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Directed Hydroxylation of sp^2 and sp^3 C–H Bonds Using Stoichiometric Amounts of Cu and H_2O_2

Rachel Trammell[†], Lorenzo D'Amore[‡], Alexandra Cordova[†], Pavel Polunin[†], Nan Xie[†],
Maxime A. Siegler^{||}, Paola Belanzoni^{⊥, #}, Marcel Swart^{*, ‡, §}, and Isaac Garcia-Bosch^{*, †}

[†] Department of Chemistry, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas 75275, United States

[‡] University of Girona, Campus Montilivi (Ciències), IQCC, 17004 Girona, Spain

[§] ICREA, Pg. Lluís Companys 23, 08010 Barcelona, Spain

^{||} Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland 21218, United States

[⊥] Dipartimento di Chimica, Biologia e Biotecnologie, Università degli Studi di Perugia, Via Elce di Sotto 8, 06123 Perugia, Italy

[#] Consortium for Computational Molecular and Materials Sciences (CMS)², Via Elce di Sotto 8, 06123 Perugia, Italy

Abstract

The use of copper for C–H bond functionalization, compared to other metals, is relatively unexplored. Herein, we report a synthetic protocol for the regioselective hydroxylation of sp^2 and sp^3 C–H bonds using a directing group, stoichiometric amounts of Cu and H_2O_2 . A wide array of aromatic ketones and aldehydes are oxidized in the carbonyl γ -position with remarkable yields. We also expanded this methodology to hydroxylate the β -position of alkylic ketones. Spectroscopic characterization, kinetics, and density functional theory calculations point toward the involvement of a mononuclear $LCu^{II}(OOH)$ species, which oxidizes the aromatic sp^2 C–H bonds via a concerted heterolytic O–O bond cleavage with concomitant electrophilic attack on the arene system.

Graphical Abstract

*Corresponding Authors marcel.swart@udg.edu, igarciabosch@smu.edu.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website at DOI: [10.1021/acs.inorg-chem.9b00901](https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.inorg-chem.9b00901). Experimental details, including substrate–ligand synthesis and oxidation, complex synthesis and characterization, kinetic analysis, spectroscopic characterization, and DFT calculations (PDF)

Accession Codes

CCDC 1880982–1880987 contain the supplementary crys-tallographic 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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1. INTRODUCTION

Synthetic methods that use 3d metals to carry out regioselective C–H hydroxylations are scarce.¹ One of the main challenges of this approach is to overcome the tendency of these metals to generate radical species, which usually lead to unselective C–H oxidations and functional group degradation.² Metalloenzymes have evolved to bypass these issues by developing active centers that can regulate the redox reactivity of the metal–O₂ intermediates and to control the substrate spatial orientation for site selectivity.^{3,4} Que, Costas, and White have shown that non-heme Fe complexes catalyze the regioselective hydroxylation of complex organic molecules with H₂O₂ via formation of Fe–oxo intermediates.^{5–7} On the other hand, our research group has recently reported that analogous Cu catalysts react with H₂O₂ to generate unselective hydroxyl radicals (Fenton-like chemistry).⁸ The use of directing groups (DGs) is an elegant method for circumventing regioselectivity issues in organic synthesis.⁹ We have recently studied the mechanism by which Cu promotes the intramolecular γ sp³ C–H hydroxylation of steroidal iminopyridine substrates,¹⁰ a reaction first developed by Schönecker^{11–13} and later optimized by Baran¹⁴ (Figure 1A). On the basis of our findings, we were able to redesign the reaction conditions to use cheaper reagents with shorter reaction times under milder conditions.¹⁰ In this work, we take advantage of this knowledge to carry out the functionalization of a wide array of substrates containing sp² and sp³ C–H bonds (Figure 1B).

o-Acylphenols are commonly found in several bioactive natural products and drugs and are widely used as building blocks in the synthesis of pharmaceuticals and oxygen-containing heterocycles.¹⁵ A classic approach for the synthesis of *o*-acylphenols is a two-step procedure that entails acylation of the phenols followed by Fries rearrangement; however, this method is not selective, and the substrate scope is limited.¹⁶ A very attractive synthetic route is the direct regioselective hydroxylation of arylketones. Catalytic amounts of precious metals (Pd, Rh, and Ru) have been used for this purpose, but their reactivity often relies on harsh reaction conditions and the use of expensive hypervalent iodine oxidants [i.e.,

