Copper-catalyzed asymmetric conjugate addition of Grignard reagents to cyclic enones

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It is no longer necessary to use dialkylzinc reagents to obtain enantioselectivities >95% in the copper-catalyzed asymmetric conjugate addition of organometallic compounds to cyclic enones. We now report how this can be accomplished by using inexpensive and readily available Grignard reagents. Screening of bidentate ligands provided outstanding results with copper complexes of commercially available chiral ferrocenyl-based diphosphines, in particular TaniaPhos and JosiPhos derivatives. These catalysts tolerate a range of Grignard reagents and different cyclic enones as substrates, leading to high regioselectivities and unprecedented enantioselectivities. Moreover, the reactions are successful with moderate catalyst loading (5 mol %) under mild conditions and in the absence of additives.

The conjugate addition (1,4-addition) of carbon nucleophiles to α,β-unsatuated carbonyl compounds is one of the most widely used methods for the construction of C–C bonds (1). The development of highly enantioselective catalytic versions of this key transformation is of paramount importance (2–9). In recent years, the design of new chiral ligands and catalysts has led to the realization of asymmetric Michael additions (10, 11) and conjugate additions of dialkylzinc reagents (12, 13) as well as arylboronides (14) with excellent levels of stereoselectivity. For the asymmetric conjugate addition of alkylmetals, the subject of the present study, particularly effective methods based on alkylzinc reagents are now available for various cyclic enones (12, 15) including the usually problematic cyclopentenones (16, 17), lactones (18), nitroalkenes (19, 20), and acyclic enones (21). Meanwhile, considerable difficulties have been experienced in attempts to reach high stereoselectivities in transition metal-catalyzed 1,4-addition of other organometallic reagents. Illustrative of this fact is that an effective copper-catalyzed enantioselective conjugate addition of Grignard reagents is lacking despite more than two decades of intensive research (2, 5–9).

In 1988, Lippard and coworkers (22, 23) reported the first enantioselective conjugate addition of a Grignard reagent to an enone using catalytic amounts of a copper amide complex. Shortly after this seminal work was published, various catalytic systems were developed based on copper thiolorates (24–30) and monophosphine ligands (31–34), although in these systems, enantioselectivities rarely reached the 90% enantiomeric excess (ee) level. Notable exceptions are the two literature reports of 92% ee in the addition of BuMgCl to cyclic enones. Tomioka and coworkers (33) used 32 mol % of a chiral amidophosphine in the addition to cyclohexenone, and Stangeland and Sammakia (34) used 12 mol % of a chiral ferrocenyl monophosphine in the addition to cycloheptenone. Severe problems associated with the copper-catalyzed conjugate addition of Grignard reagents are the fast, uncatalyzed background reaction, the presence of competing chiral and achiral copper complexes in solution, the high sensitivity toward various reaction parameters, and the usually detrimental effect of the presence of halides on enantioselectivity (5, 35). Furthermore, the discovery of the efficiency of dialkylzinc reagents in the copper-catalyzed enantioselective conjugate addition clearly displaced the use of Grignard reagents in this asymmetric C–C bond formation (4–9). Dialkylzinc reagents have distinct advantages, compared with Grignard reagents, because they show low reactivity in uncatalyzed reaction and high tolerance for functional groups both in the substrate and the zinc reagent. Functionalized organozinc reagents are readily available from the corresponding alkynes through a hydroboration alkyl-transfer procedure (36). However, the use of alkylzinc halides instead of dialkylzinc reagents results in very low enantioselectivities. The Grignard version of this 1,4-addition remains challenging, because it is not only essential to obtain high ees but also to avoid the fast, uncatalyzed addition of the organomagnesium reagent to the carbonyl group (1,2-addition). Nevertheless, there are advantages in the use of common monoaalkylmagnesium halide reagents as opposed to dialkylzinc compounds, most notably the ready availability of inexpensive Grignard reagents, the transfer of all the alkyl groups of the organometallic compound, and the higher reactivity of the magnesium enolate subsequently formed. The advantages of monoaalkylmagnesium halides prompted us to search for a highly enantioselective family of ligands for this asymmetric transformation.

Chiral diphosphine ligands have dominated the field of asymmetric catalysis in the last 30 years (37, 38); however, none of these ligands has been reported to be effective in the conjugate addition of Grignard reagents. In principle, diphosphines do not match with the metal-differentiating coordination concept (32). It should be emphasized that until now, most successful ligands in the field of copper-catalyzed 1,4-addition of Grignard reagents fulfill the criteria of combining P, S, or Se with N or O donor atoms in their structure to coordinate selectively with Cu and Mg of the organometallic species, respectively (24–34). Among the most important bidentate ligands in asymmetric catalysis are ferrocenyl diphosphine ligands, especially TaniaPhos (I; Fig. 1 and refs. 39 and 40) and JosiPhos (6; Fig. 1 and refs. 41 and 42). In recent years, these prominent ligands, developed originally for use in enantioselective hydrogenation reactions, have proven to be successful in other asymmetric transformations (43–45). In particular, JosiPhos ligands exhibit moderate enantioselectivities (up to 71% ee) in the copper-catalyzed conjugate addition of dialkylzinc reagents to enones (44).

