# **Supporting Information**

### for

# Chiral Cu(II)-catalyzed enantioselective $\beta$ -borylation of $\alpha$ , $\beta$ -unsaturated nitriles in water

Lei Zhu, Taku Kitanosono, Pengyu Xu, and Shū Kobayashi\*

Address: Department of Chemistry, School of Sciences, The University of

Tokyo,

Hongo, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, Japan

Email: Shū Kobayashi - shu\_kobayashi@chem.s.u-tokyo.ac.jp

\* Corresponding author

# General procedure, analytical data and spectra of all compounds, methods for conversion

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#### 1. General

Nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectra were recorded on a JEOL JNM ECX-600 spectrometer, operating at 600 MHz for <sup>1</sup>H and 150 MHz for <sup>13</sup>C NMR in CDCl<sub>3</sub> unless otherwise noted. CDCl<sub>3</sub> served as the internal standard ( $\delta = 7.24$ ) for <sup>1</sup>H NMR and ( $\delta = 77.0$ ) for <sup>13</sup>C NMR. High-performance liquid chromatography was carried out using following apparatures: SHIMADZU LC-20AB (liquid chromatograph), SHIMADZU SPD-20A (UV detector) and SHIMADZU DGU-20A<sub>3</sub> (Chromatopac) using Daicel chiralpak<sup>®</sup> or chiralcel<sup>®</sup> columns. Preparative thin-layer chromatography (PTLC) was carried out using Wakogel B-5F from Wako Pure Chemical Industries, Ltd. Optical Rotations were measured on a JASCO P1010 polarimeter using a 2 mL cell with 1 dm path length. Data are reported as follows:  $\left[\alpha\right]_{D}^{T}$  (c in g/100 mL, solvent). All melting points were determined on a YAZAWA micro melting point BY-1 apparatus and are uncorrected. Deionized water from a MILLIPORE MilliQ machine (Gradient A 10) was used as solvent without further treatment. All organic solvents used were commercially available dry solvents, which were distilled appropriately under an argon atmosphere or were stored over molecular sieves prior to use.

#### Reagents

 $\alpha$ , $\beta$ -Unsaturated nitriles **1a** and **1g** were purchased from TCI Co., Ltd. and were used directly while **1b–1f** were prepared following the reported method. Analytical data for these compounds are in full agreement with their reported data.

#### General procedure for the synthesis of $\alpha$ , $\beta$ -unsaturated nitriles 1b–1f [1]

Under an Ar atmosphere, powdered KOH in dry CH<sub>3</sub>CN was heated under reflux and a solution of an aldehyde in dry CH<sub>3</sub>CN was then added immediately. After the addition was completed, the stirring was continued for the specified time (vide infra). Afterwards the hot reaction mixture was directly poured onto cracked ice (100 g). The mixture was extracted with 50 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> three times, and the organic layers were dried over MgSO<sub>4</sub>. After filtration and evaporation, the crude product was purified by column chromatography on silica gel.

(*E*)-4-Methylcinnamonitrile (**1b**) [1]

Prepared from 4-methylbenzaldehyde and stirring was continued for 6 min. White solid (pure *E* isomer): mp 69-71°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz);  $\delta$  = 7.25-7.29 (m, 3H), 7.12 (d, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 2H), 5.72 (d, *J* = 17.2 Hz, 1H), 2.30 (s, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (150 MHz);  $\delta$  = 150.5, 141.8, 130.9, 129.8, 127.3, 118.4, 95.1, 21.5.

(*E*)- and (*Z*)-4-Fluorocinnamonitrile (1c) [1]



Prepared from 4-fluorobenzaldehyde and stirring was continued for 7 min. Wet white solid (E/Z = 5.3/1): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz);  $\delta$  (*E*-isomer) = 7.41-7.44 (m, 2H), 7.33 (d, J = 16.5 Hz, 1H), 7.06-7.12 (m, 2H), 5.77 (d, J = 16.5 Hz, 1H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (150 MHz);  $\delta = 163.5$  (d), 149.2, 131.1 (d), 129.3 (d), 117.9, 116.0 (d), 96.1.

(*E*)-4-Chlorocinnamonitrile (**1d**) [1]



Prepared from 4-chlorobenzaldehyde and stirring was continued for 20 sec.

