

Synthetic Methods

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Enantioselective Synthesis of 3a-Amino-Pyrroloindolines by Copper-Catalyzed Direct Asymmetric Dearomative Amination of Tryptamines

Chuan Liu, Ji-Cheng Yi, Zhong-Bo Zheng, Yong Tang,* Li-Xin Dai, and Shu-Li You*

Abstract: A direct asymmetric dearomative amination of tryptamines with *O*-(2,4-dinitrophenyl)hydroxylamine (DPH) was achieved using CuBr-bisoxazoline complex as a catalyst, affording 3a-amino-pyrroloindolines in good to excellent enantioselectivity under mild reaction conditions. Furthermore, the synthetic value of this method was demonstrated in the total synthesis of (–)-psychotriasine in a highly concise manner.

Pyrroloindolines exist as key frameworks in a large number of indole alkaloids and pharmacological compounds^[1] that exhibit interesting biological properties.^[2] Among those, 3a-amino-pyrroloindoline and derivatives^[3] are privileged structures (Figure 1) that have attracted considerable attention^[4] owing to their distinctive structures and remarkable anti-bacterial and antitumor properties.^[3e,f,5] For example, (+)-psychotrimine was first synthesized by Takayama and co-workers

by employing an asymmetric Ireland–Claisen rearrangement as a key step.^[4e] Meanwhile, Baran and co-workers have made great progress in the total synthesis of psychotrimine,^[4b] kapakahine F^[4c] and kapakahine B^[4c] through direct indole–aniline coupling reactions. Recently, Liao, Deng, and their co-workers reported a unified strategy for the syntheses of (–)-psychotriasine and (+)-pestalazine B, based on the advanced intermediates of 3a-amino-pyrroloindolines.^[4i]

From a synthetic perspective, 3a-amino-pyrroloindoline is a key intermediate for the synthesis of these natural products.^[6] However, to date, only limited enantioselective methodologies have been developed for the synthesis of 3a-amino-pyrroloindoline derivatives.^[7] In 2012, the enantioselective synthesis of 3a-amino-pyrroloindoline derivatives was first reported by Antilla and co-workers^[7a] using a chiral phosphoric-acid-catalyzed dearomatization reaction of tryptamine derivatives with DEAD (diethyl azodicarboxylate). Later Toste's group^[7b] disclosed a highly enantioselective synthesis of C3-diazenated pyrroloindolines by a chiral anion phase-transfer (CAPT) catalysis technique. Then, 3a-amino-pyrroloindolines could be obtained through a reduction reaction.^[4i]

Despite these achievements, the development of direct approaches to construct protecting-group-free 3a-amino-pyrroloindolines remains highly desirable, and the catalytic asymmetric version has not been reported.^[8] In line with our interest in developing catalytic asymmetric dearomatization (CADA) reactions,^[9,10] we envisioned that the unprotected 3a-amino-pyrroloindolines could be afforded by direct asymmetric dearomative amination of tryptamines with *O*-(2,4-dinitrophenyl)hydroxylamine (DPH) **2**, which has been elegantly introduced as an amination reagent by Ess, Kürti, Falck, and their co-workers (Scheme 1).^[11] Herein, we report our preliminary results on the enantioselective synthesis of 3a-amino-pyrroloindolines by copper-catalyzed intermolecular asymmetric dearomative amination of tryptamines.

Our initial studies focused on testing the reaction between tryptamine **1a** and DPH with various chiral copper complexes.^[12] These efforts led to the identification of bisoxazoline **L1** as a promising ligand. Further evaluation of copper source (Table 1, entries 1–9) revealed that CuBr is optimal, affording product **3a** in 53% yield and 63% *ee* (Table 1, entry 4). Encouraged by these results, different solvents were further examined, and the polar protic solvent 2,2,2-trifluoroethanol was found to be the best one in terms of enantioselectivity (73% *ee*; Table 1, entry 14). Furthermore, different chiral bisoxazoline ligands were evaluated, and chiral ligands were found to play a critical role in the enantioselective control. Compound **3a** was obtained in 75% *ee* with cyclopropane-linked ligand **L2** (Table 1, entry 19), and in 78% *ee*

