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Graphical Abstract

Relative reactivity of substituted acetophenones in enantioselective biocatalytic reduction

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catalyzed by plant cells of Daucus carota and Petroselinum crispum

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S-alcohol



X= H; *p*-OCH₃; *p*-Cl; *p*-Br; *p*-NO₂.



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Relative reactivity of substituted acetophenones in enantioselective biocatalytic reduction catalyzed by plant cells of *Daucus carota* and *Petroselinum crispum*

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords: Enantioselective bioreduction Plant cells Acetophenones Hammett's correlation Relative reactivity S-alcohols We have examined enantioselective bioreduction of acetophenone and its substituted derivatives into corresponding *S*-alcohols catalyzed by *Daucus carota* and *Petroselinum crispum* plant cells in water and isooctane. We found that the nature of the substituent has a profound effect on the relative reactivity of substituted acetophenones and enantioselectivity of biocatalytic reduction. Electron-withdrawing substituents –Br and –NO₂ enhance the initial rate of reaction and yields of products, while electron-donating substituent –OCH₃ decreases them. The reduction rates and yields of products in water were noticeably higher in comparison with similar reductions conducted in isooctane. Correlations between the initial reaction rate and the substituent constant (σ^+) in the aromatic ring characterizing its nature were established. Comparison of ρ constants of bioreduction catalyzed by *D. carota* and *P. crispum* shows that the sensitivity of the reduction to the nature of the substituents is more significant in the case of *D. carota* biocatalyst. Comparison of ρ constants for *D. carota* and *P. crispum* in water and isooctane indicates that the sensitivity of bioreduction to the nature of the substituent tends to increase from water to isooctane.

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1. Introduction

Enantioselective bioreduction of prochiral ketones is an important transformation in organic synthesis. Biocatalytic reduction can be performed using whole cell plant and microbial systems, as well as isolated enzymes. Enantioselective bioreduction catalyzed by various plant cells is an efficient and simple method due to its high enantioselectivity and mild reaction conditions. *Daucus carota* cells are widely used in enantioselective biocatalysis due to their ability to produce secondary alcohols with excellent yields and optical purity. In addition, *Petroselinum crispum, Nicotiana tabacum, Apium graveolens, Cucumis sativus, Solanum tuberosum, Pisum sativa* were previously reported to have a high synthetic potential in asymmetric reduction of functionally substituted carbonyl compounds.^{1–19}

Enantioselective bioreduction of prochiral ketones, in particular substituted acetophenones, implies the participation of oxidoreductases in the process of hydride ion transfer from NADH to the carbonyl group. The rate and efficiency of this process may depend on the electron density of the carbonyl group, which can be changed in the presence of electron-donating or electron-withdrawing substituents in the aromatic ring. The effect of these substituents' nature on the enantioselectivity of bioreduction is not very well understood.

Correlations between bioreduction rate of acetophenone derivatives and the nature of substituents catalyzed by isolated rat liver dehydrogenase and recombinant ketoreductases were previously described by Uwai K. et al.²⁰ and Zhu D. et al.²¹

In this report, we examined how the nature of substituents in a series of acetophenones affects the rate and direction of bioreduction catalyzed by plant cells of *D. carota* and *P. crispum*.

2. Results and Discussion

We investigated the kinetics and enantioselectivity of bioreduction of functionally substituted acetophenones catalyzed

Pre-by plant cells of *D. carota* and *P. crispum*, which are known to exhibit a rather high reductase activity ²⁻¹⁹.

Acetophenone 1a and its derivatives: 4-chloroacetophenone 2a, 4-bromoacetophenone **3a**, 4-nitroacetophenone **4a**, 4-methoxyacetophenone 5a were reduced enantioselectively by using D. carota or P. crispum in water (substrate concentration 20 mmol/l, biocatalyst concentration 100 g/l) at 23 -27 °C for 96 hours to produce *S*-1-phenylethanol 1b. S-1-(4chlorophenyl)ethanol 2b, S-1-(4-bromophenyl)ethanol 3b, S-1-(4nitrophenyl)ethanol 4b and S-1-(4-methoxyphenyl)ethanol 5b, respectively. The conversion and enantiomeric excess (ee) of products were determined by enantioselective GC and polarimetry analysis (Scheme 1).