White solid (pure *E* isomer): mp 85-86°C; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz);  $\delta$  = 7.32-7.38 (m, 5H), 5.83 (d, *J* = 16.5 Hz, 1H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (150 MHz);  $\delta$  = 149.1, 137.3, 131.9, 129.4, 128.5, 117.8, 97.0.

(*E*)- and (*Z*)-2-(2-Furyl)acrylonitrile (1e) [1]

Prepared from furfural and stirring was continued for 3 min.

Yellow liquid (E/Z = 4/1): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz);  $\delta$  (*E*-isomer) = 7.47-7.50 (m, 1H), 7.10-7.18 (m, 1H), 6.60 (d, J = 3.4 Hz, 1H), 6.51 (d, J = 3.4 Hz, 1H), 5.73 (d, J = 16.5 Hz, 1H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (150 MHz);  $\delta = 149.8$ , 145.4, 136.1, 118.2, 115.5, 112.6, 93.4.

(*E*)-3-phenylbut-2-enenitrile (**1f**) [1]



Prepared from acetophenone and stirring was continued for 6 h.

Colourless liquid (pure *E* isomer): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz);  $\delta$  = 7.32-7.40 (m, 5H), 5.55 (s, 1H), 2.40 (d, *J* = 1.4 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (150 MHz);  $\delta$  =159.8, 138.2, 130.2, 128.8, 125.8, 117.6, 95.5, 20.2.

Bis(pinacolato)diboron [2]

$$\mathbf{A}_{\mathbf{O}}^{\mathbf{O}}$$

White solid

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz);  $\delta = 1.26$  (s, 24H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz);  $\delta = 83.5$ , 25.0. <sup>11</sup>B NMR (160 MHz);  $\delta = 30.6$  [lit<sup>3</sup> 30.6 ppm].

#### Metal salts

Anhydrous  $Cu(OAc)_2$  was purchased from Kanto Chemical Co., Inc (min 95.0% purity).

#### **Preparation of ligands**

Chiral 2,2'-bipyridine L was synthesized using protocols described in the literature.





White solid

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz); δ = 8.30 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.79 (dd, *J* = 7.6, 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.22 (d, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 4.50-4.43 (m, 2H), 0.98 (s, 18H).

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (100 MHz); δ = 159.3, 153.8, 136.6, 123.1, 119.6, 80.2, 36.3, 25.9.

HPLC (Dialcel Chiralcel OD, <sup>*n*</sup>hexane/ <sup>*i*</sup>PrOH = 19/1, flow rate 1.0 mL/min);  $t_R = 40.2 \min (R, R)$ ,  $t_R = 48.7 \min (S, S)$ ,  $t_R = 19.9 \min (meso \text{ isomer})$ . >99.5% ee

# 2. Typical experimental procedure for chiral $Cu(OAc)_2$ -catalyzed enantioselective $\beta$ -borylation to $\alpha,\beta$ -unsaturated nitriles in water (for compound 2a):

An aqueous solution (2 mL) of Cu(OAc)<sub>2</sub> (3.6 mg, 5 mol %) and chiral 2,2'-bipyridine L (7.9 mg, 6 mol %) was stirred vigorously for 1 h at room temperature. To the solution,  $\alpha$ , $\beta$ -unsaturated nitrile **1a** (51.7 mg, 0.4 mmol) and B<sub>2</sub>(pin)<sub>2</sub> (121.8 mg, 0.48 mmol) were successively added. After stirring for 12 h at room temperature, the reaction mixture was extracted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (20 mL) three times. The combined organic phase was evaporated and the residue was rinsed with THF (3 mL) and H<sub>2</sub>O (2 mL). Then an excess amount of NaBO<sub>3</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O (488 mg) was added and the mixture was stirred at room temperature for 4 h. The aqueous layer was extracted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (20 mL) three times, and the combined organic layers were dried over anhydrous MgSO<sub>4</sub>. After concentration under reduced pressure, the crude mixture was purified by preparative TLC (*n*-hexane/AcOEt 2:1) to afford the desired product **2a** (49.5 mg, 84% yield) as a colourless oil.

#### 3. Optimization of reaction conditions



Scheme S1: Screening of chiral ligands.

Table S1: Screening of solvents.



#### 4. Analytical data for oxidized compounds

All adducts are literature-known and the obtained analytical data for these compounds are in full agreement with their reported data. The absolute configurations of the optically active compounds were determined by comparison of the order of retention time in the chiral HPLC analyses. (*R*)-3-Hydroxy-3-phenylpropanenitrile (2a) [6]

Colourless oil

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz);  $\delta = 2.48$  (d, J = 3.5 Hz, 1H), 2.75-2.76 (m, 2H), 5.02-5.04 (m,

1H), 7.34-7.39 (m, 5H).

