

Enantioselective Synthesis of [6]Carbohelicenes

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Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: The use of α -cationic phosphonites derived from TADDOL as ancillary ligands has allowed a highly regio- and enantioselective synthesis of substituted [6]carbohelicenes by sequential Au-catalyzed intramolecular hydroarylation of diynes. Key for these results is the modular structure of these new ligands, and the enhanced reactivity that they impart to Au(I)-centers after coordination.

T he asymmetric synthesis of ortho-annulated polycyclic skeletons, helicenes,¹ has received considerable attention during the past decade as a result of their unique chiroptical properties and their continually emerging applications in different areas of chemistry such as asymmetric organo-² or transition metal catalysis,³ molecular machines,⁴ or liquid crystal technology.⁵ Indeed, several diasteroselective approaches to helicenes and helicene derivatives have been reported;⁶ yet, syntheses built upon highly enantioselective catalytic processes are still scarce.⁷

Our research group has investigated during the past few years the synthesis and applications of α -cationic phosphines and their applications in catalysis.⁸ The use of these strong π -acceptor ligands has been proven to be highly beneficial in π -acid catalysis; specifically, tremendous enhancement of catalyst activity has been observed in the Au- and Pt-catalyzed intra- and intermolecular hydroarylation of alkynes, which allowed these transformations to be accomplished under comparatively mild conditions.⁹ Encouraged by the realization that alkyne hydroarylation has the potential to assemble aromatic rings into helicenes if applied on suitably designed substrates,¹⁰ we embarked on the design of an enantioselective route toward [6]carbohelicenes employing chiral cationic ancillary ligands. Herein, we summarize our progress in this direction.

The starting point for our approach was the synthesis of a library of chiral cationic phosphanes. Being aware of the difficulties inherent to asymmetric gold catalysis,¹¹ which stem from its linear coordination geometry and the outer-sphere nature of Au(I)-catalyzed processes, we reasoned that the new ligand structure had to be highly modular in order to tackle this challenge with any possibility of success. Cationic phosphonites of general formula 1 fulfill this requirement. The chiral information is provided by well-precedented TADDOL-derived moieties, which are cheap, easy to tune, and have already demonstrated their suitability in asymmetric gold catalysis.¹² In

addition, the imidazolium unit introduces a positive charge which eventually will be responsible for enhanced catalyst efficiency (Figure 1).

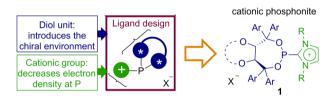


Figure 1. Structural design of cationic phosphonites.

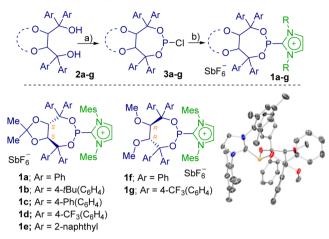
To bring our plan into practice, we first examined the synthesis of cationic phosphonites 1a-g. Following known procedures, diols 2a-g were prepared and subsequently condensed with PCl₃ to afford chorophosphites 3a-g.¹² Pyridine revealed to be the most suitable base for this step since it allows an efficient separation of 3a-g from pyridinium hydrochloride by simple filtration. This is crucial for the next and final step, which involves the condensation of 3a-g with free N-heterocyclic carbenes to afford 1a-g (Scheme 1).¹³

The formation of cationic phosphonites 1a-g was first suggested by the rise of a characteristic ³¹P NMR signal ($\delta = 143-149$ ppm), and subsequently confirmed by single crystal X-ray diffraction of 1f. This first structure of a cationic phosphonite is, in fact, quite suggestive. The geometry around the phosphorus atom is pyramidal (sum of angles 298.1°) and the electron pair located on this atom points toward the interior of the chiral cavity created by the aromatic substituents of both the TADDOL and imidazolium unit. Besides that, ligands 1a-g are stable enough to resist chromatographic purification at low temperature, and can be handled for short times in air without apparent decomposition.