X= H; *p*-OCH₃; *p*-Cl; *p*-Br; *p*-NO₂.

Scheme 1 - Biocatalytic reduction of acetophenone and its substituted derivatives 1a-5a catalyzed by D. carota or P. crispum plant cells.

The obtained results indicate that the nature of the substituent in the aromatic ring significantly impacts the reaction rate and the yields of products. Electron-withdrawing substituents –Br and – NO_2 enhance the initial rate of reaction, while electron-donating substituent –OCH₃ slows down the initial reaction rate (Figure 1). Such effect of substituents in the aromatic ring on the initial rate of reactions involving nucleophilic agents was previously observed in various reaction series.²²

The sensitivity of reactions to the nature of the substituent is determined by the type of reaction and by position of the substituent in the aromatic ring. There is often a correlation between the initial reaction rate and the substituent constant characterizing its nature.



Figure 1 - Kinetics of formation of substituted S-1-phenylethanols **1b-5b** in biocatalytic reduction of acetophenone and its derivatives **1a-5a** in the presence of a). *D. carota*; b). *P. crispum* (T = $23-27 \degree C$, solvent - water, substrate concentration 20 mmol/l, biocatalyst concentration 100 g/l).

The classic description of such correlations is performed by the Hammett equation²²:

$$lg(V_X/V_H) = \rho\sigma \tag{1}$$

where V_x - the initial rate of substituted S-1-phenylethanols **2b-5b** formation, mmol·s⁻¹/l;

 $V_{\rm H}$ - the initial rate of S-1-phenylethanol **1b** formation, mmol·s⁻¹/l;

 σ – the Hammett constant;

 ρ – the reaction series constant.

ournal Pre-princontrast, application of the modified Hammett equation

Calculation of experimentally obtained initial rates of bioreduction of substituted acetophenones and comparison of the $lg(V_X/V_H)$ values and the substituent constants σ^{22} showed poor correlation in accordance with the Hammett equation.

using the σ^+ constants, suggesting that the substituent participates in direct polar conjugation with the electron-withdrawing transition state, showed a good correlation between $lg(V_X/V_H)$ values and σ^+ constants.²² (Table 1, Figure 2).

Table 1. Kinetic parameters in the bioreduction of acetophenone and its substituted derivatives **1a-5a** catalyzed by *D. carota* or *P. crispum* cells

Daucus carota				Petroselinum crispum					
Alcohol (X)	V _X	(V_X/V_H)	$lg(V_X/V_H)$	$\sigma^{\scriptscriptstyle +}$	Alcohol (X)	V _X	(V_X/V_H)	$lg(V_X/V_H)$	σ^+
1b (H)	7,77.10-5	1	0	0	1b (H)	9,02·10 ⁻⁵	1	0	0
2b (Cl)	3,05.10-5	0,39	-0,41	0,035	2b (Cl)	5,41.10-5	0,60	-0,22	0,035
3b (Br)	17,2.10-5	2,21	0,34	0,025	3b (Br)	11,5.10-5	1,28	0,11	0,025
4b (NO ₂)	26,9.10-5	3,46	0,54	0,74	4b (NO ₂)	17,2.10-5	1,91	0,28	0,74
5b (OCH ₃)	1,25.10-5	0,16	-0,8	-0,648	5b (OCH ₃)	0,97.10-5	0,11	-0,96	-0,648

substrate concentration 20 mmol/l, biocatalyst concentration 100 g/l, T=23-27 °C, solvent - water



Figure 2 – Correlations between experimentally obtained $lg(V_X/V_B)$ and σ^* values in the bioreduction of substituted acetophenones **1a-5a** catalyzed by a). *D. carota* or b). *P. crispum* at 23-27 ° C in water

The hydride ion transfer to the carbonyl group by NADH occurs in the process of enatioselective bioreduction of acetophenones **1a-5a** to the corresponding alcohols **1b-5b**. The favorable combination of polar factors that occurs in transition state in case of electron-withdrawing substituents is positively reflected in the values of the initial reaction rates.