PhI(CF₃CO₂)₃].^{17–19} The Yu research lab showed that Cu can promote intramolecular *ortho* hydroxylation of phenylamides at high temperatures by using excess amounts of a metal source and adding external oxazoline ligands and various additives.¹⁹ Very recently, Uchiyama reported the directed *ortho* hydroxylation of *N,N*-diisopropylamides by deprotonation using excess amounts of a cuprate base followed by oxidation with ^tBuOOH.²⁰ Inspired by our findings on Cu-directed hydroxylation of sp³ C–H bonds using H₂O₂ as an oxidant (see Figure 1A), we decided to determine if a similar methodology could be used for the synthesis of *o*-acylphenols under mild conditions.

The study of the oxidative properties of LCu/O₂ species has led to a better understanding of the reactivity of Cu-dependent monooxygenase enzymes.^{21–24} For several examples, the formation of a metastable LCu/O₂ intermediate is followed by the intramolecular oxidation of the ligand scaffold, including ligand hydroxylation,^{25,26} sulfoxidation,²⁷ and N-dealkylation.²⁸ In selected examples, Cu complexes have been used to promote the intermolecular oxidation of external substrates,²⁹ with a focus on mimicking the tyrosinase-like *ortho* hydroxylation of phenolates, including stoichiometric^{30–32} and catalytic transformations.^{33,34} Despite the rich reactivity of Cu/O₂ species in the synthetic inorganic literature, their use in synthetic organic chemistry has been restricted to a handful of examples.²³ Among these, it is worth mentioning Lumb's reports on Cu-catalyzed aerobic functionalization of phenols.^{35–37} Réglier pioneered the field of Cu-directed oxidation of C–H bonds,^{38,39} an approach that inspired the work of Schonecker^{11–13} on steroid sp³ hydroxylation. Using a similar methodology, Schindler has also shown that bidentate amines can direct the hydroxylation of sp² and sp³ C–H bonds employing Cu^I and O₂ with modest oxidation yields (<50%).⁴⁰ On the basis of these precedents, we report the Cu-directed hydroxylation of sp² and sp³ C–H bonds in which unprecedented regioselectivity and a deeper mechanistic understanding of the reaction mechanism are achieved (Figure 1B).

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.1. Synthesis and Oxidation of Imino-Pyridine Substrates.

Condensation of benzophenone, **S1**, with 2-picolyamine led to the formation of the substrate-ligand system **L1** (Figure 2A; see also the Supporting Information for experimental details). The Cu-promoted oxidation of **L1** was optimized under various reaction conditions (Figure 2A). One-pot mixing of equimolar amounts of **L1** and [Cu^I(CH₃CN)₄](PF₆) in acetone followed by addition of 5 equiv of H₂O₂ produced the hydroxylation product **P1** in excellent yields (Figure 2A, entry 3). The use of various Cu sources was tested (Figure 2A, entries 14–18) with [Cu^I(CH₃CN)₄](PF₆) reaching the highest yields (85%). Acetone was found to be the best solvent, followed by THF, CH₂Cl₂, and CH₃CN (Figure 2A, entries 3 and 9–11). We also analyzed the use of O₂ as an oxidant. We observed that an increase in the reaction temperature from –20 to 50 °C (Figure 2A, entries 5–8) afforded higher yields (from 7% to 46%). A similar effect was observed in the oxidation of sp³ steroidal systems and was attributed to the formation of H₂O₂ via reduction of O₂ by Cu^I (i.e., formation of Cu^{II} and superoxide) and subsequent oxidation of the solvent, which is favored at high temperatures.¹⁰ The efficiency of other oxidants such as cumyl hydroperoxide (CumOOH) and *tert*-butyl hydroperoxide (^tBuOOH) was also studied

(Figure 2A, entries 12 and 13, respectively), but only H₂O₂ produced the oxidation product **P1**. Noticeably, when other first-row transition metal sources were used (e.g., Mn^{II}, Fe^{II}, and Ni^{II}), **P1** was not formed and only starting material was recovered (Figure 2A, entries 19–21). We performed the oxidation of **L1** on a gram scale using the optimized conditions (1 equiv of Cu^I and 5 equiv of H₂O₂), which afforded the hydroxylation product, **P1**, in 71% yield (Figure 2B; note that a 64% overall yield includes the installation of the directing group).