Mixing 1a-g with (Me₂S)AuCl in dichloromethane led to the formation of the corresponding Au(I) complexes 4a-g in good to excellent isolated yields. Coordination of the phosphonite to gold was evidenced by a pronounced upfield shift of their ³¹P NMR signals ($\delta = 108-113$ ppm), to a range that perfectly overlaps with that of closely related Au(I)-phosphoramidite complexes. Unambiguous confirmation of the expected connectivity was once more obtained by X-ray diffraction of single crystals of 4e, 4f and 4g (Scheme 2). The three structures depict

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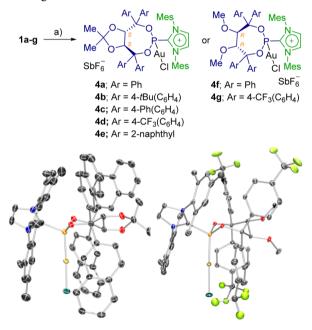
Scheme 1. Synthesis of Cationic Phosphonites and Structure of 1h in the Solid State 14a



^{*a*}Reagents and conditions: (a) PCl₃, Pyridine, toluene, $0 \rightarrow 60$ °C; (b) IMes, Et₂O, $-78 \rightarrow 0$ °C and then NaSbF₆. Yields (3 steps): **1a**, 69%; **1b**, 29%; **1c**, 48%; **1d**, 72%; **1e**, 64%; **1f**, 79%; **1g**, 65%. X-ray structure of **1f**; H atoms and anion removed for clarity.

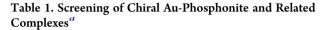
the Au atom immersed into a deep chiral pocket that will likely be key for the desired asymmetric transformation.

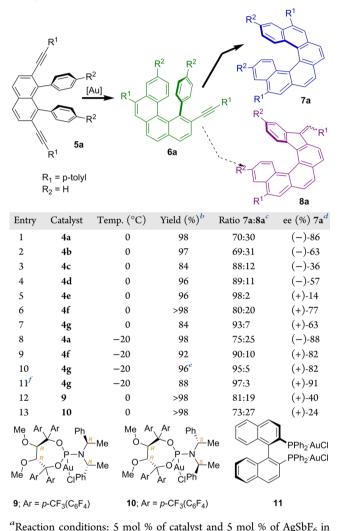
Scheme 2. Synthesis of Au-Complexes 4a-h and Structures of 4e and $4g^{14a}$



^{*a*}Reagents and conditions: (a) (Me₂S)AuCl, CH₂Cl₂, $-20 \, ^{\circ}C \rightarrow rt$. Yields: **4a**, 99%; **4b**, 98%; **4c**, 91%; **4d**, 91%; **4e**, 77%; **4f**, 94%; **4g**, 99%. H atoms and SbF₆ anion removed for clarity.

Once this first set of Au-precatalysts was made available, they all were screened on the cyclization of diyne 5a into helicene 7a. Substrates of general formula 5 were chosen as adequate starting materials for the synthesis of [6]helicenes because they do not contain any interfering element of chirality, and can be assembled in gram scale through a robust and modular route (For the synthesis of 5a-k, see the Supporting Information). During our preliminary optimization of reaction conditions with precatalyst 4a, we found that the desired helicene 7a was formed with a very promising 86% ee employing 5 mol % of catalyst at 0 °C in CH_2Cl_2 . Note, however, that the regioselectivity of the cyclization was not satisfactory and considerable amounts of 8a, the product from the 5-*exo*-dig cyclization of one of the alkynes, was also obtained (Table 1,





Reaction conditions: S mol % of catalyst and S mol % of AgSbF₆ in CH_2Cl_2 , 72 h. ^bCombined yields to 7a and 8a. Unless specified, the amount of intermediate 6a in these mixtures was inferior to 2%. ^cDetermined by ¹H NMR and/or HPLC. ^dDetermined by chiral HPLC. ^eThe reaction mixture still contained 21% of 6a. ^fC₆H₅F used as solvent, 10 mol% of 4g/AgSbF₆, 96h.

