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<www.rsc.org/obc> **COMMUNICATION**

Highly efficient asymmetric aldol reaction in brine using a fluorous sulfonamide organocatalyst†‡

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A fluorous organocatalyst promotes direct asymmetric aldol reactions of aromatic aldehydes with ketones in brine to afford the corresponding anti-aldol products in high yield with up to 96% ee. Fluorous organocatalyst can be readily recovered by solid phase extraction using fluorous silica gel and reused without purification.

Formation of new carbon–carbon bonds is one of the most important transformations in organic chemistry. In particular, direct asymmetric aldol reactions using organocatalysts have attracted considerable attention in recent years. Proline and its derivatives with cyclic secondary amino groups are good organocatalysts for direct aldol reactions.¹ Moreover, many chiral primary amines have been reported as excellent organocatalysts.^{2,3} In addition, the use of water as a reaction solvent plays an important role in the field of green chemistry.⁴ Organocatalysts that can promote aldol reactions in water have recently been reported by several research groups.^{2,5} Most of the organocatalysts used in water bear hydrophobic units such as alkyl chain groups or aromatic groups that function as a reaction field in water. In addition, fluorous chain groups such as perfluoroalkyl groups can be utilized as hydrophobic reaction fields; however, asymmetric reactions in water using organocatalysts bearing a fluorous tag have rarely been reported.^{5m, $\bar{6}$,7 Fluorous compounds} with high fluorine content can be easily separated from nonfluorous compounds by fluorous solid phase extraction (FSPE) using fluorous silica gel or fluorous organic solvent extraction.⁸ There are many reports of asymmetric reactions in which fluorous organocatalysts are recyclable.⁹

We have recently reported a direct aldol reaction in water using the fluorous sulfonamide organocatalyst $1b$,⁷ the Michael addition reaction using a fluorous thiourea organocatalyst, 10 and the oxidation reaction using fluorous IBX .¹¹ In addition, we have

reported a method for the synthesis of both enantiomeric aldol products in brine using organocatalysts $1a^{12}$ and $2,13$ which are easily prepared from L-phenylalanine, a commercially available, inexpensive natural amino acid (Scheme 1). The asymmetric synthesis of both enantiomeric products using two different organocatalysts, which are prepared from a common chiral source, has not been extensively reported, although Maruoka and coworker elaborated the concept for the first time.¹⁴ Furthermore, we successively developed the recyclable fluorous organocatalyst 1b,⁷ which can provide the *anti*-aldol product 6a, by appending a fluorous tag to β-aminosulfonamide 1a. However, direct aldol reactions using organocatalyst 2 ,¹³ which afford the opposite absolute configuration product 7a, require high catalyst loading (0.2 equiv). In addition, a protocol for recovery and reuse of 2 has not yet been developed. Therefore, to improve the catalytic activity of 2 and enable catalyst recovery, we attempted to develop a novel organocatalyst 4 bearing a fluorous tag that can effectively promote asymmetric aldol reactions in water. Herein, we report highly efficient direct asymmetric aldol reactions using 4. **Commission Commission Commission**

The preparation of 4 bearing a fluorous tag is shown in Scheme 2. Treatment of 8, which is an intermediate in the synthesis of chiral ligand $3¹⁵$, with methanesulfonyl chloride (MsCl) in the presence of triethylamine in THF afforded 9 in 98% yield. Azide 10 was then obtained in 85% yield via the reaction of 9 with sodium azide in DMF. Next, the Boc group of 10 was removed by treatment with hydrogen chloride in ethyl acetate, followed by reaction with trifluoromethanesulfonic anhydride (Tf₂O) in the presence of triethylamine in CH₂Cl₂ to give

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Scheme 2 Preparation of organocatalyst.

Table 1 Optimization of reaction conditions

the corresponding sulfonamide 12 in excellent yield. Finally, the azide group of 12 was reduced by triphenylphosphine in THF– $H₂O$ to afford 4.

