Published in final edited form as:

Bioorg Med Chem Lett. 2009 July 15; 19(14): 3856–3858. doi:10.1016/j.bmcl.2009.03.152.

Asymmetric Synthesis of β,γ -Unsaturated α -Amino Acids via Efficient Kinetic Resolution with Cinchona Alkaloids

Jianfeng Hang and Li Deng

Department of Chemistry, Brandeis University, 415 South St., Waltham, MA 02454-9110

Abstract

The β,γ -unsaturated amino acids are versatile chiral building blocks and biologically interesting compounds. The asymmetric synthesis of β,γ -unsaturated amino acids presents a challenging task as these compounds are labile toward racemization as well as the undesirable double bond isomerization. An efficient, general and mild kinetic resolution with readily accessible and fully recyclable cinchona alkaloid catalysts has been developed to provide a reliably useful approach toward optically active β,γ -unsaturated amino acids.

The β,γ -unsaturated α -amino acids are versatile chiral building blocks.¹ In addition they have displayed antibiotic effects² and exhibited significant biological activity as suicide inhibitors for pyridoxal phosphate dependent enzymes.³ Many synthetic routes toward optically active β,γ -unsaturated α -amino acids that make use of chiral synthons^{4, 5, 6, 7} and chiral auxiliaries⁸ have been developed. Catalytic enantioselective approaches to these amino acids have been explored with the use of asymmetric Strecker reaction,⁹ and more recently an enantioselective α -sulfenylation of aldehydes followed by a stereospecific [2,3] sigmatropic rearrangement.¹⁰ The presence of the olefinic functionality renders β,γ -unsaturated α -amino acids labile toward base-^{7c, 8b} and acid-catalyzed^{9a, 11} racemization as well as isomerization of the double bond to α,β -position⁶, thereby making the asymmetric syntheses of these delicate amino acids highly challenging. Therefore, the development of efficient, mild and general catalytic enantioselective methods for the preparations of β,γ -unsaturated α -amino acids remains a synthetically important task.¹²

Numerous methods for the synthesis of a wide variety of racemic β,γ -unsaturated α -amino acids have been established.^{13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20} Thus, it is attractive to develop a general and efficient kinetic resolution of racemic β,γ -unsaturated α -amino acids as a means to produce optically active β,γ -unsaturated α -amino acids. However, to our knowledge, this possibility has only been explored with enzymes, which has met with limited success.²¹ We reported an efficient kinetic resolution of urethane-protected α -amino acid *N*-carboxyanhydrides (UNCAs) via modified cinchona alkaloid-catalyzed alcoholysis. This kinetic resolution is applicable for the asymmetric synthesis of a broad range of optically active α -amino acids bearing aryl and alkyl side chains.²² In addition to its generality, the reactions were carried out under very mild conditions utilizing readily accessible and fully recyclable chiral organic catalysts. The high enantioselectivity and the mild conditions prompted us to explore the possibility of applying this kinetic resolution to the asymmetric synthesis of β,γ -unsaturated α -amino acids. We report herein our progress in achieving this goal.

Correspondence to: Li Deng.

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We prepared a variety of α -amino acid UNCAs bearing cyclic and acyclic β,γ -unsaturated side chains.²³ Specifically, these α -amino acids presented trisubstituted double bond of various substitution patterns (**1a**, **1b**, **1c**, **1d**); 1,2-disubstituted (**1e**, **1f**), double bond in both *Z* (**1e**) and *E* configurations (**1f**). With (DHQD)₂AQN (10 mol%) as the catalyst and ethanol (1.5 eq.) as the nucleophile, α -alkenyl UNCAs **1a–f** were resolved cleanly and efficiently at -78 to -40 °C to afford a mixture of amino ester **2** and unreacted **1**. The selectivity factors measured for the resolution of **1a–f** were uniformly high, ranging from 26 to 149. A reliable protocol was also developed for the conversion of the unreacted enantiomerically enriched UNCA **1** into the corresponding α -amino acids **3** without compromising the optical purity. Once the alcoholysis reached a desirable conversion, the reaction mixture was poured into a precooled aqueous HCl solution where UNCA **1** was rapidly and clearly hydrolyzed into amino acid **3**.²⁴ Overall, optically active amino esters **2** and amino acids **3** were obtained in 88–97% combined isolated yields (Table 1). This is the first general and non-enzymatic kinetic resolution method for the asymmetric synthesis of β,γ -unsaturated α -amino acids. It should be noted that optically active amino acids **3a–c** had not been reported previously.