With the most suitable oxidation conditions in hand, we explored the hydroxylation of the substrate–ligand systems derived from the condensation of 2-picolyamine with various benzophenones, acetophenones, and benzaldehydes (Figure 3A). For all of these systems, we obtained the oxidation products derived from the γ -hydroxylation of the sp² C–H bond (**P1**–**P13**) with moderate to excellent yields (30–85%). Substrates in which the oxidation can occur at multiple sites (e.g., 2-acetonaphthone can be oxidized at the β sp³ position or two different γ sp² positions) were also tested. Oxidation of 2-acetonaphthone occurred selectively at position 1 of the naphthyl ring with remarkable yields (**P14**, 84%). Similarly, the oxidation of the imino-pyridine substrate derived from 1-acetonaphthone led to the sp² hydroxylation product (**P15**, 33%). We also aimed to verify that our oxidation conditions did not generate overoxidation products. To do so, we synthesized the imino-pyridine system derived from **P1** and subjected it to oxidation with Cu^I and H₂O₂, which led to recovery of **P1** (**P16**, 0%) and differed from other Cu/O₂ systems in which intramolecular hydroxylation of phenol substituents was observed.⁴¹

A new set of sp³ C–H bond-containing systems were also oxidized using Cu^I and H₂O₂ (Figure 3B). The substrate–ligand system derived from dicyclohexyl ketone was selectively oxidized at the β position in high yields (**P17**, 70%). This selectivity differs from previous findings in which the sp³ C–H hydroxylation occurred at the γ position. Like in previous reports, the systems derived from dehydro-*epi*-androsterone and *R*-camphor were selectively oxidized at the γ site (**P20** and **P21**).^{10–14} The β selectivity was also observed by the oxidation of the asymmetric system derived from cyclohexyl phenyl ketone (**P18**, 55%). More importantly, our methodology allowed synthesis of the β -hydroxylation product of 2-adamantanone with remarkable yields (**P19**, 70%), which is inaccessible using classic silyl enol ether/peroxyacid oxidations and other base-triggered oxidation reactions.^{42–45} Our methodology also resulted in the γ sp² hydroxylation of cyclic ketones such as 2-methyl-1-tetralone with good yields (Figure 3C, **P22**, 54%). Interestingly, this regioselectivity differs from the reactivity observed by Schoenebeck and co-workers, in which a combination of Cu₂O, a strong base, and O₂ led to the oxidation of the β -sp³ C–H bond (**P23**, 92%).⁴²

2.2. Synthesis of Copper Complexes.

With the substrate–ligand systems in hand, we synthesized and characterized cuprous complexes in which one or two ligand scaffolds are bound to the metal ion (Figure 4A; see also the Supporting Information). X-ray diffraction analysis of the isolated substrate–ligand Cu complexes provided structural information about the site of hydroxylation (Figure 4B; see also the Supporting Information). For example, analysis of the Cu^I system derived from 2-acetophenone (**L15**) showed that the γ sp² C–H position that will undergo oxidation

(C_{oxid.}) is the closest to the Cu ion, with the CH₃ site pointed away from the CuN₃ T-shaped core.

