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Asymmetric construction of quaternary stereocenters by magnesium catalysed direct amination of β -ketoesters using *in situ* generated nitrosocarbonyl compounds as nitrogen sources†

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The first example of a Lewis acid catalysed asymmetric hydroxyamination of β -ketoesters with nitrosocarbonyl compounds generated *in situ* was accomplished. The combination of a catalytic amount of $\text{Mg}(\text{OTf})_2$ with a chiral N,N' -dioxide ligand provides highly substituted quaternary β -keto amino acid derivatives in high yields (up to 97%) and enantioselectivities (up to 96%). Regioselectivities (N- vs. O-attack) are uniformly high for all substrates (>20 : 1).

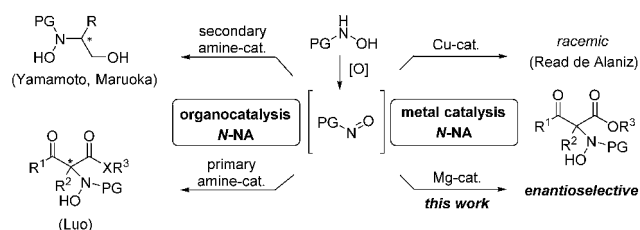
Introduction

The development of catalytic and enantioselective reactions using unmodified reaction partners with simple experimental protocols has been a rapidly growing area in synthetic organic chemistry. In this regard, the construction of optically active nitrogen-containing molecules is of fundamental interest due to their diverse biological activities and applications in pharmaceutical industries.¹ In general, the construction of C–N bonds in asymmetric catalysis involves either the addition of nitrogen-based nucleophiles to electrophiles or nucleophilic additions to preformed C=N bonds.^{2,3} An alternative to these strategies is electrophilic amination using a formal “ NH_2^+ ” source.⁴ Azodicarboxylates have been most frequently utilized in such reactions. However, the cleavage of N–N bonds to obtain the desired α -aminocarbonyl compounds requires harsh conditions.⁵ Nitrosoarenes have also been utilized as a nitrogen source, but their synthetic utility is unfortunately quite limited due to the difficult removal of aromatic N-substituents.⁶ In contrast, nitrosocarbonyl compounds with easily removable protecting groups (*e.g.* Boc or Cbz) are more versatile aminating reagents.⁷ Unlike the stable arylnitroso compounds, nitrosocarbonyl compounds are transient species and are usually generated by the oxidation of corresponding hydroxamic acid derivatives.⁸ Mechanistically, this coupling of a nucleophilic hydroxylamine with carbonyl compounds is a direct route to

α -aminocarbonyls, with the challenge of ensuring that oxidation processes are compatible with the catalytic cycle.⁹

In seminal work, the Read de Alaniz group has generated nitrosocarbonyl species through aerobic oxidation and utilized them in the Cu-catalysed *N*-nitroso aldol (*N*-NA, hydroxyamination) reactions of β -ketoesters in racemic fashion.¹⁰ Recently, Luo *et al.* reported an asymmetric version of this reaction using a chiral primary amine as an organocatalyst.¹¹ Our group and the Maruoka group have also independently reported asymmetric *N*-NA reactions of nitrosocarbonyl species with aldehydes using chiral secondary amines as organocatalysts (Scheme 1).¹²

While many asymmetric *N*-NA reactions of transient nitrosocarbonyl species have been established through organocatalysis, the development of enantioselective *N*-NA reactions of these species using Lewis acid catalysis remains elusive. Recently, our group and the Read de Alaniz group independently reported the Cu-catalysed enantioselective *O*-nitroso aldol (*O*-NA, aminoxylation) reactions of β -ketoesters with *in situ* generated nitrosocarbonyl species (Scheme 2).¹³ We envisioned that the high *O*-selectivity of these reactions is possibly due to the high affinity of copper towards the nitrogen center of the ambident nitrosocarbonyl electrophile¹⁴ and a

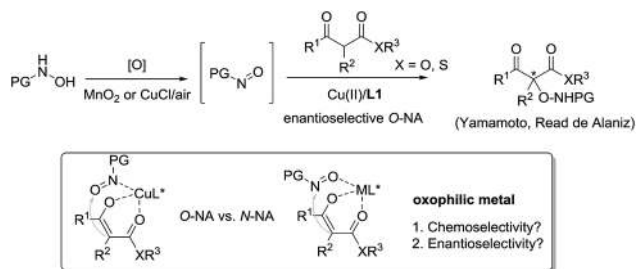


Scheme 1 *N*-Nitroso aldol reactions of nitrosocarbonyl compounds. PG = protecting group.

