



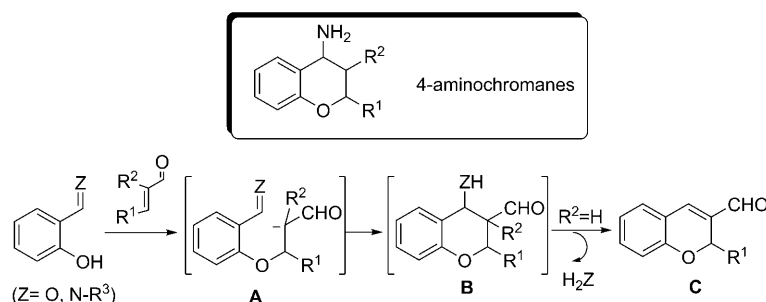
## Asymmetric Synthesis of 4-Amino-4*H*-Chromenes by Organocatalytic Oxa-Michael/Aza-Baylis–Hillman Tandem Reactions

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4-Aminochromanes (Scheme 1) are a class of structures that are integrated in hundreds of natural and bioactive compounds. Their importance is reflected in the existence of dozens of patents related to 4-aminochromanes bearing different aromatic rings at the NH<sub>2</sub> group.<sup>[1]</sup> Among these com-

as well as the synthesis of related products have been reported.<sup>[5]</sup>

The most direct organocatalytic asymmetric method for obtaining these skeletons would involve the oxa-Michael reaction of  $\alpha,\beta$ -unsaturated aldehydes to salicylaldehyde<sup>[6]</sup> or salicylimines,<sup>[7]</sup> followed by aldolic (or Mannich, Z = NR<sup>3</sup>) reaction of the resulting intermediate **A** (Scheme 1). However, when R<sup>2</sup> is hydrogen, the intermediate **B** cannot be isolated, because H<sub>2</sub>Z (Z = O, NR) is quickly eliminated, affording 2*H*-chromenes **C**,<sup>[7a-d]</sup> due to the large acidity of such hydrogen. When R<sup>2</sup> is not hydrogen, no reaction takes place, because the reactivity of **A** is strongly decreased.<sup>[8]</sup> At this point we



Scheme 1. Approach to the synthesis of 4-aminochromenes.

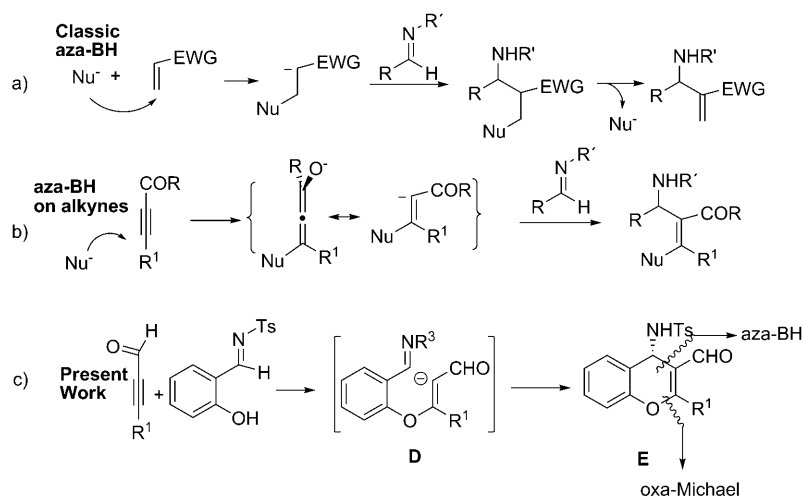
pounds, those with a CH<sub>2</sub>OH group at C-3 (3-hydroxymethyl-4-aminochromanes)<sup>[2]</sup> exhibit interesting biological properties (e.g., antibiotic),<sup>[2d]</sup> and take part in the tetrahydrochromanoquinolines core,<sup>[3]</sup> whereas 1,4*a*-5,10*b*-tetrahydro-4*H*-chromen<sup>[4,3b]</sup>pyridines are considered as aza analogs of  $\Delta^1$ -trans-tetrahydrocannabinols.<sup>[3h-i]</sup> Moreover, some attractive alkaloids (e.g., martinelli<sup>[4]</sup>) with the 4-aminochromane structure have been described. Finally, the 4-aminochromanol moiety is also important and dozens of medicinal studies

activated 2-hydroxy benzaldimines with alkynals would afford 4-amino-4*H*-chromenes **E** (Scheme 2c), which could retain the stereochemical information associated to the nitrogen function and could be used as precursors of **B** by reduction.<sup>[9]</sup> To the best of our knowledge, this transformation involving an oxa-Michael/aza-Baylis–Hillman (aza-BH)<sup>[10]</sup> tandem process<sup>[11]</sup> with alkynals has never been reported and prompted us to study it.