Optimized conditions for enantioselective direct aldol reactions using 4 are shown in Table 1. Aldol reactions were carried out with p-nitrobenzaldehyde (5a) and cyclohexanone as test reactants in the presence of a catalytic amount of 4 and trifluoroacetic acid (TFA) in brine. Finally, the most suitable conditions were found when the reaction was performed in the presence of TFA (0.0125 equiv) and 4 (0.05 equiv) at room temperature (entry 5). When no TFA was added, a slight reduction in enantioselectivity was observed (entry 7). Fluorous organocatalyst 4 is an excellent catalyst and provides high yield and excellent stereoselectivity even at low catalyst loading (0.05 equiv) and with reasonable amount of cyclohexanone (5 equiv) as compared to 2, which requires high catalyst loading (0.2 equiv) and large amount of cyclohexanone (10 equiv).

Considering the optimized reaction conditions, the scope and limitation of the direct asymmetric aldol reactions between various aldehydes and ketones were examined (Table 2). We

Table 2 Direct asymmetric aldol reactions using organocatalyst 4

Table 2 (Contd.)

 $a¹H$ NMR yields. b^b Determined by ¹H NMR. c^c Determined by HPLC analysis. d Catalyst 4 (0.1 equiv) and TFA (0.025 equiv) were used. ^e The reaction was carried at 0° C. ^{*f*} The reaction was carried out with 30 equiv of acetone in brine.

 a Isolated yield. b Determined by $1H$ NMR. c Determined by HPLC analysis using Chiralcel AS-H.

selected methoxy substituents as the representative electrondonating group and nitro, trifluoromethyl, and halogen substituents as the electron-withdrawing groups on the benzene ring of benzaldehyde. The reactions between aromatic aldehydes with electron-withdrawing groups and cyclohexanone smoothly resulted in the corresponding anti-aldol products in good to excellent yield with 84–96% ee (entries 1–4, 7, 8, and 10 and 11). On the other hand, the reactions between aldehydes with electron-donating groups and cyclohexanone provided the antialdol products in low yield; however, high enantioselectivity was obtained (entries 5 and 9). Moreover, we examined the reactions between other types of ketones and p-nitrobenzaldehyde (5a). The aldol reactions of cycloheptanone and cyclopentanone with 4a resulted in the expected aldol products 7l and 7m in high yield with 73 and 88% ee, respectively (entries 12 and 13). The reaction of acetone as an acyclic ketone with 5a afforded 7n in moderate yield with 70% ee (entry 14). The stereochemistry of the anti-aldol products obtained using 4 was determined by comparison with reported chiral-phase HPLC retention times, optical rotation data, and NMR spectroscopy.

Next, the recyclability of the catalyst was evaluated. After use in the aldol reaction between cyclohexanone and 5a under the similar conditions, 4 was readily recovered by FSPE using fluorous silica gel.⁸ Moreover, the recovered 4 can be reused, and it retained its catalytic activity and enantioselectivity without further purification although longer reaction times were necessary for the second reuse (Table 3).

Conclusions

In conclusion, the novel fluorous organocatalyst 4 can be easily prepared from L-tyrosine, an inexpensive and commercially available amino acid. Fluorous organocatalyst 4, which is a simple β-aminosulfonamide with only one chiral center, efficiently catalyzes the direct aldol reactions of various aromatic aldehydes with ketones in brine to afford the corresponding antialdol products with high enantioselectivity. Fluorous organocatalyst 4 is a better catalyst than the original organocatalyst 2¹³ and can efficiently catalyze aldol reactions even under mild reaction conditions, at only low catalyst loading (0.05 equiv) and with reasonable amount of cyclohexanone (5 equiv). The excellent performance is probably due to the ability of the fluorous tag $(-C_8F_{17})$ on 4 to function as a preferable hydrophobic reaction field in brine. Fluorous organocatalyst 4 was readily recovered by simple solid phase extraction using fluorous silica gel and was immediately reusable without purification. Further application of this catalyst in the synthesis of bioactive compounds is currently under progress in our laboratory. Next, the recyclastic of the catalyst was evaluated. After use $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{$

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