The exception is p-chloroacetophenone **2a**. The initial reduction rate of **2a** is significantly lower than the expected value (Fig. 2), estimated by interpolating the resulting dependence. It apparently can be explained by a specific effect of this substrate on the catalyst.

In order to study the possible inhibitory effect of pchloroacetophenone **2a** on the biocatalyst, we carried out transformation of acetophenone **1a** by *D. carota* cells under the same reaction conditions for 24 hours in the presence of a small additive of p-chloroacetophenone (2.5%). Bioreduction resulted in formation of corresponding *S*-1-phenylethanol **1b** with 7% yield. Reduction of ketone **1a** under similar conditions (24 hours) in the absence of 2.5% *p*-chloroacetophenone **2a** results in production of alcohol **1b** with a yield of 20%. In the case of biotransformation in the presence of *p*-chloroacetophenone (2.5%) for 96 hours the yield of *S*-1-phenylethanol **1b** is 22%. The inhibitory effect increases with the increase in the concentration of *p*-chloroacetophenone **2a** (7.5%) during bioreduction of acetophenone **1a**. In this case, the yield of *S*-1-phenylethanol **1b** decreased to 5% (24h), and - 16% (96h). These results most likely reflect the assumption of the inhibitory effect of ketone **2a** on the biocatalyst.

We compared the ρ constants of bioreduction catalyzed by *D*. *carota* (1) and *P*. *crispum* (2) and found that $\rho_2 = 0.85$ is lower than $\rho_1=0.94$. Thus, the sensitivity of the reduction to the nature of the substituents is more significant in the case of *D*. *carota* biocatalyst.

The nature of the substituent also affects the product yields and the enantioselectivity of the process (Table 2).

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<i>crispum</i> in wa	ter				······	
	Daucus carota		Petroselinum crispum			
Alcohol (X)	Yield, %	Enantiomeric excess (ee), %	Alcohol (X)	Yield, %	Enantiomeric excess (ee), %	
1b (H)	50	98	1b (H)	76	82	
2b (Cl)	27	68	2b (Cl)	59	90	
3b (Br)	70	98	3b (Br)	69	94	
4b (NO ₂)	83	97	4b (NO ₂)	74	95	
5b (OCH ₃)	5	71	5b (OCH ₃)	14	72	

Table 2. Yield and enantiomeric excess (ee) of alcohols 1b-5b in bioreduction of ketones 1a-5a catalyzed by D. carota and F

T=23-27 °C, t=96 hours, substrate concentration 20 mmol/l, biocatalyst concentration 100 g/l

Organic compounds, including alkylaromatic ketones, have limited solubility in aqueous media. Thus, it is important to study the possibility of enantioselective bioreduction catalyzed by D. carota and P. crispum plant cells in organic solvents.

Moreover, it is not obvious that the influence of the nature of substituents on the bioreduction of acetophenones 1a-5a in organic solvents will be similar to reductions conducted in water.

conditions in isooctane (which is less toxic among other organic solvents) (Scheme 1).

We found that the presence of a substituent in the aromatic ring has the same significant effect on the reaction rate and the yields and ees of products as in the case of bioreductions carried out in water solutions. The electron-withdrawing substituents -Br and -NO₂ enhance the initial rates of reaction, while the electrondonating substituent –OCH₃ slows it down (Figure 3, Table 3).