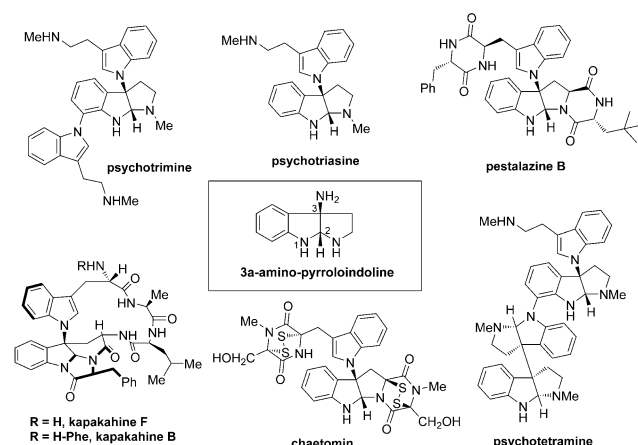


Figure 1. Representative 3a-amino-pyrroloindoline-containing natural products.

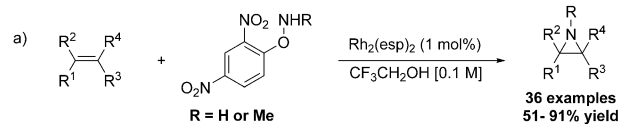
[*] Dr. C. Liu, J.-C. Yi, Dr. Z.-B. Zheng, Prof. Dr. Y. Tang, Prof. L.-X. Dai, Prof. Dr. S.-L. You

State Key Laboratory of Organometallic Chemistry
Shanghai Institute of Organic Chemistry
Chinese Academy of Sciences
345 Lingling Lu, Shanghai 200032 (China)
E-mail: tangy@sioc.ac.cn
slyou@sioc.ac.cn

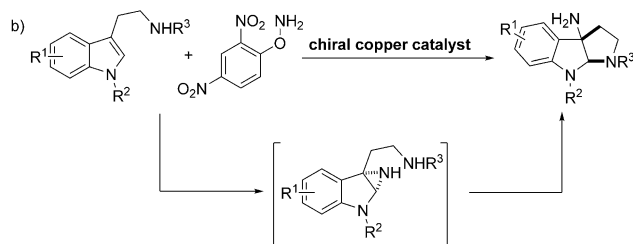
Prof. Dr. Y. Tang, Prof. Dr. S.-L. You
Collaborative Innovation Center of
Chemical Science and Engineering
Tianjin (China)

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Aziridination reported by Ess, Kürti, and Falck

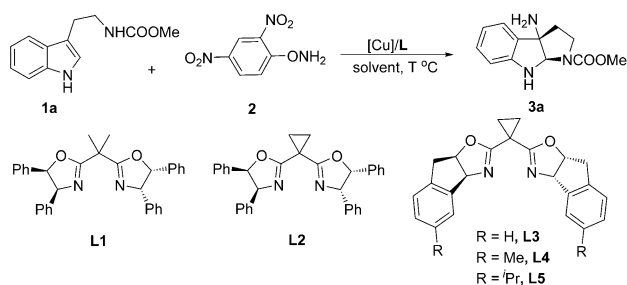


Dearomative amination (this work)



Scheme 1. Proposed copper-catalyzed asymmetric dearomative amination of tryptamines.

Table 1: Optimization of the reaction conditions.^[a]



Entry	[Cu]	Solvent	L	Yield [%] ^[b]	ee [%] ^[c]
1	Cu(OTf) ₂ ·0.5 PhMe	HFIP/EtOH	L1	21	57
2	[Cu(CH ₃ CN) ₄]PF ₆	HFIP/EtOH	L1	14	50
3	CuCl	HFIP/EtOH	L1	66	61
4	CuBr	HFIP/EtOH	L1	53	63
5	CuI	HFIP/EtOH	L1	trace	–
6	CuTc	HFIP/EtOH	L1	17	51
7	Cu(OAc) ₂	HFIP/EtOH	L1	21	53
8	Cu(acac) ₂	HFIP/EtOH	L1	15	55
9	Cu(Cl ₄ O) ₂ ·6H ₂ O	HFIP/EtOH	L1	20	47
10	CuBr	HFIP	L1	54	70
11	CuBr	MeOH	L1	44	71
12	CuBr	EtOH	L1	23	55
13	CuBr	<i>i</i> -PrOH	L1	21	51
14	CuBr	CF ₃ CH ₂ OH	L1	43	73
15	CuBr	EtOAc	L1	trace	–
16	CuBr	toluene	L1	5	–
17	CuBr	CH ₃ CN	L1	14	51
18	CuBr	DCM	L1	trace	–
19	CuBr	CF ₃ CH ₂ OH	L2	50	75
20	CuBr	CF ₃ CH ₂ OH	L3	60	78
21	CuBr	CF ₃ CH ₂ OH	L4	51	84
22	CuBr	CF ₃ CH ₂ OH	L5	43	88
23 ^[d]	CuBr	CF ₃ CH ₂ OH	L5	44	92
24 ^[d,e]	CuBr	CF₃CH₂OH/MeOH	L5	65	90
25 ^[d]	CuBr	MeOH	L5	68	84

