵⁹ Figure 6 exhibits the superimposed crystal structures of (**S**)-**3** and (**S**)-**5** and reveals

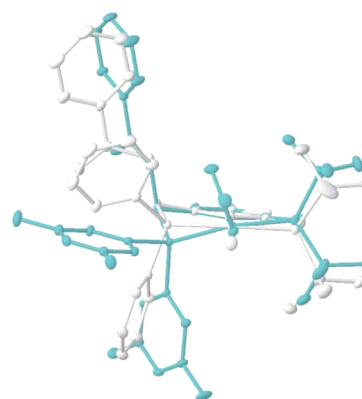


Figure 6. Superimposed crystal structure of (**S**)-**3** (gray) with (**S**)-**5** (blue). Fitted are the central metal together with the metal-bound phenyl carbon atoms. Hydrogen atoms are omitted for clarity.

differences in how the phosphorus groups flank the coordination site around nickel center. It is easy to observe that two phosphorus atoms are almost located in the same plane with the Ni-bound phenyl atoms in (S)-3, while distributed on both sides of the plane in (S)-4. This distortion ($\theta = 20.1(3)^\circ$, see the Supporting Information) should be attributed to the 3,5-methyl substituted phenyls and -OAc group. The inversion of phenylphosphine in nickel phosphido intermediate **A** might be limited due to the enhanced steric strain when (S)-4 was used as catalyst. Experimental evidence for this steric hindrance effect by the unsymmetric PCP' pincer-nickel complex (S)-4 is supported by the improved enantio- and diastereoselectivity, which were obtained when utilizing 3,5-(Me)₂-Ph in place of Ph substituent (Table 1, entry 4 vs entry 3). Similarly, low reactivity was observed by the addition of chalcone with HPPH₂ using (S)-4 as catalyst (14% yield and 12% ee with (S)-4; 27% yield and 38% ee with (S)-3, see the Supporting Information), which can be explained by the crowded steric environment around nickel center in (S)-4.

The tentative stereochemical pathway for this hydrophosphination is shown in Figure 7. The observed absolute

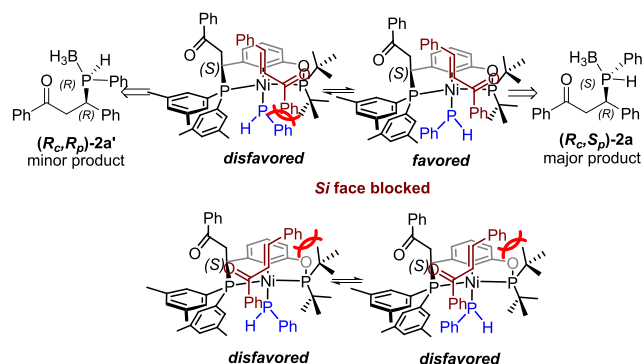


Figure 7. Tentative stereochemical pathway for the asymmetric hydrophosphination.

configuration of the major product **2** with *R* configuration at the carbon atom and *S* configuration at the phosphorus atom when (S)-4 is used is consistent with this mechanistic picture in which the prochiral *Si* face of the nickel phosphido intermediate **A** is effectively shielded by *tert*-butyl groups of the unsymmetric PCP' ligand sphere, providing excellent stereochemical control over the addition process.

In summary, we have developed an unsymmetric bisphosphine (PCP') pincer-nickel complex for catalytic synthesis of P-stereogenic secondary phosphine-boranes in high yields with excellent enantio- and diastereoselectivities. Substrates with various functional groups were tolerated under current conditions. In addition, the obtained chiral secondary phosphines are useful precursors for the conversion into other phosphorus compounds, which can be used as chiral phosphine ligands for asymmetric catalysis. Further application of this chiral pincer-nickel catalyst in other asymmetric reactions are in progress.

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/jacs.1c02772>.

Experimental procedures, products, NMR spectra, HPLC traces, and X-ray structures (PDF)

■ Accession Codes

CCDC 2026045 and 2026047–2026049 contain 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.

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