2.3. Mechanistic Studies.

With the isolated complexes $[(LX)Cu^I(CH_3CN)]^+$, we studied the mechanism by which the Cu-directed sp^2 hydroxylation takes place (Figure 5). In our previous study, we proposed that the reaction between LCu^I and O_2 generated LCu^{II} and superoxide that, upon oxidation of the solvent, formed H_2O_2 .¹⁰ Subsequent reaction of LCu^{II} and H_2O_2 would produce a mononuclear $LCu^{II}(OOH)$ intermediate before the rate-determining step (r.d.s.). We found that the same $LCu^{II}(OOH)$ species could also be formed by addition of H_2O_2 to the LCu^I or LCu^{II} complexes.⁴⁶ For the benzophenone-derived Cu^I complexes described herein, we suggest a similar hydroxylation pathway (Figure 5A). The reaction between LCu^I and H_2O_2 was followed by ultraviolet visible (UV-vis) and electron paramagnetic resonance (EPR) (Figure 5B, i). Addition of H_2O_2 (20 equiv) to a 0.5 mM acetone solution of $[(L)Cu^I(CH_3CN)]^+$ at $-20\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ (orange spectrum) generated a species with spectral features characteristic of $LCu^{II}(OOH)$ complexes (green spectrum, $\lambda_{max} = 380\text{--}400\text{ nm}$, $\mu = 2000\text{ M}^{-1}\text{ cm}^{-1}$).⁴⁶ Decomposition of the metastable $LCu^{II}(OOH)$ produced two mononuclear Cu^{II} species in a stepwise manner ($\lambda_{max} \sim 380\text{ nm}$), which we assign as Cu^{II} compounds in which the $\gamma\text{ }sp^2\text{ C-H}$ bond has been oxidized (purple and blue spectra in Figure 5B, i). We independently synthesized and characterized the Cu^{II} -bound hydroxylation product (ligand derived from **P1**), and its UV-vis spectrum overlaps with the species formed in the LCu^I/H_2O_2 reaction (see the Supporting Information). Fitting of the absorbance at 380 nm (Figure 5B, ii, top) suggested a three-step reaction in which the initial LCu^I is quickly transformed to the $LCu^{II}(OOH)$ complex (0–5 s), which evolves to generate two forms of the hydroxylation product [$(L-O)Cu^{II}(OH_2)$ from 5 to 200 s and $(L-O)Cu^{II}$ from 200 to 3000 s]. The same species are observed by EPR, during which, upon addition of H_2O_2 to LCu^I , three distinctive mononuclear Cu^{II} complexes are consecutively formed (Figure 5B, i, inset). We confirmed that the hydroxylation of the substrate occurred at short reaction times (from 5 to 200 s after addition of H_2O_2) by analyzing the hydroxylation yields at different reaction times (Figure 5B, ii, bottom).

Kinetic analysis at different Cu and H_2O_2 concentrations indicated that the hydroxylation rate is first-order in $[LCu^I]_0$ and zero-order in $[H_2O_2]_0$, which suggested that the intramolecular hydroxylation is not a one-step bimolecular process between LCu^I and H_2O_2 and that the decay of the putative $LCu^{II}(OOH)$ intermediate occurs in the r.d.s. (Figure 5B, iii). The kinetic isotope effect (KIE) of the reaction was obtained by comparing the reaction rates of the benzophenone-derived ligand system **L1** with the benzophenone- d_{10} analogue **L7** (Figure 5B, iii; see also the Supporting Information). The KIE value (~ 0.83) indicates that during the r.d.s. the C–H bond that is oxidized undergoes sp^2 to sp^3 hybridization, which is consistent with an electrophilic attack of the $LCu^{II}(OOH)$ on the arene substrate.⁴⁷

We also obtained the reaction rates of Cu^I substrate–ligand systems derived from 4-substituted benzophenones ($X = \text{MeO}, \text{Me}, \text{F}, \text{Cl}, \text{or Br}$). The hydroxylation rates were found to be independent of the substituent (k_{obs} vs σ_p^+ , Hammett plot, in Figure 5B, iii), which might appear to contradict the proposed direct electrophilic attack of the $LCu^{II}(OOH)$ on the

aromatic system, because this reaction would be accelerated for electron-donating systems.⁴⁸ However, the possibility that the introduction of electron-donating or electron-withdrawing substituents into the substrate–ligand structure might also affect the electrophilicity of the $\text{LCu}^{\text{II}}(\text{OOH})$ cores should be considered: for example, the use of the 4-MeO substituent will produce a substrate more reactive toward electrophilic attack but will also lead to a more electron-rich $\text{LCu}^{\text{II}}(\text{OOH})$ species, and hence less electrophilic (see Figure 6B), compensating for the substrate substituent effect.

To substantiate this mechanistic hypothesis, we measured the redox potentials of the benzophenone-derived Cu complexes (Figure 6). We found that the complex derived from benzophenone $[(L)\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}(\text{CH}_3\text{CN})]^+$ was reversibly oxidized in CH_3CN at -0.07 V versus ferrocene/ferrocenium ($\text{Fc}^{0/+}$). For the systems containing electron-donating groups, the $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}/\text{Cu}^{\text{II}}$ redox couple shifted to lower redox potentials (-0.11 V for 4-Me and -0.16 V for 4-MeO), while for the systems with electron-withdrawing substituents, the redox potentials were found at higher potentials (0.00 V for 4-F and 0.02 V for 4-Cl and 4-Br).