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Scheme 2 O-Nitroso aldol reactions of nitrosocarbonyl compounds and the tuning of the regioselectivities using oxophilic metal centered Lewis acids. PG = protecting group. For **L1** see Table 1.

judicial choice of an oxophilic Lewis acid should switch the chemo-selectivity to *N*-NA (Scheme 2).¹⁵ Herein, we report the Mg(OTf)₂-catalysed enantioselective α -amination of β -ketoesters with *N*-protected hydroxyl amines as a nitrogen source and MnO₂ as an oxidant (Scheme 1).¹⁶ This novel method allows the asymmetric construction of quaternary stereocenters in high yields and enantioselectivities *en route* to a diverse array of β -keto and β -hydroxy amino acid derivatives.

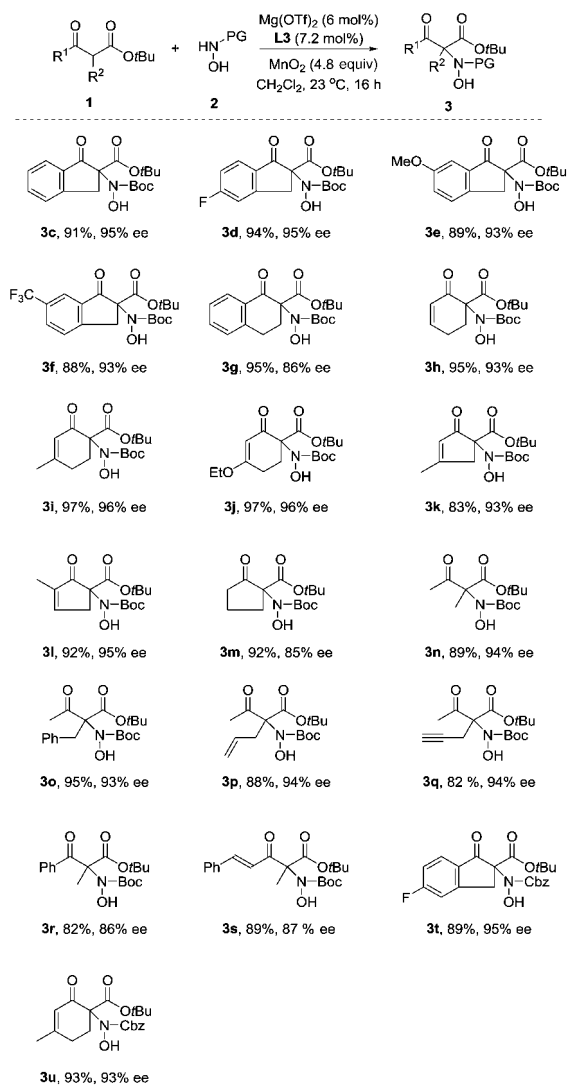
Results and discussion

We commenced our investigation using β -ketoester **1a** as model substrate with the oxophilic magnesium salt Mg(OTf)₂ as a catalyst in combination with commercially available bisoxazoline ligands (Table 1). To our delight, when a solution of readily available *N*-Boc-hydroxylamine **2a** was slowly injected into a mixture of 10 mol% of Mg(OTf)₂ and 12 mol% of PhBox ligand **L1** in the presence of substrate **1a** and oxidant MnO₂ in CH₂Cl₂ at room temperature, the aldol reaction proceeded with high regioselectivity (**3** : **4** = 15 : 1) and smoothly delivered the desired product **3a** in an 86% isolated yield. However, the asymmetric induction was very poor (entry 1). Replacing ligand **L1** with **L2** did not improve the outcome. The use of the chiral *N,N'*-dioxide ligand **L3** developed by Feng¹⁷ exclusively delivered *N*-NA product **3a** in high yield (91%) and the enantioselectivity also increased to 68% (entry 3) with only 6 mol% catalyst loading. To further improve the asymmetric induction, we have modified the ester moiety of the β -ketoester **1**. Gratifyingly, the asymmetric induction increases with the increasing steric bulk of the R group in **1** (entries 3–5) and the best result was obtained for a *t*Bu group producing **3c** in 91% yield and 95% ee, without compromising the regioselectivity (**3** : **4** > 20 : 1, entry 5). Thus,