[a] Reaction conditions: **1a** (0.2 mmol), **2** (0.2 mmol), metal (10 mol%), L (11 mol%) in solvent (3.0 mL) at rt, unless otherwise noted. After 8 h, another batch of **2** (0.1 mmol) was added in one portion. [b] Isolated yields. [c] Determined by HPLC analysis. [d] Reaction at -20°C . [e] CF₃CH₂OH (1.5 mL) and MeOH (1.5 mL) were used as co-solvents.

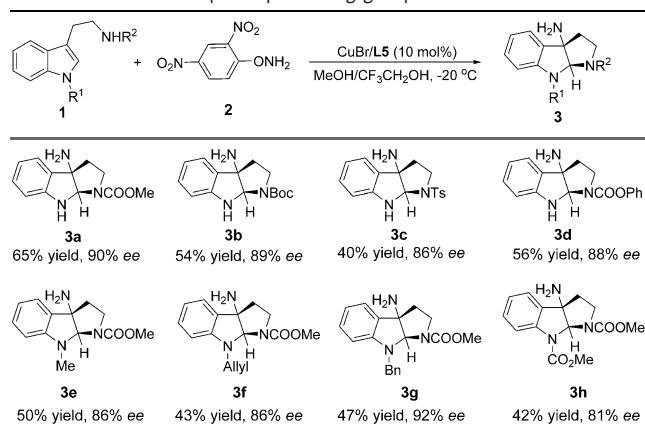
with indano scaffold ligand **L3** (Table 1, entry 20). To our delight, when methyl groups were introduced (ligand **L4**), the *ee* was improved to 84% (Table 1, entry 21). Finally, ligand **L5** with isopropyl groups was found to be the best one, providing product **3a** in 43% yield and 88% *ee* (Table 1, entry 22). Conducting the reaction at -20°C further enhanced the enantioselectivity to 92% *ee* (Table 1, entry 23). When methanol and 2,2,2-trifluoroethanol were used as co-solvents,^[12] product **3a** was obtained in 65% yield and 90% *ee* (Table 1, entry 24). Notably, reaction in methanol alone gave an increased yield but decreased enantioselectivity (68% yield, 84% *ee*; Table 1, entry 25).

With the optimized reaction conditions in hand (Table 1, entry 24), we turned to explore the substrate scope (Table 2). Typical electron-withdrawing N-protecting groups ($\text{R}^2 = \text{CO}_2\text{Me}$, Boc, Ts, CO_2Ph) on the side chain of tryptamine were all well tolerated, providing the desired 3a-amino-pyrroloindoline products in good to excellent *ee* and moderate yields (86–90% *ee*, 40–65% yield; Table 2, **3a–d**). Furthermore, the reactions of substrates bearing either an electron-rich ($\text{R}^1 = \text{Me}$, Bn, allyl) or electron-poor ($\text{R}^1 = \text{CO}_2\text{Me}$) substituent on the indole nitrogen atom proceeded smoothly (81–92% *ee*, 42–50% yield; Table 2, **3e–h**).