Therefore, we studied bioreduction of substituted acetophenones 1a-5a catalyzed by D. carota or P. crispum cells under the same

Figure 3 - Kinetics of S-1-phenylethanol 1b and its substituted derivatives 2b-5b formation in the reaction of biocatalytic reduction of acetophenone derivatives 1a-5a in the presence of a). D. carota; b). P. crispum (T = 23-27 ° C, solvent - isooctane, substrate concentration 20 mmol/l, biocatalyst concentration 100 g/l).



The reduction rates of ketones 1a-5a in the presence of D. carota and P. crispum in isooctane are noticeably lower in comparison with a similar reductions conducted in water. This is probably due to a change of lipophilic-hydrophilic balance in the globular structure of the enzyme responsible for the reduction process, which leads to a decrease in its catalytic activity. In this case, the enantioselectivity also depends on the nature of the substituent.

Graphic dependence (Figure 4) of $lg(V_X/V_H)$ parameter on σ^+ indicates satisfactory correlation of these values (Table 4). Ketone 2a is the exception as in the case of bioreduction carried out in water.

Table 3. Yield and enantiomeric excess (ee) of alcohols **1b-5b** in bioreduction of ketones **1a-5a** catalyzed by *D. carota* and *F crispum* in isooctane

	Daucus carota	Petroselinum crispum						
Alcohol (X)	Yield, %	Enantiomeric excess (<i>ee</i>), %	Alcohol (X)	Yield, %	Enantiomeric excess (<i>ee</i>), %	_		
1b (H)	24	94	1b (H)	22	90			
2b (Cl)	17	94	2b (Cl)	14	91			
3b (Br)	28	94	3b (Br)	29	93			
4b (NO ₂)	33	94	4b (NO ₂)	26	94			
5b (OCH ₃)	2,5	74	5b (OCH ₃)	2	73			
T=23-27 °	C, t=96 hou	rs, substrate concentration	20 mm	ol/l, biocat	talyst concentration 100	g/l		



Figure 4 – Correlations between experimentally obtained lg (V_X/V_H) and σ + values in the bioreduction of substituted acetophenones (1a-5a) by a). D. carota or b). P. crispum at 23-27 ° C in isooctane

Table 4. Kinetic parameters in the bioreduction of acetophenone and its substituted derivatives **1a-5a** catalyzed by *D. carota* or *P. crispum* cells

Daucus carota				Petroselinum crispum					
Alcohol (X)	V _X	(V_X/V_H)	$lg(V_X/V_H)$	$\sigma^{\scriptscriptstyle +}$	Alcohol (X)	V _X	(V_X/V_H)	$lg(V_X/V_H)$	$\sigma^{\!+}$
1b (H)	$4,44 \cdot 10^{-5}$	1	0	0	1b (H)	4,79·10 ⁻⁵	1	0	0
2b (Cl)	$2,08 \cdot 10^{-5}$	0,47	-0,33	0,035	2b (Cl)	$2,70 \cdot 10^{-5}$	0,56	-0,25	0,035
3b (Br)	8,68·10 ⁻⁵	1,95	0,29	0,025	3b (Br)	9,31·10 ⁻⁵	1,94	0,28	0,025
4b (NO ₂)	14,3.10-5	3,22	0,51	0,74	4b (NO ₂)	14,9·10 ⁻⁵	3,11	0,48	0,74
5b (OCH ₃)	0,35.10-5	0,07	-1,15	-0,648	5b (OCH ₃)	$0,65 \cdot 10^{-5}$	0,14	-0,85	-0,648

substrate concentration 20 mmol/l, biocatalyst concentration 100 g/l, T=23-27 °C, solvent – isooctane

In general, a similar dependence of the influence of substituents on the reaction rate is observed for both isooctane and aqueous medium.