Here, we report copper-catalyzed asymmetric conjugate addition of Grignard reagents to cyclic enones with enantioselectivities up to 96%. This level of stereocontrol is achieved by using CuCl or CuBr-SMe2 as metal source, simple alkylmagnesium bromides as nucleophiles, and commercially available ferrocenyl diphosphines as chiral ligands.
Materials and Methods

General Procedures and Instrumental Techniques. All reactions were performed in a dry argon atmosphere using standard Schlenk techniques. Solvents were reagent-grade, dried, and distilled before use following standard procedures. We recorded 1H NMR, 13C NMR, and 31P NMR spectra at room temperature in CDCl3 on a Gemini 200 (200 MHz) or VXR300 (300 MHz) spectrometer (Varian). Chemical shifts were determined relative to the residual solvent peaks (CDCl3, δ = 7.26 ppm for hydrogen atoms, δ = 77 ppm for carbon atoms; H3PO4, δ = 0 ppm for phosphorus atoms). Progress of the reactions was monitored by GC MS (GC, HP6890; MS, HP5973) with an HP1 column (Agilent Technologies, Palo Alto, CA). ees were determined by capillary GC analysis (HP5890 or HP6890) with a Chiralix G-TA column for 9a, 9e, 9f, and 12c; a Chiraladex A-TA column for 9b–9d, 9g–9i, and 12b; or a CP-Chiralsil-Dex-CB column for 12a. Optical rotations were measured on a 241 MC polarimeter (Perkin-Elmer) at room temperature.

Materials. Cyclohexenone 8, cycloheptenone 11a, cyclopentenone 11b, lactone 11c, CuCl, and CuBr·SMe2 were purchased from Aldrich and used without additional purification. Grignard reagents (RMgBr) were prepared from the corresponding alkyl bromides and magnesium turnings in Et2O following standard procedures. Grignard reagents were titrated by using s-BuOH and catalytic amounts of 1,10-phenanthroline. Ligands 1, 2, 6, and 7 were initially supplied as a gift in the Solvias ligand kit. Ligand 1 was also obtained from Strem Chemicals (Kehl, Germany) and used as received. Ligands 1 and 3–5 (39, 40) were prepared according to published procedures. Racemic 1,4-addition products 9a–9i and 12a–12c were obtained by reaction of the enones 8 or 11a–11c with the corresponding Grignard reagent at 0°C in the presence of CuCl (100 mol %). Racemic 1,2-addition products 10a–10i and 13a–13c were prepared by reaction in the absence of copper source. All the products showed NMR and MS spectra in accordance with reported data: 9a, 9d, 9f, 9h, and 12b (46); 9b and 12a (47); 9c and 9e (33); 9g (48); 9i (49); and 12c (50).

General Procedure for the Asymmetric Conjugate Addition. In a Schlenk tube equipped with septum and stirring bar, a mixture of CuCl (12.5 μmol) and the ligand (1-7) (15 μmol) was dissolved in Et2O (2.5 ml). After stirring under argon at room temperature for 30 min, the enone (8 or 11a–11c, 0.25 mmol) was added. After additional stirring for 10 min, the corresponding Grignard reagent (solution in Et2O, 0.29 mmol) was added dropwise to the resulting mixture during 5 min at 0°C. After stirring under argon for 15 min, aqueous NH4Cl solution (1 M, 1 ml) was added to the reaction mixture. The organic phase was separated, filtered over a short silica column, and subjected to conversion and ee determination (capillary GC). CuBr·SMe2 was used instead of CuCl in reactions performed at low temperature. To avoid undesirable tandem aldol reactions, MeOH was used instead of aqueous NH4Cl solution in the work-up of reactions using cyclopentenone 11b as substrate. The configuration of the products was determined by comparing the sign of optical rotations with those reported: 9a (51), 9h (33), 12a (47), 12b (52), and 12c (50).

Results and Discussion

Preliminary screening involved the addition of different ethylmagnesium halides to cyclohexenone, the use of various Cu salts, and a systematic search for the optimal diphosphine ligand. Among those ligands initially tested that led to poor enantioselectivities (5–28% ee) were monodentate and bidentate phosphoramidites (13) and bidentate phosphines (Fig. 2). Remarkably, promising enantioselectivities (45–70% ee) were obtained by using ferrocenyl-based diphosphine ligands including MandyPhos (45), JosiPhos (42), and WalPhos (56), and in particular by using TaniaPhos (1; Fig. 1) and related ligands (39, 40).

Careful optimization of the reaction led to conditions using 5 mol % of CuCl, 6 mol % of TaniaPhos (1), and 1.15 eq of EtMgBr in Et2O at 0°C, which afforded full conversion in 15 min with a regioselectivity of 95% (1.4-addition versus 1.2-addition product) and an excellent 96% ee (Scheme 1). The use of a higher copper-to-ligand ratio results in low enantioselectivity. An important factor for efficiency of the chiral catalyst based on the ferrocenyl diphosphine ligands seems to be that the presence of free copper salt has to be avoided as long as Grignard reagent is present in the system.