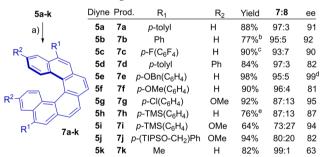
Entry 1). Neither changing the steric nor electronic nature of the aryl substituents on the TADDOL moiety lead to any improvement in terms of ee of 7a (Entries 2–5); yet, precatalyst 4d decorated with 4-(trifluoromethyl)phenyl group on the TADDOL moiety substantially increased the regioselectivity of the process toward formation of the helicene without eroding irreversibly the enantioselectivity (7a:8a, 89:11; 57% ee; Entry 4). Hence, both the -Ph and p-CF₃(C₆H₄)- rings were kept for next optimization round consisting of the replacement of the acetonide backbone by a more flexible dimethyl ether motif.

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The results obtained with precatalysts 4f and 4g were not conclusive. The enantioselectivities obtained were lower than the one provided by 4a; however, the regioselectivity toward 7a could be further improved to a respectable 93:7 ratio with the aid of complex 4g (Entry 7). The effect of lowering the temperature to -20 °C was subsequently examined. Precatalyst 4a proved not to be sensitive to this parameter (Entry 8); in contrast, under these conditions complex 4g produced remarkable results in terms of regio- and enantioselectivity (Entry 10). Finally, a solvent screening identified fluorobenzene as the most appropriate one for this transformation.¹⁵ Helicene 7a is thus obtained with excellent regioselectivity and a remarkable 91% ee. Note, however, that the catalyst loading had to be increased to 10% in order to obtain complete conversions. Under the same conditions, the structurally related phosphoramidite Aucomplexes 9 and 10 do not display any catalytic activity, thus demonstrating the activating effect of the imidazolium moiety. Only at 0 °C some reactivity was observed, but the regioselectivity and ee of the product obtained were inferior to those induced by 4g (Entries 12 and 13). Au-complex 11, based on a stronger σ -donor BINAP ligand does not show any activity at 0 °C after activation with $AgSbF_6$ (1 equiv).¹⁶

With the optimal conditions in hand, the scope of the cyclization was evaluated using diynes $\mathbf{5b}-\mathbf{k}$ which contain a diverse substitution pattern (See the Supporting Information for the X-ray structures of $\mathbf{5b}$ and $\mathbf{5k}$). Gratifyingly, the high levels of regio- and enantioinduction imparted by $4\mathbf{g}$ were maintained through the series reaching up to 99% ee (7e). Only the methyl capped alkyne $\mathbf{5k}$ afforded significantly lower ee for reasons that are not completely understood at this moment (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Substrate Scope and Limitations^a



^{*a*}Reactions conditions: 5a-k (0.02 mmol) with catalyst 4g, 10 mol %, AgSbF₆ 10 mol %, FC₆H₅ (0.05M), -20 °C, 96 h. Yields are of the isolated 7:8 mixtures; de values were determined by ¹H NMR and HPLC; ee values were determined by chiral HPLC. ^{*b*}5% of unreacted **5b** and 14% of intermediate **6b** were still present in the reaction mixture. ^{*c*}8% of unreacted **5c** and 1% of intermediate **6c** were still present in the reaction mixture. ^{*e*}3% of **6h** was still present in the reaction mixture.