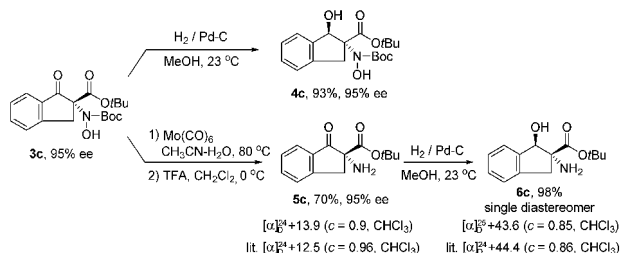
Table 1 Optimization of the reaction conditions^a

Entry	1	MX _n	L	Solvent	Yield ^b of 3 (%)	3 : 4 ^c	ee ^d of 3 (%)
1 ^e	1a	Mg(OTf) ₂	L1	CH ₂ Cl ₂	86	15 : 1	21
2 ^e	1a	Mg(OTf) ₂	L2	CH ₂ Cl ₂	80	15 : 1	4
3	1a	Mg(OTf) ₂	L3	CH ₂ Cl ₂	91	>20 : 1	68
4	1b	Mg(OTf) ₂	L3	CH ₂ Cl ₂	68	>20 : 1	83
5	1c	Mg(OTf) ₂	L3	CH ₂ Cl ₂	91	>20 : 1	95
6	1c	Mg(OTf) ₂	L4	CH ₂ Cl ₂	74	>20 : 1	4
7	1c	Mg(OTf) ₂	L5	CH ₂ Cl ₂	74	>20 : 1	78
8	1c	Mg(OTf) ₂	L6	CH ₂ Cl ₂	94	>20 : 1	20
9 ^e	1c	Ni(OTf) ₂	L3	CH ₂ Cl ₂	45	1 : 1	ND
10 ^e	1c	Zn(OTf) ₂	L3	CH ₂ Cl ₂	60	2 : 1	ND
11 ^e	1c	Ca(OTf) ₂	L3	CH ₂ Cl ₂	96	>20 : 1	31
12 ^e	1c	Sr(OTf) ₂	L3	CH ₂ Cl ₂	88	15 : 1	43
13 ^e	1c	Sc(OTf) ₃	L3	CH ₂ Cl ₂	85	13 : 1	–36
14	1c	Mg(ClO ₄) ₂	L3	CH ₂ Cl ₂	94	>20 : 1	93
15	1c	Mg(NTf) ₂	L3	CH ₂ Cl ₂	82	15 : 1	95
16	1c	Mg(OTf) ₂	L3	(CH ₂ Cl) ₂	85	>20 : 1	93
17 ^f	1b	Cu(OTf) ₂	L1	CH ₂ Cl ₂	68	<1 : 20	88

^a Reaction of β -ketoester **1** (0.1 mmol) with hydroxamic acid **2** (0.12 mmol) was carried out in the presence of metal salt MX_n (0.006 mmol), ligand **L** (0.0075 mmol) and MnO₂ (0.48 mmol). ^b Yield of isolated product. ^c Isolated product ratio. ^d Determined by HPLC on chiral stationary phase. ^e 0.01 mmol of MX_n and 0.012 mmol of **L** were used. ^f Ref. 13a. ND = not determined.



Scheme 3 Scope of the enantioselective *N*-nitroso aldol reaction. Reaction conditions: β -ketoester **1** (0.1 mmol), hydroxamic acid (0.12 mmol), $\text{Mg}(\text{OTf})_2$ (0.006 mmol), **L3** (0.0075 mmol), MnO_2 (0.48 mmol). The yield of the isolated products are given. The ee values were determined by HPLC on a chiral stationary phase. PG = protecting group.



Scheme 4 Transformation of the hydroxyamination product: synthesis of β -keto and β -hydroxy amino acid derivatives.