The classic aza-BH reaction<sup>[10a]</sup> consists of the reaction of a nucleophile (usually a catalyst) with a deactivated double bond and further addition of the resulting  $\alpha$ -stabilized carbanion to a C=N bond, being finally the catalyst recovered after elimination (Scheme 2a). The use of deactivated triple bonds as electrophiles in aza-BH determines that the final elimination cannot take place (Scheme 2b). These reactions have hardly been explored,<sup>[12]</sup> which increased our interest for studying them. Since natural 4-aminochromanes are optically pure, we decided to study the oxa-Michael/aza-BH tandem reaction by using activation with silyl prolinol ethers

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Scheme 2. Different approaches for the aza-BH reaction.

in an asymmetric version,<sup>[13]</sup> taking advantage of the efficient activation of alkynals<sup>[14]</sup> in their reactions with nitroalkenes has been recently reported.<sup>[14b]</sup>

In this work we present the first highly enantioselective organocatalytic<sup>[15]</sup> oxa-Michael/aza-BH tandem reaction between 2-alkynals and salicyl *N*-tosylimine, leading to optically active 4-amino-4*H*-chromenes by iminium activation (Scheme 2c).

The screening of salicyl *N*-tosylimine **2** with alkyne **1a** was used as the model reaction. Different secondary amines were used as catalyst and all reactions were stopped after 2 h (see Table 1). With proline **5a** and prolinol **5c**, none or very low conversion was observed (entries 1 and 3). In the rest of the cases, the reaction provided mixtures of two compounds, the expected 4-amino-4*H*-chromene **4a** and the **4'a**. With prolinamide **5b** full conversion was achieved in less than 2 h, but a 1:1 mixture of both compounds (**4a** and **4'a**) was obtained with rather low stereoselectivity (33% *ee* for **4a**, entry 2).<sup>[16]</sup> Better enantiomeric excesses were obtained with protected silyl prolinol ethers **5d** (95% conversion) and **5e** (77% conversion), but a significant amount of **4'a** was also formed (entries 4 and 5). The amount of the by-product **4'a** could not be reduced by dilution in toluene or CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (entries 6 and 7), but it was increased when the ratio **1a/2** become smaller (entry 8). To our delight, the use of a 1.5:1 ratio of **1a/2** (entry 9), afforded a 80:20 mixture of **4a** and **4'a** and the result was even better by using an 2:1 ratio of **1a/2** (entry 10). Under these last conditions, we observed full conversion after two hours into a 95:5 mixture of **4a** and **4'a**, isolating **4a** with 80% yield. Both compounds **4a** and **4'a** were obtained with identical *ee* (entry 10). All mentioned reactions were performed by using 20 mol% of the catalysts. We studied the influence of the catalytic loading. Thus, good results were also obtained with 10 mol% (99% *ee* and 58% yield, entry 11) with only traces of **4'a** and also with 5 mol% of the catalyst (97% *ee*, 60% yield, entry 12); however, under these conditions the reaction time was slightly longer (8 h). The use of only 1 mol% of **5d** was

not enough to activate the alkyne and no reaction was observed (entry 13).

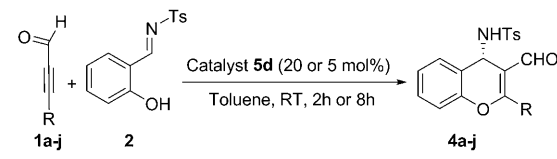
In order to check the scope of the reaction, we explored reactions of different aryl (**1a–g**), alkyl (**1h**) and alkenyl (**1i**) alkynals with **2** under the previously optimized conditions (entries 10–12, Table 1). Results are summarized in Table 2. Most reactions were completed in less than 2 h (8 h when the catalytic loading was 5 mol%, entries 1 and 2). All reactions were performed on a 0.2 mmol scale in 0.2 mL of toluene,