Overall, substitution of position 4 of the substrate–ligand phenyl substituent led to a change in the redox potentials of almost 0.2 V, with the 4-MeO system having the lowest redox potential and the 4-Br system having the highest, which we believe corroborates our hypothesis about the electrophilicity of the putative $\text{LCu}^{\text{II}}(\text{OOH})$ reactive intermediates [i.e., 4-MeO substrate more prone to electrophilic attack but $\text{LCu}^{\text{II}}(\text{OOH})$ less electrophilic].

2.4. Computational Studies.

Density functional theory (DFT) calculations were carried out to improve our understanding of the mechanism by which the putative mononuclear $\text{LCu}^{\text{II}}(\text{OOH})$ promotes intramolecular hydroxylation (Figure 7). Our calculations (including solvent and scalar relativistic corrections) at S12g/TZ2P//BP86-D3/TDZP showed that the end-on Cu^{II} –hydroperoxide intermediate (RC) undergoes heterolytic O–O cleavage with concomitant electrophilic attack of the phenyl substituent.⁴⁹ We found that the resulting Wheland-like intermediate⁵⁰ (INT1) isomerized to a Cu complex in which the H at the γ -carbon is transferred to the δ aromatic position (INT2).⁵¹ This hydrogen shift could then trigger the deprotonation of the organic fragment by the Cu^{II} –OH core (TS3) to generate H_2O and recover the aromaticity of the ring (PC).

On the basis of these results, O–O bond cleavage is the reaction step that requires more energy. This agrees with our kinetic measurements [i.e., first-order dependence of $[\text{Cu}]_0$, zero-order dependence of $[\text{H}_2\text{O}_2]_0$, and KIE (*vide supra*)] and spectroscopic characterizations, all of which suggested that the O–O bond cleavage, coupled with electrophilic attack, is rate-limiting. We also carried out the same calculations for the 4-substituted systems 4-MeO and 4-Br. We computed that the energetics of the rate-determining step for 4-MeO and 4-Br were very similar to the values found for the 4-H system (15.8 kcal/mol for 4-H, 16.2 kcal/mol for 4-MeO, and 14.6 kcal/mol for 4-Br). These findings (~ 1 kcal/mol difference between the 4-substituted systems) are in agreement with the kinetic data described above in which similar reaction rates were observed for all of the 4-substituted benzophenone–ligand complexes.

2.5. Mechanistic Considerations.

Copper(I) complexes react with O₂ to generate fleeting mononuclear Cu/O₂ species that are difficult to trap due to their tendency to react with other LCu^I equivalents and form more stable Cu₂O₂ cores.^{21,52} Because of this, the reactivity of Cu₂O₂ species has been studied in detail, and it has been established that end-on dicopper(II)–peroxide intermediates are normally nucleophilic oxidants while side-on dicopper(II)–peroxide complexes and dicopper(III) bis-μ-oxo compounds are considered electrophilic oxidants.^{32,53,54} On the other hand, mononuclear Cu/O₂ complexes are scarce and the study of their reactivity has been restricted to a few selected systems.^{55–58}

Several research groups have reported that both mononuclear and dinuclear Cu/O₂ species can perform intra-molecular C–H hydroxylations (Figure 8A). For example, Karlin and co-workers observed that a Cu complex bearing a superbasic tetradentate ligand (Figure 8A, i) could undergo intramolecular sp³ C–H hydroxylation via formation of a putative mononuclear LCu^{II}–oxyl species.²⁵ The same research group also found that an LCu^{II}(OOH) complex promoted the intramolecular sp² hydroxylation of a tmpa-derived tetradentate scaffold and showed that the corresponding L₂Cu₂O₂ adduct did not undergo intramolecular ligand oxidation (Figure 8A, ii).⁵⁹ Itoh and co-workers were able to generate and characterize a unique Cu^{II}–superoxide complex that underwent intramolecular C–H hydroxylation via H atom abstraction of the supporting tridentate ligand (Figure 8A, iii).^{26,60} Reglier,³⁸ Schindler,^{40,61} and Tolman⁴⁸ have reported that for some bidentate and tridentate ligands, these intra-molecular hydroxylations entail the formation of Cu₂O₂ cores because N2 and N3 scaffolds usually favor their formation⁵² [note that both Schindler and Tolman observed the formation of L₂Cu^{III}₂(O²⁻)₂ cores before ligand hydroxylation]. On the basis of reaction yields, a similar mechanistic scenario was hypothesized by Schonecker and co-workers for the intra-molecular hydroxylation of sp³ C–H bonds in steroid-derived bidentate ligands.^{11–13} However, we have recently proposed that these ligand scaffolds are more likely oxidized via formation of mononuclear Cu/O₂ intermediates (Figure 8B).¹⁰

