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Unprecedented copper-catalyzed asymmetric conjugate addition of organometallic reagents to α,β -unsaturated lactams†Mauro Pineschi,^{*a} Federica Del Moro,^a Francesca Gini,^{ab} Adriaan J. Minnaard^b and Ben L. Feringa^b^a Dipartimento di Chimica Bioorganica e Biofarmacia, Università di Pisa, Via Bonanno 33, 56126 Pisa, Italy. E-mail: pineschi@farm.unipi.it; Fax: +3905043321^b Department of Organic and Molecular Inorganic Chemistry, Stratingh Institute, University of Groningen, Nijenborgh 4, 9747, AG Groningen, The Netherlands

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For the first time, an excellent enantioselectivity has been obtained in the conjugate addition of hard organometallic reagents to α,β -unsaturated lactams bearing appropriate protecting-activating groups on the nitrogen.

The asymmetric conjugate addition of organometallic reagents to α,β -unsaturated carbonyl compounds is one of the most useful methods to assemble carbon-carbon bonds in organic chemistry, and several highly enantioselective processes have been developed.¹ In the case of α,β -unsaturated lactams, Hayashi has recently described a highly enantioselective Rh(I)/BINAP catalyzed 1,4-addition of arylboronic reagents to cyclic 5,6-dihydro-2(1H)-pyridinones.² Using a different approach, Buchwald very recently developed a catalytic enantioselective conjugate reduction of five- and six-membered α,β -unsaturated lactams.³ However, the stereoselective introduction of a carbon-carbon bond in the β -position of a lactam is mostly based on the use of stoichiometric amounts of chiral auxiliaries⁴ or reagents.⁵ Chiral copper complexes with non-racemic BINOL-based phosphoramidites have proved to be excellent catalysts for the conjugate addition of dialkylzinc reagents to enones.⁶ To the best of our knowledge, the catalytic enantioselective 1,4-addition of hard alkyl metals to α,β -unsaturated lactams has not been described. Here we wish to report an unprecedented enantioselective copper-phosphoramidite catalyzed alkylation of α,β -unsaturated lactams with dialkylzincs and trialkylaluminium reagents.

It is known that *N*-alkyl- α,β -unsaturated lactams without an additional withdrawing group in the α -position possess an inherently low reactivity.⁷ Consistent with this observation, we found that *N*-methyl- and *N*-benzyl-5,6-dihydro-2(1H)-pyridinones **2a** and **2b** do not react with Et₂Zn in the presence of catalytic amounts of Cu(OTf)₂/(*R,S,S*)-**1** (Scheme 1).⁸

The contemporary introduction of a carbomethoxy group in the α -position and a carbamate protecting group for the nitrogen, as in compound **2c**, was able to overcome this low reactivity. In this case

a very fast reaction occurred at -78°C even in the absence of the catalyst and invariably the racemic *trans* adduct **5** was obtained as the major product. To minimize the uncatalyzed background reaction, the sole use of a protecting-activating group for the nitrogen proved to be sufficient (Table 1).

The Cu(II)/(*R,S,S*)-**1** catalysed addition of Et₂Zn to the *N*-benzoyl lactam **2d** gave 83% conversion in 4 h from -78°C up to 0°C and 4-ethyl-2-piperidinone **6** was obtained with 26% ee (entry 1, Table 1). The Cbz-protected lactam **2e** underwent a clean addition reaction, with a complete conversion in 3 h from -78°C up to 0°C , to provide the corresponding β -ethyl substituted lactam **7** with 75% ee (entry 2).

During the search for a more enantioselective reaction, the *N*-carbophenoxy group was found to be superior to all the other protecting-activating groups in terms of both reactivity and enantioselectivity. Indeed substrate **2f** gave the corresponding β -ethyl substituted lactam **8a** with 95% ee and complete conversion in 2 h (entry 3). Similarly, the reaction of **2f** with Bu₂Zn was completed in 4 h from -78° to 0°C and afforded the corresponding β -butylated lactam **8b** with a high ee (entry 4). Unfortunately, the easily accessible *N*-Boc-dihydropyrrol-2-one¹⁰ **3** gave a more complex reaction mixture with dialkylzinc reagents and the corresponding β -ethylated addition product **9** was found to be not entirely stable under standard chromatographic purification on SiO₂ (entry 5).¹¹ δ -Lactams **2d-f** and *N*-Boc- γ -lactam **3** were not alkylated by Me₂Zn under our reaction protocol even using prolonged reaction times and a large excess of the reagent (data not shown in Table 1). Therefore, we decided to change the primary organometallic reagent from the poorly reactive Me₂Zn to Me₃Al in order to address the asymmetric formation of β -methylated lactams.