All our attempts to obtain single crystals from the enantioenriched mixtures were unsuccessful, but racemates readily crystallized. This was enough to confirm the helical structure of the assembled products (Figure 2). To ascertain the absolute configuration of the helicenes prepared, the CD spectra of 7c, 7e, and 7g were recorded (See the Supporting Information and Figure 2). The pattern and sign of these spectra correlate well with the one reported for (*P*)-[6]helicene, suggesting the same absolute configuration.¹⁷

Subsequently, a series of dynamic NMR studies was conducted to determine whether the first or the second hydroarylation is the

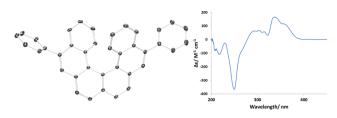
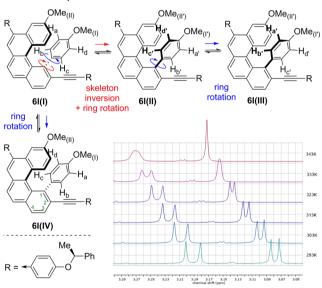


Figure 2. X-ray structure of *rac-*7**b** (left) and CD spectrum of 7**e** (right). H atoms omitted for clarity. Ellipsoids shown at 50% probability. Only one of the two independent molecules present in the unit cell is shown.

enantio-determining step of the whole process. With this idea in mind, intermediate **61** bearing chiral (*S*)-1-phenylethoxy substituents was prepared (See the Supporting Information). The presence of additional elements of asymmetry in this tetrahelicene renders isomers with different helicity diasteromers, making them observable by NMR spectroscopy. In the measured temperature series, two coalescence phenomena were observed. The first one with a coalescence temperature ($T_{\rm C}$) of 313 K only involves exchange of *o*- and *m*-protons of the internal phenyl substituent, indicating simple rotation of this group (Scheme 3, blue arrows). The second, with a higher

Scheme 3. Dynamic Processes in Tetrahelicene Intermediates



coalescence temperature ($T_{\rm C}$ = 338 K), interconverts all diasteromeric pairs in **6**l; therefore, it implies stereoinversion of the helicene skeleton (Scheme 3, red arrows). NOESY/EXSY experiments also corroborate this view.

Spectra were recorded at the indicated temperatures in d_{8} -toluene on a 500 MHz spectrometer. Only the -OMe region is shown.

At the coalescence temperature, the activation energy barriers ΔG^{\ddagger} were calculated to be 59.4 and 74.5 kJ/mol for the ring rotation and skeleton inversion, respectively. As expected, these values are slightly higher than those obtained for related tetrahelicenes with no substituent in position 2.¹⁸ From the Eyring plot of the exchange rates at different temperatures, the thermodynamic parameters were estimated for the skeletal inversion (See the Supporting Information, also for a similar analysis of the ring rotation process). The enthalpy of activation is relatively low, $\Delta H^{\ddagger} = 33.5$ kJ/mol, but there is a substantial negative contribution of entropy of activation ($\Delta S^{\ddagger} = -0.13$ kJ/

molK) to the ΔG^{\ddagger} , indicating that the entropy decreases to attain the transition state. This hints to a highly ordered transition state in which the phenyl substituent and the tetrahelicene unit are probably perpendicular. Finally, the half-life of the diasteromers of **61** was estimated to be approximately 5 s at -20 °C. Comparing this fast equilibration with our experimental reaction time (72–96 h), it can be concluded that a dynamic kinetic resolution process takes place during the second cyclization stemming from the preferred reaction of one enantiomer of **6** with the chiral catalyst.

In summary, a highly enantioselective synthesis of substituted [6]helicenes has been achieved via sequential Au-catalyzed hydroarylation of alkynes employing newly designed chiral cationic phosphinites as ancillary ligands. Ongoing work in our laboratory is focused on the further optimization of the phosphonite ligands for the enantioselective synthesis of heterohelicenes and higher order helicenes.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website at DOI: 10.1021/jacs.6b12443.

Data for 1f (CIF) Data for 4e (CIF) Data for 4f (CIF) Data for 4g (CIF) Data for 5b (CIF) Data for 5k (CIF) Data for 7b (CIF) Data for 7k (CIF) Experimental details and NMR spectra (PDF)

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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