Our mechanistic findings supported the idea that H₂O₂ is the active oxidant in these intramolecular hydroxylations.¹⁰ We proposed that the reaction between LCu^I and O₂ generated LCu^{II} and free superoxide, which was reduced to H₂O₂ via solvent oxidation. The resulting LCu^{II} would then react with H₂O₂ to produce a mononuclear LCu^{II}(OOH) intermediate before ligand hydroxylation. We found that this LCu^{II}(OOH) species could also be generated by adding H₂O₂ to LCu^I, which would form sequentially LCu^{II}(OH) and LCu^{II}(OOH). Alternatively, we observed that the LCu^{II}(OOH) could also be formed by addition of H₂O₂ to the corresponding LCu^{II} complex in a presence of a base. On the basis of mechanistic evidence, we suggested that the mononuclear LCu^{II}(OOH) complex underwent homolytic O–O bond cleavage to generate a hydroxyl radical, which would abstract a H atom from the γ sp³ C–H bond of the ligand scaffold before C–O bond formation (Figure 8B). The mechanistic studies of sp² hydroxylation presented herein also support the formation of LCu^{II}(OOH) intermediates. However, the reaction pathway for sp² C–H hydroxylation seems to entail a concerted C–O bond formation with heterolytic O–O bond cleavage as the rate-determining step of the reaction rather than homolytic cleavage.

As we have shown, the $\text{LCu}^{\text{II}}(\text{OOH})$ complex is formed by addition of H_2O_2 to the copper(I) complex (see Figure 5B). We also tested if $\text{LCu}^{\text{II}}(\text{OOH})$ could be generated by adding H_2O_2 to a solution of LCu^{II} and NMe_4OH (see the Supporting Information). Interestingly, we observe that the UV-vis changes and the rate of hydroxylation for **L1** with Cu^{II} , H_2O_2 , and hydroxide were identical to those found in the oxidation of **L1** with Cu^{I} and H_2O_2 [note that the use of NMe_4OH also led to higher reaction yields in the oxidation of **L1** with $\text{Cu}^{\text{II}}(\text{NO}_3)$ (see entry 25 in Figure 2)]. We also carried out the oxidation of **L7** (deuterated version of **L1**) in the presence of Cu^{II} , H_2O_2 , and HO^- , and the rates of hydroxylation were also similar to those calculated in $\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}/\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$, leading to an inverse kinetic isotope effect [KIE = 0.89 (see the Supporting Information)]. These findings suggest that under both oxidation conditions ($\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}/\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ or $\text{Cu}^{\text{II}}/\text{H}_2\text{O}_2/\text{HO}^-$) the same reaction intermediates are formed.

It is worth mentioning that the formation of dinuclear Cu_2O_2 species under the reaction conditions presented here cannot be ruled out. However, the fact that the Cu^{I} complexes do not generate Cu_2O_2 cores at low temperatures upon reacting with O_2 suggests that these species are not involved in the oxidation of the ligand scaffold. The first-order dependence on $[\text{LCu}^{\text{I}}]_0$ and zero-order dependence on $[\text{H}_2\text{O}_2]_0$, the observed inverse kinetic isotope effect, and the spectroscopic characterization of the reaction intermediates point toward the involvement of a mononuclear species as the active hydroxylating agent. The formation of a Cu_2O_2 species after the rate-determining step and before C–H oxidation would not lead to a kinetic isotope effect (KIE = 1). The generation of a Cu_2O_2 core before the rate-determining step could also show a first-order dependence on $[\text{LCu}^{\text{I}}]_0$ and a zero-order dependence on $[\text{H}_2\text{O}_2]_0$, but if that were the case, the putative Cu_2O_2 species would accumulate before ligand oxidation (r.d.s.) and would be observed spectroscopically [$\text{Cu}^{\text{II}}_2(\text{O}_2^{2-})$ and $\text{Cu}^{\text{III}}_2(\text{O}^{2-})_2$ intermediates are EPR silent, and their UV-vis features are very intense and characteristic]. However, the possible involvement of dinuclear species was computed, and we found that the activation energy for the intramolecular sp^2 C–H hydroxylation is slightly lower than that found for the $\text{LCu}^{\text{II}}(\text{OOH})$ intermediate (see the Supporting Information). Our calculations also indicate that the generation of the $\text{L}_2\text{Cu}_2\text{O}_2$ cores from $\text{LCu}^{\text{II}}(\text{OOH})$ is exergonic [$2\text{LCu}^{\text{II}}(\text{OOH}) \leftrightarrow \text{L}_2\text{Cu}^{\text{II}}_2(\text{O}_2^{2-}) + \text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ ($\Delta G \sim -7$ kcal/mol)], but the fact the reactions are carried out under excess amounts of H_2O_2 might favor the formation of the mononuclear $\text{LCu}^{\text{II}}(\text{OOH})$ species, a behavior that has also been observed in the Cu-catalyzed hydroxylation of benzene by dicopper species with H_2O_2 .⁶²

3. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

In summary, we report here a synthetic protocol for the functionalization of ketones (and aldehydes) based on the use of directing groups (easily installed and removed), Cu, and H_2O_2 , which resulted in hydroxylation products with remarkable yields and unprecedented selectivity (i.e., β -hydroxylation of sp^3 systems and selective hydroxylation in unsymmetric ketones). Close examination of the overall reaction mechanism led us to propose an $\text{LCu}^{\text{II}}(\text{OOH})$ species as a key reaction intermediate, which has also been invoked in some Cu-containing metalloenzymes (e.g., lytic polysaccharide monooxygenases).⁶³ Inspired by these findings, our lab is now focused on rationally modifying the directing group to promote the hydroxylation of different substrate sites (β vs γ vs δ) and to generate a wide

variety of Cu_n/O₂ species (mononuclear and dinuclear) that will lead to a better understanding of the reactivity of Cu-dependent monooxygenases.

Supplementary Material

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A. Previous findings (sp^3 γ -hydroxylation of steroids)

B. This work

Figure 1.
Cu-directed hydroxylation of sp^2 and sp^3 C–H bonds.

A. Optimization of Cu oxidation protocol^a

Entry	Metal source ^b	Oxidant ^c	Solvent	Yield P1 (%) ^d
1	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](PF ₆)	H ₂ O ₂ (1.5 equiv.)	acetone	65
2	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](PF ₆)	H ₂ O ₂ (2.5 equiv.)	acetone	78
3	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](PF ₆)	H ₂ O ₂ (5 equiv.)	acetone	85
4	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](PF ₆)	H ₂ O ₂ (10 equiv.)	acetone	80
5	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](PF ₆)	O ₂ , -20 °C	acetone	7
6	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](PF ₆)	O ₂ , 0 °C	acetone	8
7	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](PF ₆)	O ₂ , 20 °C	acetone	12
8	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](PF ₆)	O ₂ , 50 °C	acetone	46
9	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](PF ₆)	H ₂ O ₂	CH ₃ CN	44
10	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](PF ₆)	H ₂ O ₂	THF	66
11	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](PF ₆)	H ₂ O ₂	CH ₂ Cl ₂	49
12	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](PF ₆)	^t BuOOH	acetone	0
13	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](PF ₆)	CumOOH	acetone	0
14	Cu ^I (OAc)	H ₂ O ₂	acetone	0
15	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](CF ₃ SO ₃)	H ₂ O ₂	acetone	76
16	Cu ^{II} (CF ₃ SO ₃) ₂	H ₂ O ₂	acetone	45
17	Cu ^{II} Cl ₂	H ₂ O ₂	acetone	6
18	Cu ^{II} (OAc) ₂	H ₂ O ₂	acetone	0
19	Ni ^{II} (CF ₃ SO ₃) ₂	H ₂ O ₂	acetone	0
20	Fe ^{II} (CF ₃ SO ₃) ₂	H ₂ O ₂	acetone	0
21	Mn ^{II} (CF ₃ SO ₃) ₂	H ₂ O ₂	acetone	0
22	[Cu ^I (CH ₃ CN) ₄](PF ₆)	H ₂ O ₂	acetone	70 ^e
23	Cu ^{II} (NO ₃) ₂ ·3H ₂ O	H ₂ O ₂	acetone	22
24	Cu ^{II} (NO ₃) ₂ ·3H ₂ O	H ₂ O ₂	THF	37
25	Cu ^{II} (NO ₃) ₂ ·3H ₂ O	H ₂ O ₂ /OH ⁻	acetone	80 ^f