Table 1. Optimization of the reaction of aldehyde (**1a**) with salicyl *N*-tosylimine **2**.<sup>[a]</sup>

	Catalyst (mol %)	Solvent	<b>1a/2</b>	Conversion [%] <sup>[e]</sup>	<b>4a/4'a</b>	<i>ee</i> [%] <sup>[d]</sup>
1	<b>5a</b> (20)	toluene	1:1	nr	–	–
2	<b>5b</b> (20)	toluene	1:1	> 98	50:50	33
3	<b>5c</b> (20)	toluene	1:1	nr	–	–
4	<b>5d</b> (20)	toluene	1:1	95	55:45	96
5	<b>5e</b> (20)	toluene	1:1	77	41:59	98
6	<b>5d</b> (20)	toluene <sup>[d]</sup>	1:1	85	40:60	nd
7	<b>5d</b> (20)	CH <sub>2</sub> Cl <sub>2</sub> <sup>[d]</sup>	1:1	60	70:30	96
8	<b>5d</b> (20)	toluene	1:1.5	> 98	50:50	94
9	<b>5d</b> (20)	toluene	1.5:1	> 98	80:20	96
10	<b>5d</b> (20)	toluene	2:1	> 98 (80) <sup>[e]</sup>	95:5	98 (98) <sup>[f]</sup>
11	<b>5d</b> (10)	toluene	2:1	> 98 (58) <sup>[e]</sup>	> 98:2	99
12	<b>5d</b> (5)	toluene <sup>[g]</sup>	2:1	> 98 (60) <sup>[e]</sup>	93:7	97
13	<b>5d</b> (1)	toluene <sup>[g]</sup>	2:1	nr	–	–

[a] All reactions were performed on a 0.2 mmol scale in 0.2 mL of solvent and stopped after 2 h. [b] Conversion was determined by <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy. [c] Enantiomeric ratio was determined by chiral HPLC; nr = no reaction. [d] Diluted up to 0.1 M. [e] Isolated yield after flash chromatography. [f] Enantiomeric ratio of the byproduct **4'a**. [g] These reactions were stopped after 8 h.

except for entry 3 that was carried out in 2.0 mmol scale. Upon scaling up the reaction, **4a** was obtained in 76% isolated yield without decreasing the optical purity (98% *ee*). The incorporation of electron-donating groups (*p*-Me, *o*-MeO and *p*-MeO) at the alkyne's aromatic ring did not affect the stereoselectivity with *ee*'s ranging between 94 to

Table 2. Scope results for the reaction of salicyl *N*-tosylimine (**2**) with aldehydes **1a–j**.<sup>[a]</sup>


