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Published in:
Organic letters

DOI:
10.1021/o1027457t

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Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2003

Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database

Citation for published version (APA):

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Mono- versus Bidentate Ligands in Rhodium-Catalyzed Asymmetric Hydrogenation. A Comparative Rate Study

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Received December 12, 2002

ABSTRACT

Bidentate chiral phosphines are no longer essential for achieving a fast and highly enantioselective hydrogenation of α- or β-dehydroamino acid derivatives. In particular, a readily accessible and stable monodentate phosphoramidite can be highly effective in these asymmetric hydrogenations.

Monophosphines were the first chiral ligands employed in the pioneering studies on the rhodium-catalyzed asymmetric hydrogenation of prochiral olefins.1 Following the introduction of DIOP,2 the field was soon taken over by chiral bidentate phosphorus ligands, and for more than thirty years, hundreds of these ligands were developed3 on the basis of the assumption that bidentate ligands were essential for achieving high enantioselectivities in the hydrogenation reaction.4 However, this widespread notion has recently been challenged since monodentate phosphines,5a phosphonites,5b phosphites,5c and phosphoramidites5d have been successfully

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used in a number of asymmetric hydrogenation reactions with enantioselectivities up to 99%. In the last three years, this small but rapidly expanding class of monodentate ligands has shown enantioselectivities comparable to or better than those reached with bidentate ligands reported so far. Monodentate phosphonites, phosphites, and phosphoramidites have the advantage of being readily accessible, highly diverse, and extraordinarily inexpensive compared to various privileged bidentate ligands. Bearing in mind that asymmetric hydrogenation is continuously expanding as an important methodology in the industrial preparation of chiral building blocks, those characteristics mentioned above are vital features. However, to date, mono- and bidentate ligands have not been compared yet in terms of catalytic activity; another crucial parameter for implementation of asymmetric catalysis methodology. Herein we report a study demonstrating for the first time that a monodentate ligand can lead not only to higher enantioselectivities but also to faster asymmetric hydrogenations of prochiral olefins compared to several of the best bidentate ligands used so far.

Monophos (1) is an extremely stable monodentate phosphoramidite that affords very good enantioselectivities when used as a ligand in the rhodium-catalyzed hydrogenation of α-dehydroamino acid derivatives and enamides. This phosphorus ligand can be easily prepared from bis-β-naphthol and HMPT in excellent yield. In the course of a study to find an efficient ligand for the enantioselective hydrogenation of β-dehydroamino acid derivatives, we carried out a systematic optimization of the structure of Monophos by variations of the amine functionality via amine exchange (Scheme 1). In this way, ligand 2 was obtained from (S)-phosphoramidite. In this way, the presence in ligand 2 of a hydrogen attached to the nitrogen instead of a methyl group as in the case of MonoPhos should influence the rate of the hydrogenation. Nevertheless, the different enantioselectivities found with both phosphoramidites suggest a more complex mechanistic picture. The differences in reaction rates and ees are probably based on the influence of the NH group present in 2, as this is the major chemical difference between both ligands. Similar to its monophosphite analogue (S,R)-3 in this particular hydrogenation, the ee of the product when using ligand (S,R)-2 only depends on the chirality of the bisnaphthol unit.

Encouraged by these findings, we decided to compare the rate of the reaction of monophosphoramidites 1 and 2 and monophosphate 3 with some of the most successful and commercially available bidentate phosphines used in asymmetric hydrogenation, in particular DuPhos, PhanePhos, and JosiPhos (Figure 1). For the rate comparison, we first carried out parallel experiments using methyl 2-acetamido cinnamate (7), a common substrate normally hydrogenated

![Scheme 1. Preparation of Phosphoramidite 2.](image)

**Figure 1. Ligands used in the comparison with phosphoramidites.**

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(7) For a recent review, see: Komarov, I. V.; Borner, A. Angew. Chem., Int. Ed. 2001, 40, 1197.

with excellent enantioselectivities. Ligands were compared using a standard 1 mmol of substrate 7 (0.2 M), 0.5 mol % Rh(COD)$_2$BF$_4$, and 2 bar of H$_2$. Due to the fact that there is an important influence of the solvent used in the hydrogenation, we employed the best of the reported solvents for each ligand: DCM (1 and 3), EtOAc (2), or MeOH (4). To compensate for the influence of the rate on the catalyst formation or chelate effects on the global rate of hydrogenation, we preformed all of the rhodium precatalysts prior to use. Hydrogenation experiments were performed simultaneously in a parallel way using a semiautomated autoclave with eight reactors (Endeavor) that was purged twice with hydrogen. Then, the autoclave was pressurized with H$_2$ to 2 bar and the reaction was monitored by the hydrogen consumption while being stirred at room temperature.