^a All reactions were performed with [L1] = 40 mM. ^b 1 equiv. ^c 5 equiv. of 30% H₂O₂ (aq.) were used unless stated (30 min, r.t.). ^d Yields were determined by ¹H-NMR using 1,3,5-trimethoxybenzene as internal standard. ^e Oxidation of isolated [(L1)Cu^I(CH₃CN)](PF₆). ^f 1 equiv. of NMe₄OH·5H₂O

B. Gram scale hydroxylation of benzophenone

Figure 2.

(A) Optimization of the reaction conditions for the hydroxylation of **L1**. (B) Gram scale oxidation of **S1** using the optimized Cu^I/H₂O₂ conditions. See the Supporting Information.

A. γ -hydroxylation of sp^2 C-H bonds **B. β and γ -hydroxylation of sp^3 C-H bonds** **C. Divergent regioselectivity in Cu-promoted hydroxylations** **Figure 3.**

(A) γ -Hydroxylation of sp^2 C-H bonds. (B) β - and γ -hydroxylation of sp^3 C-H. (C) Divergent regioselectivity: γ - sp^2 hydroxylation described this work (DG, 2-picolylamine) vs β - sp^3 hydroxylation reported by Schoenebeck.⁴² All reactions were performed with 40 mM LX using 5 equiv of 30% H₂O₂ (2.5 equiv for sp^2 C-H hydroxylation) for 30 min at room temperature in acetone. See the Supporting Information for further details.

A. Synthesis of Cu complexes **B. X-ray diffraction analysis** **Figure 4.**

(A) Synthesis of Cu^{I} substrate–ligand complexes. (B) X-ray diffraction analyses of the systems derived from benzaldehyde (left) and 1-acetophenone (right). See the Supporting Information for further details.

A. Proposed mechanism for the hydroxylation of sp^2 C-H bonds

B. Spectroscopic and kinetic analysis

i) UV-vis and EPR

ii) UV-vis vs. Yield

iii) Kinetics

Figure 5.

(A) Proposed reaction mechanism for the Cu-directed sp^2 C-H hydroxylation with H_2O_2 . (B) (i) UV-vis and EPR characterization of the reaction intermediates formed upon addition of H_2O_2 (20 equiv) to the $[(L)Cu^I(CH_3CN)]^+$ complex (0.5 mM) in acetone at $-20^\circ C$ (note that the EPR shows mixtures of intermediates and only the main contributor is indicated; the $g_\perp$, $g_\parallel$, and $A_\parallel$ values can be found in the Supporting Information; also see the Supporting Information for Cu^{II} signal quantification). (ii) Evolution of the absorbance at 380 nm of the reaction (top) and analysis of the hydroxylation yields over time (bottom). (iii) Kinetic analysis of the reaction by varying $[Cu^I]_0$ and $[H_2O_2]_0$, KIE analysis, and a Hammett plot (see the text and Supporting Information for details).

A. Cyclic voltammetry of $[(\text{LX})\text{Cu}^{\text{I}}(\text{CH}_3\text{CN})]^+$ complexes. B. Analysis of the electronic effects on the reactivity of $\text{Cu}^{\text{II}}\text{OOH}$ cores **Figure 6.**

(A) Cyclic voltammetry measurements for the family of benzophenone-derived Cu complexes. (B) Effects on the reactivity of the putative $\text{LCu}^{\text{II}}(\text{OOH})$ species.

Figure 7.
DFT calculations on the Cu-directed hydroxylation of sp^2 C-H bonds.

A. Selected examples of Cu complexes that undergo intramolecular hydroxylation

B. Proposed mechanisms for the Cu-directed hydroxylation of C-H bonds

Figure 8.

(A) Copper complexes that undergo intramolecular C–H hydroxylation via formation of mononuclear or dinuclear Cu/O₂ species. (B) Proposed reaction mechanisms for the intramolecular γ -hydroxylation of C–H bonds discussed herein.