The combination of CuCl and ethylmagnesium bromide turned out to be particularly effective (Table 1). The use of different halides, either in the Grignard reagent or the copper salt, has a major influence on the regioselectivity, whereas the enantioselectivity is barely affected. The use of CuBr·SMe2 at −60°C did not improve the enantioselectivity (Table 1, entry 5).
Table 1. Influence of halides on the regioselectivity and enantioselectivity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>EtMgX</th>
<th>[Cu]</th>
<th>Regioselectivity 1,4-1,2-addition</th>
<th>9a ee, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>EtMgCl</td>
<td>CuI</td>
<td>43:57</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>EtMgCl</td>
<td>CuBr</td>
<td>61:39</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>EtMgCl</td>
<td>CuCl</td>
<td>71:29</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>EtMgBr</td>
<td>CuCl</td>
<td>95:5</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5*</td>
<td>EtMgBr</td>
<td>CuBr</td>
<td>90:10</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*See Scheme 1. Full conversion after 15 min.
†Full conversion after 2 h at –60°C.

With the aim of relating the key structural features of the ligand with the high selectivity observed, analogues of TaniaPhos (1) were tested in the reaction under the same experimental conditions. The use of ligand 2 (Table 2, entry 2), with cyclohexyl groups instead of phenyl groups at the phosphorus attached to the cyclopentadienyl ring, led to a drastic decrease in the ee (10%). Surprisingly, variation of the amine substituents in the cyclopentadienyl ring, led to a drastic decrease in the ee groups instead of phenyl groups at the phosphorus attached to CuBr.

Table 2. Enantioselective copper-catalyzed conjugate addition of Grignard reagents to cyclohexene (8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry</th>
<th>RMGBr</th>
<th>Ligand</th>
<th>Regio, % ¹</th>
<th>ee 9, %</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Conf, R/S ²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>EtMgBr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>95 [69]</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>9a</td>
<td>(+)-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>EtMgBr</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9a</td>
<td>(+)-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>EtMgBr</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>9a</td>
<td>(+)-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>EtMgBr</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>9a</td>
<td>(+)-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>EtMgBr</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9a</td>
<td>(+)-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6*</td>
<td>EtMgBr</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9a</td>
<td>(+)-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7†</td>
<td>EtMgBr</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>9a</td>
<td>(-)-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8*</td>
<td>EtMgBr</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9a</td>
<td>(-)-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>MeMgBr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>9b</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>PrMgBr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>9c</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>BuMgBr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>9d</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12*</td>
<td>i-PrMgBr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>78 [72]</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9e</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13*</td>
<td>i-BuMgBr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>62 [70]</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9f</td>
<td>(+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14*</td>
<td>i-PrMgBr</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>9e</td>
<td>9c</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>PhMgBr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>9h</td>
<td>(+)-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>4-Cl-BuMgBr</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>9i</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17†</td>
<td>i-PrMgBr</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>9e</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18†</td>
<td>i-BuMgBr</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>9f</td>
<td>(-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 †</td>
<td>PhMgBr</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9j</td>
<td>n.d.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Regioselectivity [9/(9 + 10)] × 100.
²Conf, absolute configuration; n.d., not determined.
³More than 98% conversion after 2 h at –60°C using CuBr.
⁴Isolated yields are given in brackets.
⁵More than 98% conversion after 15 min at 0°C using CuCl.
Table 3. Enantioselective copper-catalyzed conjugate addition of EtMgBr to cyclic enones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry*</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>Ligand</th>
<th>Regio, %†</th>
<th>ee, %</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>Conf(R/S)‡</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1†</td>
<td>11a</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>80 [60]</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>12a</td>
<td>(+)-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11a</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>12a</td>
<td>(-)-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>11b</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12b</td>
<td>(-)-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>11b</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>12b</td>
<td>(+)-R</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>11b</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>12b</td>
<td>(+)-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>11c</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>12c</td>
<td>(+)-R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7§</td>
<td>11c</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>99 [75]</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>12c</td>
<td>(-)-S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>11c</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>12c</td>
<td>(-)-S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conf, absolute configuration.
†More than 98% conversion after 2 h at −60°C using CuBr-SMe2.
‡Regioselectivity = [12/[(12 + 13) × 100].
§Absolute configuration and sign of the optical rotation.
‖Isolated yields are given in brackets.

β-branched Grignard reagents i-PrMgBr and i-BuMgBr, excellent regiocontrol (95%) with moderate (9e, 54% ee) to high (9f, 92% ee) enantioselectivities (entries 17 and 18) were obtained, which is in sharp contrast with the results when using TaniaPhos.

This present catalytic system shows only modest enantioselectivity with phenylmagnesium bromide (Table 2, entry 19).