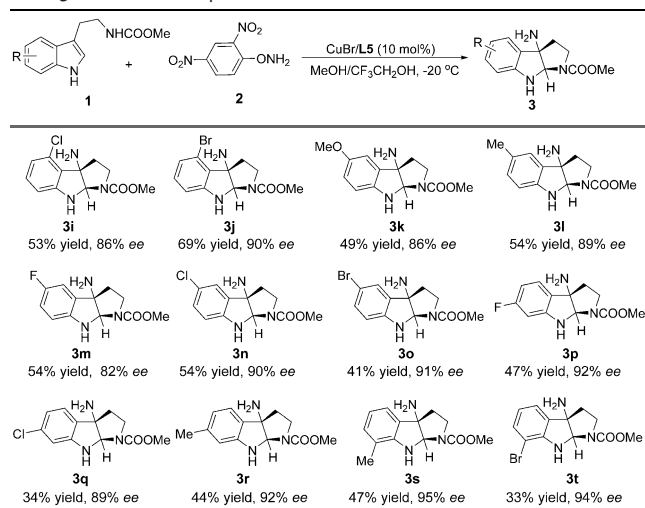
Next, the substrate scope of substituted tryptamines was explored. Tryptamine derivatives bearing either an electron-donating group (5-MeO, 5-Me, 6-Me, 7-Me) or an electron-withdrawing group (4-Cl, 4-Br, 5-F, 5-Cl, 5-Br, 6-F, 6-Cl, 7-Br) on the indole core were found to be well tolerated, affording the corresponding 3a-amino-pyrroloindolines in moderate yields with excellent enantioselectivity (33–69% yield, 82–95% *ee*; Table 3). Notably, the compatibility of the Br substituent provides the potential for further transformation by cross-coupling reactions. Although the yields are moderate, the reactions in general are clean by TLC (thin layer chromatography) detection, and the products are easy to be purified. The moderate yields are likely due to the formation of unidentified oligomers and the side reactions of primary amines **3** with DPH.

The synthetic value of this methodology has been demonstrated by the total synthesis of (–)-psychotriasine. In the presence of (CuOTf)₂·PhMe, 3a-amino-pyrroloindoline **3a** was reacted with diaryliodonium salt **4**, affording compound **5** in 64% yield,^[4j] which was then converted to compound **6** by a Larock annulation reaction (Scheme 2).^[4d] Further reduction of **6** with LiAlH₄ gave (–)-psychotriasine in 85% yield. Such an asymmetric total synthesis of (–)-psychotriasine features 31.8% overall yield in four steps from methyl (2-(1*H*-indol-3-yl)ethyl)carbamate (**1a**). Furthermore, the total synthesis of (–)-psychotriasine suggested the absolute configuration of product **3a** as (3*S*,8*R*).^[3h,12]

In conclusion, we have developed a copper-catalyzed direct asymmetric dearomative amination of substituted tryptamines with DPH for the synthesis of 3a-amino-pyrroloindolines, a privileged

Table 2: Substrate scope: N-protecting groups.^[a]

[a] Reaction conditions: **1** (0.2 mmol), **2** (0.2 mmol), CuBr (0.02 mmol), L5 (0.022 mmol) in CF₃CH₂OH (1.5 mL) and MeOH (1.5 mL) at -20 °C. After 8 h, another batch of **2** (0.1 mmol) was added in one portion. Yield refers to isolated products. The ee values were determined by HPLC analysis.

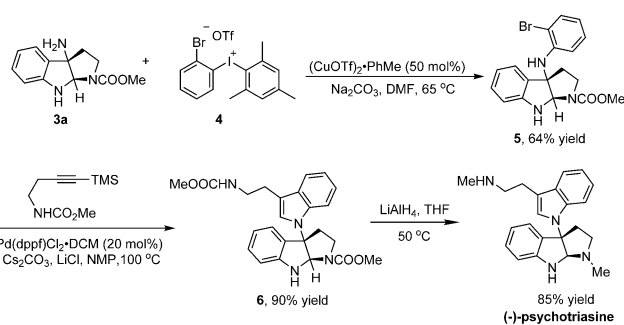
Table 3: Substrate scope: substituent on indole core.^[a]

[a] Reaction conditions: **1** (0.2 mmol), **2** (0.2 mmol), CuBr (0.02 mmol), L5 (0.022 mmol) in CF₃CH₂OH (1.5 mL) and MeOH (1.5 mL) at -20 °C. After 8 h, another batch of **2** (0.1 mmol) was added in one portion. Yield refers to isolated products. The ee values were determined by HPLC analysis.

structure present in various indole alkaloids. This method provides facile access to structurally diverse 3a-amino-pyrroloindolines in good to excellent enantioselectivity and moderate yields under mild reaction conditions. Furthermore, the synthetic value of this new method was demonstrated in the total synthesis of (-)-psychotriasine in a highly concise manner.

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**Scheme 2.** Total synthesis of (-)-psychotriasine.

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Keywords: asymmetric catalysis · copper · dearomatization · pyrroloindolines · tryptamines

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