*t*Bu- β -ketoesters seem to be optimal for our purpose. Further screening of other *N,N'*-dioxide ligands **L4–L6** and Lewis acid catalysts (Ni-, Zn-, Ca-, Sr-, Sc-salts) with β -ketoester **1c** was

unsatisfactory in terms of both the reactivities and selectivities (entries 6–13). Altering the counter anion of the Mg-catalyst and the reaction solvent also gave inferior results (entries 14–16). Thus, $\text{Mg}(\text{OTf})_2$ in combination with ligand **L3** was considered as the catalyst of choice. It should be noted that β -ketoester **1b** exclusively delivered *O*-NA product **4b** in 68% yield and 88% ee when $\text{Cu}(\text{OTf})_2$ was employed as the catalyst in combination with bisoxazoline ligand **L1** under identical conditions.^{13a}

With the optimal reaction conditions in hand, the substrate scope of this Lewis acid catalysed asymmetric *N*-NA reaction for the construction of C–N bond was explored and the results are summarised in Scheme 3. The reaction is quite general. A broad spectrum of β -ketoesters, cyclic as well as acyclic, could be employed to afford quaternary *N*-NA products **3** in high yields and enantioselectivities. It is worthy of note that the undesired *O*-NA products **4** were not detected in any of these cases. The cyclic β -ketoesters with substituted 1-indanone subunits (**3c–f**) gave uniformly high yields (88–94%) and enantioselectivities (93–95%). The β -ketoester with a 1-tetralone subunit (**1g**) worked equally well with a slight reduction in the enantioselectivity (95% yield, 86% ee). The cyclic β -ketoesters possessing sensitive cyclohexene and cyclopentene subunits are also good substrates for this reaction, delivering the *N*-NA products **3h–l** in high yields (83–97%) and selectivities (93–96%). Substitutions at R^1 and R^2 for acyclic β -ketoesters have minimal effects on the outcome of the reaction. Reactions of *t*butyl acetoacetates with a range of substituents (methyl, benzyl, allyl, propargyl) at the R^2 position are very efficient, yielding **3n–q** with high asymmetric induction (94, 93, 94, 94% ee, respectively). The products **3p** and **3q** are particularly very interesting, where hydroxyamination proceeded without affecting labile functionalities such as allyl and propargyl, demonstrating the mildness of our oxidation/catalytic cycle. Substrates with phenyl and cinnamyl substitution at R^1 are also efficient and the desired products **3r** and **3s** were isolated with 86% and 87% ee, respectively. It is important to mention that while the asymmetric hydroxyamination reaction *via* organocatalysis developed by the Luo group has unfortunately failed for β -ketoesters substrates containing aromatic substituents at the R^1 position,¹¹ high asymmetric induction has been achieved with our protocol for this class of substrates (**1r** and **1c–g**), which demonstrates the efficiency of this catalytic protocol. The reaction is also compatible with other hydroxamic acid derivatives, such as *N*-Cbz-hydroxylamine **2b**, and the desired products (**3t**, **u**) were obtained in high yields (89, 93%, respectively) with high asymmetric induction (95, 93% ee, respectively).

In order to highlight the synthetic utility of the hydroxyamination products, we performed a functionalization of *N*-NA product **3c** (Scheme 4). Under hydrogenation conditions using Pd/C, the keto-carbonyl group was smoothly reduced offering β -hydroxy amino acid derivative **4c** in 93% yield. The treatment of **3c** with $\text{Mo}(\text{CO})_6$ cleanly cleaved the N–O bond,¹⁸ affording β -keto amino acid derivative **5c** after Boc-deprotection with TFA (70% yield). The enantioselectivity of **3c** was also reserved in the products **4c** and **5c**. Finally **5c** can easily be reduced to the corresponding β -hydroxy amino acid derivative **6c** under hydrogenation condition (single diastereomer, 98% yield). The

absolute configuration of β -keto amino acid derivative **5c** (and hence **3c**) was assigned as *R* by comparing the optical rotation of **5c** with previously reported literature data.¹⁹

Conclusions

In conclusion, we have developed a Lewis acid catalysed asymmetric hydroxyamination of β -ketoesters with *in situ* generated nitroso compounds, using a readily available Mg-catalyst in combination with a *N,N'*-dioxide ligand. This protocol is very mild with broad substrate scope offering easy access to enantioenriched quaternary β -keto amino acid derivatives in high yields while maintaining a high level of chemoselectivities. Further investigations are underway to clarify the detailed mechanism of this transformation and to explore the scope of nitrosocarbonyl chemistry in asymmetric synthesis.

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