Trialkylaluminums are interesting organometallic reagents because they are produced on an industrial scale and possess a high chemoselectivity and a low toxicity.¹² Only a few examples of enantioselective conjugate additions using trialkylaluminium reagents have been reported,¹³ and to the best of our knowledge,

Scheme 1

Table 1 Enantioselective conjugate addition of organometallic reagents ("RM") to α,β -unsaturated lactams catalysed by (*R,S,S*)-**1**/Cu(OTf)₂^a

Entry	Lactam	"RM"	Time/T	Conv. ^b	Ee (%) ^c
1	2d	Et ₂ Zn	4 h/up to 0°C	83 (50)	26
2	2e	Et ₂ Zn	3 h/up to 0°C	100 (70)	75
3	2f	Et ₂ Zn	2 h/up to -50°C	100 (65)	95
4	2f	Bu ₂ Zn	4 h/up to 0°C	100 (52)	> 90 ^d
5	3	Et ₂ Zn	4 h/up to 0°C	90 (15)	35
6	2f	Me ₃ Al	2 h/up to 0°C	100 (78)	68
7	2f	Et ₃ Al	1 h/up to -30°C	100 (88)	28
8	3	Et ₃ Al	2 h/up to 0°C	95 (25) ^e	3

^a Conditions: all reactions were run in accordance with the typical procedure.^{9, b} Conversions are determined by ¹H NMR examination of the crude reaction mixture. Isolated yields after chromatographic purification (SiO₂) are reported in parentheses. ^c Determined by HPLC on Daicel Chiralcel OB-H or OD-H columns. ^d Determined after zinc enolate trapping with acetaldehyde. ^e Isolated yield after transformation into the corresponding *N*-benzyl derivative.¹¹

† Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: experimental procedures, enantioselectivity determinations and characterization data for all new compounds. See <http://www.rsc.org/suppdata/cc/b4/b403793f/>

unsaturated lactams have never been used as substrates for this reaction. The $\text{Cu}(\text{OTf})_2$ -**1** catalysed addition of Me_3Al to lactam **2f** proceeded very cleanly in 2 h to give the corresponding methylated addition product **8c**, with a good enantioselectivity of 68% (entry 6). When the reaction was carried out with Et_3Al it was possible to obtain compound **8a** with a high yield, albeit with a modest 28% ee (entry 7). Also with the γ -lactam **3**, the use of Et_3Al proved to be less enantioselective than Et_2Zn (entry 8).

It is reasonable to assume that the different reactivity displayed by *N*-alkyl- and *N*-carbonyl- δ -lactams with dialkylzinc and organoaluminium reagents is due to the greater electron withdrawing ability of the latter protecting-activating group, which renders the reactive β -carbon more electrophilic in nature. Furthermore, a chelation by the metal ions of the two carbonyl oxygens, as shown in **A** (Fig. 1), might be responsible for a further double bond activation¹⁴ and for a beneficial reduction of the conformational mobility of the substrate.

Fig. 1 Plausible intermediate metal-chelated structure.

Conjugate addition to unsaturated ketones, followed by trapping of the zinc enolate with an electrophile, is an efficient method to build up more complex molecules.¹⁵ Here we report that also the intermediate zinc enolate derived from the conjugate addition of Et_2Zn to unsaturated lactam **2f** can be trapped with acetaldehyde at -50°C to give the new *trans*-3,4-disubstituted 2-piperidinone **10a,b** as an inseparable mixture of aldols with 94% ee (Scheme 2).¹⁶ Furthermore, the same intermediate can be trapped in a one-pot procedure by allyl bromide or allyl acetate and 4 mol% of $\text{Pd}(\text{PPh}_3)_4$ to deliver piperidinone **11** with 89% ee, albeit with 25–35% isolated yield.¹⁷ It should be noted that substituted six-membered lactams can also serve as precursors to enantiomerically enriched piperidines which are important structural motifs in pharmaceuticals.¹⁸

In conclusion, we have reported the first catalytic asymmetric alkylation of α,β -unsaturated lactams with hard organometallic

Scheme 2

reagents. The reaction gives access to new β -alkyl-substituted δ -lactams in an enantioenriched form. Further findings established that the reaction is also amenable to three-component processes to give α,β -disubstituted lactams.

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- A useful conversion of compounds **2a** can only be obtained by the use of THF as the reaction solvent (see Supporting Information). However, the corresponding adduct **4** was obtained as a racemate.
- Typical procedure*: a solution of $\text{Cu}(\text{OTf})_2$ (2.5 mg, 0.0069 mmol) and (*R,S,S*)-**1** (7.5 mg, 0.00138 mmol) in anhydrous toluene (1 ml) was stirred at room temperature for 40 min. The colorless solution was cooled to -78°C and subsequently a solution of the lactam (0.46 mmol) in the minimal amount of toluene (or CH_2Cl_2 for **2f**) and 0.69 mmol of R_2Zn or R_3Al (0.92 mmol) were added. The reaction was followed by TLC analysis and quenched with saturated aqueous NH_4Cl after the times and at the temperatures indicated in Table 1.
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- The mixture of aldols was oxidized to the corresponding ketone (see Supporting Information). Also *N*-Boc-dihydropyrrol-2-one can be used in analogous three-component aldol reactions, although the yields are lower.
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