However, a comparison of $\rho_1 = 0.94$ with $\rho_1^* = 1.12$ and also $\rho_2 = 0.85$ with $\rho_2^* = 0.93$ for *D. carota* and *P. crispum* in water and isooctane, respectively, shows that the sensitivity of bioreduction to the nature of the substituent tends to increase from water to isooctane.

3. Conclusions

In this study, we examined enantioselective bioreductions of a series of substituted arylketones into corresponding *S*-alcohols catalyzed by *Daucus carota* and *Petroselinum crispum* plant cells in water and isooctane.

We investigated how the nature of substituents in a series of acetophenones affects the rate and direction of bioreduction using *D. carota* and *P. crispum* plant cells. Our resuts suggest that the nature of the substituent in the aromatic ring and solvent significantly impact the reaction rate and the yields of products. Electron-withdrawing substituents –Br and –NO₂ enhance the initial rate of reaction and yields of products, while electron-donating substituent –OCH₃ decreases them. In addition, we observed that the reduction rates and yields of products in isooctane are noticeably lower in comparison with similar reductions conducted in water.

Correlations between the initial reaction rate and the substituent constant (σ^+) in the aromatic ring characterizing its nature were established. We compared the ρ constants of bioreduction catalyzed by *D. carota* and *P. crispum* and found that the sensitivity of the reduction to the nature of the substituents is more significant in the case of *D. carota* biocatalyst.

Comparison of ρ constants for *D. carota* and *P. crispum* in water and isooctane shows that the sensitivity of bioreduction to the nature of the substituent tends to increase from water to isooctane.

4. Experimental

4.1. General information

Acetophenone, *para*-nitro-, methoxy-, chloro- and bromoacetophenones were purchased from commercial sources.

Racemic alcohols were prepared from the corresponding ketones by reduction with NaBH₄.

Fresh carrots (*D. carota*) and parsley (*P. crispum*) were purchased from a local market.

performed Gas chromatographic analyses were on Khromatek-crystall-5000.2 with flame-ionization detector. Enantioselective column CHIRALDEXB-PM Astec $(30m\times0.25mm\times0.12\mu m)$; column temperature 100°C (1b), 120°C (2b, 5b), 130°C (3b),150°C (4b); oven temperature 250 °C, detector temperature 250 °C; helium as a carrier gas, flow rate 14.2 mL/min. For more efficient chromatographic separation of enantiomeric alcohols, its acetyl derivatives were obtained.

¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra were measured on Bruker AM-300 and AMX-300 spectrometeres. As internal δ (0.00) for standards served TMS ¹H NMR and CDCl₃ δ (77.0) for ¹³C NMR spectroscopy.

GC-MS analyses were performed using GCMS-QP2010S Shimadzu. A mass spectrometer with an ion trap detector in full scan mode under electron impact ionization (70 eV) in the 35-500 amu range was used. The chromatographic column used for the analysis was an HP-1MS capillary column (30 m×0.25 mm×0.25 μ m). The vaporizer temperature was 280°C, the ionization chamber temperature was 200°C. Helium was used as carrier gas, at a flow rate of 1.1 mL/min. The injections were performed in mode at 100 -230 °C at a heating rate of 20°C/min.

The absolute configurations of the compounds were determined with «Optical Activity Limited» model AA-55.

4.2. Reduction of ketones by D. carota or P. crispum

Ketones **1a-5a** (20mmol) were added to a suspension of freshly cut *D. carota* or *P. crispum* (15 g) in distilled water or isooctane (70 ml) under constant stirring in a conical Erlenmayer flask. The reaction mixture was then placed in an orbital shaker (150 rpm) at room temperature. After achieving the necessary conversions, the suspension was filtered, and *D. carota* or *P.crispum* were washed three times with water. The filtrates were extracted with diethyl ether (3×125 mL). The organic phase was dried over MgSO₄, evaporated and monitored by GLC.

