

Development of a Practical Synthetic Method for *N*-*tert*-Butoxycarbonyl α -Ketimino EstersTakuya Hashimoto, Kumiko Yamamoto, and Keiji Maruoka*
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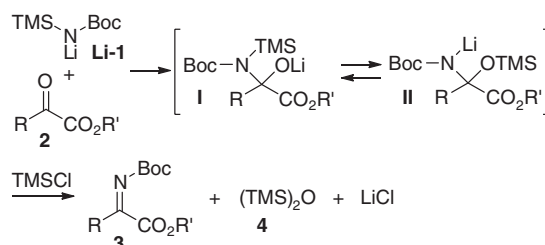
Despite the potential synthetic utility of *N*-Boc α -ketimino esters as prochiral ketimines to give chiral α -tertiary amines, there has been no general method to access these molecules in a practical fashion. We report herein a procedure for the one-step synthesis of *N*-Boc α -ketimino esters starting from the corresponding α -keto esters.

In the realm of asymmetric catalysis aimed at the synthesis of chiral amines, prochiral *N*-Boc aldimines have found unlimited applications building on their good reactivity and ease of deprotection after the planned transformation.¹ However, when it comes to their keto equivalent, *N*-Boc ketimines, there has been essentially no report using these molecules in asymmetric catalysis.^{2d} We assumed that the reason for this deficiency is partially due to the lack of supply of *N*-Boc ketimines² in addition to their elusive nature existing as a tautomeric mixture in the case of ketimines having α -hydrogens,^{2c} despite their high potency as valuable prochiral substrates to produce *N*-Boc-protected chiral α -tertiary amines.³

We report herein the attempt to solve this issue by establishment of a practical synthetic procedure for *N*-Boc α -ketimino esters having no α -hydrogen which are particularly attractive as a robust template for the asymmetric synthesis of α,α -disubstituted α -amino acids.⁴ Our strategy to realize this goal is the use of lithium *N*-Boc-*N*-TMS-amide **Li-1** as a source of the *N*-Boc imino group, designed according to early reports on the synthesis of *N*-TMS and *N*-acyl imines (Figure 1).⁵ Nucleophilic addition of this lithium amide to α -keto ester **2** would give the intermediate **I** which might be in equilibrium with **II**. We anticipated that addition of TMSCl to this intermediate would deliver the corresponding *N*-Boc α -ketimino ester concomitant with the extrusion of disiloxane **4**.

Following this synthetic plan, we actually implemented the synthesis of *N*-Boc α -ketimino esters. After some optimization studies, we settled on the operationally simple one-pot sequential procedure shown in the scheme below (Table 1). Lithium amide **Li-1** could be generated by the reaction of carbamate **1** with butyllithium at -78°C . Exposure of methyl benzoylformate (**2a**) to this solution and subsequent treatment with chlorotrimethylsilane furnished *N*-Boc α -ketimino ester **3a** in 67% yield as a single isomer (Entry 1). This reaction system could also be applied to α -keto esters having bulkier esters, like ethyl ester **2b** and *t*-butyl ester **2c** (Entries 2 and 3). A variety of α -ketimino esters bearing an aromatic substituent were obtained in good yields (Entries 4–10), and even an α -ketimino ester bearing an alkynyl moiety could be synthesized (Entry 11).

The limitation of this procedure is the difficulty to perform the reaction with pyruvate (**2**, R = Me)^{2c} and other alkyl-substituted α -keto esters which might be due to the preferential deprotonation of α -keto esters by **Li-1**. Probably for the same reason, acetophenone could not be employed as well.

Figure 1. Synthetic scheme for *N*-Boc α -ketimino esters.Table 1. Preparation of *N*-Boc α -ketimino esters^a

Entry	R	R'	Yield % ^b	Product
1	Me	Me	67	3a
2	Ph	Et	80	3b
3	Ph	<i>t</i> -Bu	74	3c
4	Me	<i>t</i> -Bu	71	3d
5	Me	<i>t</i> -Bu	73	3e
6	MeO	<i>t</i> -Bu	78	3f
7	MeO	<i>t</i> -Bu	57	3g
8	Cl	<i>t</i> -Bu	54	3h
9	Ph	<i>t</i> -Bu	69	3i
10	Furan	<i>t</i> -Bu	77	3j
11	TBS-C≡C-	<i>t</i> -Bu	79	3k

^aReactions performed at 0.50 mmol scale. ^bIsolated yield.

After the establishment of a practical synthetic method for *N*-Boc α -ketimino esters, we moved our attention to the elucidation of the C=N double bond geometry. To our delight, we could obtain a crystal of **3h** suitable for X-ray crystallo-

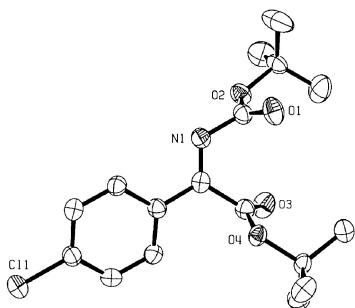


Figure 2. ORTEP representation of **3h** with ellipsoids shown at 50% probability level. Hydrogen atoms are omitted for clarity.

graphic analysis, and the configuration was determined to be *Z*, projecting the Boc group and the ester moiety in a *cis* fashion as shown in Figure 2.⁶

In conclusion, we established an operationally simple synthetic procedure to give *N*-Boc α -ketimino esters in good yield.^{7,8} Research is currently underway to exploit these substrates in the context of catalytic asymmetric synthesis.⁹

This work was partially supported by a Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan. T.H. thanks a Grant-in-Aid for Young Scientists (B).

References and Notes

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- 6 The crystal structure has been deposited at the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre (CCDC 801250). The data can be obtained free of charge via the Internet at www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/conts/retrieving.html.
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- 8 Representative procedure for the synthesis of **3c**: To a stirred solution of *tert*-butyl (trimethylsilyl)carbamate (**1**) (94.7 mg, 0.50 mmol) in THF (4.5 mL) was added 1.6 M hexane solution of butyllithium (313 μ L, 0.50 mmol) at -78°C . After stirring for 1 h, a THF solution of *tert*-butyl benzoylformate (103.1 mg, 0.50 mmol) was added dropwise. The reaction solution was stirred for an additional 5 h, and to this solution was successively added chlorotrimethylsilane (66.6 μ L, 0.525 mmol). The reaction was then gradually warmed to room temperature over 2 h. The mixture was poured into aqueous NaHCO_3 and extracted with ethyl acetate. The combined organic layers were dried over anhydrous Na_2SO_4 and concentrated in vacuo. The residue was purified by column chromatography on silica gel coated with a dry ice jacket eluting with CH_2Cl_2 (1% triethylamine) to give **3c** as a yellow liquid in 74% yield (113.3 mg, 0.37 mmol).
- 9 Supporting Information is available electronically on the CSJ-Journal Web site, <http://www.csj.jp/journals/chem-lett/index.html>.