Typical results are depicted in Figure 2. Under these conditions, monophosphoramidite 2 (initial TOF = 1100 h$^{-1}$, green line) turned out to form the fastest catalyst among those tested in this study, twice as fast as its monophosphite analogue 3 (brown), five times faster than MonoPhos (1, violet), and even faster than the most effective of the bidentate phosphines, DuPhos (4, blue). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time that a monodentate ligand has been reported to be faster than DuPhos in hydrogenation reactions. However, the enantioselectivity achieved with ligand 2 (89%) under these conditions was lower than that observed with MonoPhos (95% ee) or DuPhos (94% ee).

Recently, Heller and Börner et al. have reported a comparison of the kinetics of the hydrogenation of β-dehydroamino acid derivatives using different bidentate phosphines. We decided to compare monodentate ligands 1–3 with bidentate phosphines 4–6 in the hydrogenation of one example of this family of substrates, particularly (Z)-ethyl 3-acetamido-2-butenoate (9, Figure 3). These hydrogenation experiments were carried out using 1 mmol of substrate 9 (0.2 M), 2 mol % Rh(COD)$_2$BF$_4$, and 10 bar of H$_2$. Like in the hydrogenation of 7, we preformed all of the rhodium precatalysts prior to use. We employed PrOH$^+$ (1–3) or MeOH$^+$ (4–6) as the solvent.

| Figure 2. Asymmetric hydrogenation of methyl 2-acetamido cinnamate (7) using chiral ligands 1–4. |
| Figure 3. Asymmetric hydrogenation of (Z)-ethyl 3-acetamido 2-butenoate (9) using chiral ligands 1–6. |

(11) With 5% Rh(COD)$_2$BF$_4$ as the catalyst precursor, 11% monodentate ligand in EtOAc at room temperature, and 1 bar of H$_2$.
(12) The ee obtained using 1 as a ligand in the Rh-catalyzed hydrogenation of 7 is constant when increasing the hydrogen pressure (at least up to 60 bar), while it is enhanced when performing the reaction at lower temperatures (0 vs. 25°C; see ref 5d). On the contrary, in the case of ligand 2, the ee drops when increasing the hydrogen pressure or when decreasing the reaction temperature.
On the basis of these experiments, monophosphoramidite \(2\) (green line) turned out to be the fastest monodentate ligand compared to \(1\) (violet) and \(3\) (brown). When compared to bidentate phosphines, ligand \(2\) was found to be faster than JosiPhos \((6,\) red\) and as fast as PhanePhos \((5,\) yellow\), although slower than DuPhos \((4,\) blue\). However, phosphoramidite \(2\) is the only ligand of this group of mono- and bidentate ligands that leads to enantioselectivities exceeding 90% in this hydrogenation.27

In conclusion, in this competitive study we demonstrate that, compared to the state of the art bidentate ligands, readily accessible and stable monodentate phosphoramidites can lead to both higher rates and/or higher enantioselectivities in the asymmetric hydrogenation of \(\alpha\)- and \(\beta\)-dehydroamino acid derivatives. Therefore, bidentate chiral phosphines are no longer a conditio sine qua non for achieving a fast and highly enantioselective hydrogenation of amino acid precursors.

Acknowledgment. We thank Mr. M. B. van Gelder and Mr. E. P. Schudde for technical support and Mr. M. van den Berg and Dr. J. A. F. Boogers for useful discussions. Financial support from the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs (Grants EETK97107 and EETK99104) and NRSC-C is gratefully acknowledged. D.P. also thanks the European Community (IHP Program) for the award of a Marie Curie Fellowship (Contract HPMF-CT-2002-01612).

Supporting Information Available: Experimental details. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

OL027457T