4.2.1. S-1-phenylethanol (1b)

¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): δ =1.40 d (3H, CH₃), 4.74 q (1H, CH), 7.20-7.28 m (5H, CH_{Ar}). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): δ =25.18 (1C, CH₃), 70.05 (1C, CH), 125.34 (2C, CH_{Ar}), 127.18 (1C, CH_{Ar}), 128.28 (2C, CH_{Ar}), 145.92 (1C, CH_{Ar}).

-GC/MS (m/z (%)): 122 ([M]⁺, 30), 107 (85), 79 (100), 78 (23), 77 (57), 51 (23), 50 (11), 44 (17),43 (39), 39 (10).

4.2.2. S-1-(4-chlorophenyl)ethanol (2b)

¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): δ =1.29 d (3H, CH₃), 5.35 q (1H, CH-O), 7.34 m (4H, 4CH_{Ar}). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): δ =26.14 (CH₃), 67.86 (CH-OH), 127.59 (2CH_{Ar}), 128.33 (2CH_{Ar}), 131.35 (C_{Ar}-Cl), 146.63 (C_{Ar}). GC/MS (m/z (%)): 155 ([M]⁺, 20), 143 (25), 141 (93), 139 (38), 113 (40), 77 (100), 75 (22), 51 (23), 44 (58), 43 (59).

4.2.3. S-1-(4-bromophenyl)ethanol (3b)

¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): δ =1.29 d (3H, CH₃), 4.69 q (1H, C<u>H</u>-OH), 7.28 d (2H, 2CH_{Ar}), 7.46 d (2H, CH_{Ar}). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): δ =26.04 (CH₃), 67.96 (CH-OH), 119.85 (2CH_{Ar}), 127.98 (2CH_{Ar}), 131.25 (C_{Ar}-Br), 146.98 (C_{Ar}). GC/MS (m/z (%)): 202 ([M]⁺, 12), 186 (39), 184 (43), 156 (21), 121 (26), 78 (45), 77 (100), 51 (26), 50 (19), 43 (69).

4.2.4. S-1-(4-nitrophenyl)ethanol (4b)

¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): δ =1.45 d (3H, CH₃), 4.85 q (1H, C<u>H</u>-OH), 7.6 d (2H, 2CH_{Ar}), 8.16 d (2H, 2CH_{Ar}). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): δ =25.96 (1C, CH₃), 67.88 (1C, CH-OH), 123.67 (2CH_{Ar}), 126.81 (2CH_{Ar}), 146.6 (1C, C_{Ar}), 155.62 (C_{Ar}-NO₂). GC/MS (m/z (%)): 244 ([M⁺], 7), 150 (100), 134 (5), 120 (10), 104 (29), 92 (15), 89(9), 76 (18), 50 (16), 42 (8).

4.2.5. S-1-(4-methoxyphenyl)ethanol (5b)

¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): δ =1.28 d (3H, CH₃), 3.7 s (3H, CH₃-O), 4.65 q (1H, C<u>H</u>-OH), 6.85 d (2H, 2CH_{Ar}), 7.23 d (2H, CH_{Ar}). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): δ =26.27 (CH₃), 55.37 (CH₃-O), 68.11 (CH-OH), 113.73 (2CH_{Ar}), 126.86 (2CH_{Ar}), 139.69 (C_{Ar}), 158.36 (C_{Ar}-O). GC/MS (m/z (%)): 152 ([M]⁺, 25), 137 (100), 134 (18), 109 (53), 94 (30), 91 (15), 77 (30), 65 (14), 44 (16), 43 (29).

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- Enantioselective biocatalysis
- Enantioselective bioreduction of substituted acetophenones catalyzed by plant cells
- The effect of substituent on the relative reactivity of substituted acetophenones
- Correlation between the initial reaction rate and the substituent constant (σ^+) in bioreduction
- Sensitivity of the reduction to the substituent type for *D. carota* and *P. crispum* biocatalyst
- Sensitivity of the bioreduction to the substituent type in water and isooctane

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