We found that enantioenriched UNCA **1** underwent racemization in the presence of (DHQD)₂AQN at room temperature. This raised the possibility of realizing a dynamic kinetic resolution (DKR) with (DHQD)₂AQN as a dual-function catalyst, promoting both the racemization and the enantioselective alcoholysis of UNCA **1**.^{22b–c,25} It is noteworthy that, to our knowledge, the only literature precedent of DKR of a racemic β,γ -unsaturated α -amino acid involved an amidase-catalyzed but incomplete hydrolysis of 3,4-dehydro-*D,L*-prolinamide, from which *L*-3,4-dehydroproline was generated in 75% yield and 80% ee.²⁶

Our initial attempts to develop an efficient DKR of α -aryl UNCAs^{22b} revealed that, during a slow addition of a solution of allyl alcohol in Et₂O to a mixture of UNCA **1c**, (DHQD)₂AQN and 4Å molecular sieves in Et₂O, amino ester **4c** was formed in 86% ee at 13 % conversion, and the ee of **4c** decreased to 75 % ee when the alcoholysis proceeded to 97% conversion. This slight ee deterioration over the course of the reaction indicated that the rate of the (DHQD)₂AQN-catalyzed racemization was still slower than the rate of alcoholysis of UNCA **1c** ($k_{\text{rac}}/k_{\text{slow}} < 1$). Subsequently, we found that the overall efficiency of the DKR could be improved by increasing the reaction temperature (34°C in Et₂O) while extending the addition time of the alcohol (Table 2, entry 3 vs. 1). Under the optimized conditions, amino esters **4c**, **4f** and **4a** were obtained in 81–88 % ee and 76–94% isolated yields from their respective racemic counterparts. Importantly, we also established that the allyl amino ester **4c** (81% ee) could be converted into the corresponding amino acid **3c** in 93 % yield without migration of the double bond and deterioration of the optical purity (81% ee).²⁷

In summary, we have established a general catalytic method for the asymmetric synthesis of β,γ -unsaturated α -amino acids *via* a cinchona alkaloids-catalyzed kinetic resolution. This mild method effectively circumvented the problematic racemization and double bond isomerization associated with the optically active β,γ -unsaturated α -amino acids, thereby providing a useful access to these sensitive but important amino acids.

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support from NIH (GM-61591) and Daiso.

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Table 1

R	temp/°C	Time/h	conv <i>b</i> /%	ee ^c (yield) ^d /%		<i>s</i> ^e
				(S)-3	(R)-2	
	-78	14	51	95 (42)	93 (49)	114

temp/°C	Time/h	conv ^b %	ee ^c (yield) ^d %		s ^e
			(S)-3	(R)-2	
-40	7.5	57	96 (42)	75 (55)	39

R

R	temp/°C	Time/h	conv %	ee ^c (yield) ^d %		s ^e
				(S)-3	(R)-2	
	-52	19	52	99 (44)	93 (50)	149

R	temp/°C	Time/h	conv %	ee ^c (yield) ^d %		s ^e
				(S)-3	(R)-2	
	-52	18	52	95 ^f (44)	85 (50)	40

R	temp/°C	Time/h	conv ^b /%	ee ^c (yield) ^d /%		s ^e
				(S)- 3	(R)- 2	
	-40	13	57 ^g	96 (38)	74 (57)	26
	-73	42	49 ^g	91 (40)	95 (48)	125

Reaction was performed by treatment of **1** (0.1 mmol) with (DHQD)₂AQN (10 mol %) and ethanol (1.5 eq.) in ether (7.0 mL).

Otherwise noted, the conversion was determined by G.C. analysis.

Analysis, see Supporting Information.

Yield.

Yield factor, $s = k_f/k_s = \ln[1 - C(1 + ee)]/\ln[1 - C(1 - ee)]$, where ee is the percent enantiomeric excess of **2** and C is the conversion.

Configuration of **3d** was determined by comparing the optical rotation value of amino acid derived from **3d** with literature value, see Supporting Information. Other absolute configurations given by analogy.

^gThe conversion was determined by ¹H NMR.

Table 2
Dynamic Kinetic Resolution of UNCA *via* Modified Cinchona Alkaloids-Catalyzed Alcoholysis^a

entry	R	temp ^o C	addition time/h	reaction time/h	conv ^b /%	yield ^c /%	ee ^d /%
1		23	1.3	4.5	> 97	80	75
2		34	1.3	3.0	> 99	88	79
3		34	2.0	3.0	> 99	94	81
4		34	2.0	2.0	> 99	76	87
5		34	2.0	2.0	> 99	89	88

^aDKR procedure: A 1.0 or 1.2% (v/v) solution of allyl alcohol (0.12 mmol, 1.2 eq.) in ether was added over 1.3–2.0 h to a mixture of substrate **1** (0.10 mmol), (DHQD)₂AQN (20 mol%), (DHQD)₂AQN (20 mol%) and 4ÅMS (10 mg) in ether (7.0 mL) at the indicated temperature; see Supporting Information for details..

^bThe conversion was determined by G.C. analysis.

^cIsolated yield.

^dFor ee analysis, see Supporting Information.