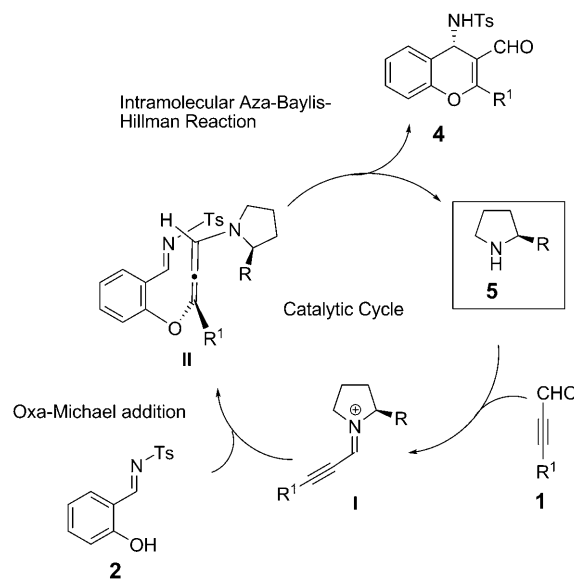
R	Mol % catalyst	Product	Yield [%]	ee [%] <sup>[b]</sup>
1 Ph ( <b>1a</b> )	20	<b>4a</b>	80	98
2 Ph ( <b>1a</b> )	5	<b>4a</b>	60	98
3 Ph ( <b>1a</b> )	5	<b>4a</b>	76 <sup>[c]</sup>	99
4 <i>p</i> -Me-C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub> ( <b>1b</b> )	20	<b>4b</b>	97	96
5 <i>o</i> -MeO-C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub> ( <b>1c</b> )	20	<b>4c</b>	80	96
6 <i>o</i> -MeO-C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub> ( <b>1c</b> )	5	<b>4c</b>	82	98
7 <i>p</i> -MeO-C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub> ( <b>1d</b> )	20	<b>4d</b>	94	94
8 3,5-CF <sub>3</sub> -C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub> ( <b>1e</b> )	40	<b>4e</b>	55 <sup>[d]</sup>	99
9 <i>t</i> Bu-C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub> ( <b>1f</b> )	20	<b>4f</b>	70	99
10 <i>t</i> Bu-C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub> ( <b>1f</b> )	10	<b>4f</b>	67	98
11 <i>p</i> -(C <sub>5</sub> H <sub>11</sub> )-C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub> ( <b>1g</b> )	20	<b>4g</b>	68	98
12 <i>p</i> -(C <sub>5</sub> H <sub>11</sub> )-C <sub>6</sub> H <sub>4</sub> ( <b>1g</b> )	5	<b>4g</b>	84 <sup>[d]</sup>	96
13 <i>n</i> -pent ( <b>1h</b> )	20	<b>4h</b>	79	98
14 1-cyclohexenyl ( <b>1i</b> )	20	<b>4i</b>	77	99
15 1-cyclohexenyl ( <b>1i</b> )	5	<b>4i</b>	78	99
16 TMS ( <b>1j</b> )	20	<b>4j</b>	nr <sup>[e]</sup>	–

[a] All reactions were performed with salicyl *N*-tosylimine (0.2 mmol), alkyne (0.4 mmol), and the indicated amount of catalyst in solvent (0.2 mL) and stopped after 2 h. [b] Determined by chiral HPLC (see Supporting Information). [c] This reaction was carried out in a 2.0 mmol scale. [d] This reaction was stopped after 20 h. [e] No reaction.

98% (Table 2, entries 4–7). No erosion of yield or stereoselectivity was observed by decreasing the catalytic loading to 5 mol% (entry 6). Interestingly, compound **1e**, bearing an electron-poor aromatic ring, also evolved with good enantioselectivity. However, the reactivity was substantially decreased and was necessary 40 mol% of the catalyst and 20 h for the consumption of the starting material (entry 8). Other alkyl groups at *para*-position, such as *n*-Pent and *t*Bu also produced excellent *ee*'s with both 20 mol% and 5 mol% of catalyst (entries 9–12). Finally, reactions of alkynals bearing alkyl or alkenyl chains, instead of aryl ones, produced good stereoselectivity and isolated yields (entries 13–15). Interestingly the reaction with the alkynal **1j** did not work at standard conditions (entry 16). The structure of **4a** and absolute configuration of compound **4'a** were unequivocally established by X-ray analysis (see the Supporting Information for more details).<sup>[17]</sup>

A plausible catalytic cycle for explaining the course of these reactions is depicted at Scheme 3. First, the catalyst **5** activates the alkynal **1**, forming an iminium intermediate **I**, that undergoes the oxa-Michael addition with the salicyl *N*-tosylimine **2**. Resulting alenamine intermediate **II**<sup>[18]</sup> reacts with the imine in an intramolecular fashion leading compounds **4**. The catalyst **5** is recovered in this last step.

In conclusion, herein we present the first highly enantioselective oxa-Michael/aza-Baylis–Hillman tandem reaction between 2-alkynals and tosylimines leading to optically active 4-amino-4*H*-chromenes. This reaction takes place in



Scheme 3. Proposed mechanism for the oxa-Michael/Baylis–Hillman tandem reaction.

less than 2 h with high yields and excellent enantioselectivities. The catalytic loading could be reduced to 5 mol% with slight increase in reaction times.

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**Keywords:** asymmetric synthesis • aza-Baylis–Hillman • diarylprolinol ethers • domino reactions • organocatalysis

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- [17] CCDC-766985 (**4'a**) and 766986 (**4a**) contains the supplementary crystallographic data (see the Supporting Information for more details). These data can be obtained free of charge from The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre via [www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data\\_request/cif](http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif).
- [18] The allenamine intermediate **II** has been previously proposed by Wang et al, see reference [14b].

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