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (150 MHz); δ = 27.9, 70.2, 117.2, 125.5, 128.9, 129.0, 141.0.

HPLC (Dialcel Chiralcel OJ-H, <sup>*n*</sup>hexane/ <sup>*i*</sup>PrOH = 90/10, flow rate 1.0 mL/min);  $t_R =$ 

27.8 min (*S*, minor),  $t_R = 35.0 min (R, major)$ .

 $[\alpha]_{D}^{26} = +55.3 \ (c = 0.84, \text{CHCl}_3).$ 

(*R*)-3-Hydroxy-3-(4-methylphenyl)propanenitrile (2b) [6]



Colourless oil

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz);  $\delta = 2.29$  (d, J = 3.5 Hz, 1H), 2.34 (s, 3H), 2.70-2.78 (m, 2H),

4.99-5.01 (m, 1H), 7.18-7.19 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 2H), 7.26-7.28 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 2H).

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (150 MHz); δ = 21,1,27.9,70.1,117.3,125.4,129.6,138.1,138.8.

HPLC (Dialcel Chiralcel OJ-H, "hexane/  $^{i}$ PrOH = 90/10, flow rate 1.0 mL/min); t<sub>R</sub> =

21.6 min (*S*, minor),  $t_R = 25.5 min (R, major)$ .

 $[\alpha]_{D}^{26} = +25.6 \ (c = 0.83, \text{CHCl}_3).$ 

(R)-3-(4-Fluorophenyl)-3-hydroxypropanenitrile (2c) [6]

Colourless oil

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz);  $\delta = 2.47$  (d, J = 3.5 Hz, 1H), 2.72-2.78 (m, 2H), 5.03-5.05 (m, 1H), 7.08 (t, J = 8.6 Hz, 2H), 7.37-7.39 (m, 2H).

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (150 MHz);  $\delta = 28.1$ , 69.4, 115.8 (d), 117.1, 127.3 (d), 136.9 (d), 162.0 (d). HPLC (Dialcel Chiralcel OJ-H, <sup>*n*</sup>hexane/ <sup>*i*</sup>PrOH = 90/10, flow rate 1.0 mL/min); t<sub>R</sub> = 21.5 min (*S*, minor), t<sub>R</sub> = 26.3 min (*R*, major). [ $\alpha$ ]<sub>D</sub><sup>26</sup> = +42.6 (*c* = 0.88, CHCl<sub>3</sub>).

(R)-3-(4-Chlorophenyl)-3-hydroxypropanenitrile (2d) [6]

Colourless oil

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz); δ = 2.44 (d, *J* = 3.7 Hz, 1H), 2.74 (t, *J* = 3.4 Hz, 2H), 5.01-5.03 (m, 1H), 7.32-7.37 (m, 4H).

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (150 MHz); δ = 28.0, 69.5, 116.9, 126.9, 129.1, 134.7, 139.4.

HPLC (Dialcel Chiralcel OJ-H, "hexane/  $^{i}$ PrOH = 90/10, flow rate 1.0 mL/min); t<sub>R</sub> =

22.5 min (*S*, minor),  $t_R = 26.6 \text{ min } (R, \text{ major})$ .

 $[\alpha]_D^{26} = +47.2 \ (c = 0.85, \text{CHCl}_3).$ 

(*R*)-3-(Furan-2-yl)-3-hydroxypropanenitrile (2e) [7]

Yellow oil

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz);  $\delta = 2.42$  (d, J = 5.3 Hz, 1H), 2.89-2.90 (m, 2H), 5.03-5.06 (m,

1H), 6.36-6.40 (m, 2H), 7.39-7.40 (m, 1H).

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (150 MHz); δ = 24.9, 63.9, 107.5, 110.6, 116.7, 143.0, 152.8.

HPLC (Dialcel Chiralcel OJ-H, "hexane/  $^{i}$ PrOH = 90/10, flow rate 1.0 mL/min); t<sub>R</sub> =

22.0 min (*S*, minor),  $t_R = 25.2 \text{ min } (R, \text{ major})$ .

 $[\alpha]_D^{26} = +37.5 \ (c = 0.82, \text{CHCl}_3).$ 

(*R*)-3-hydroxy-3-phenylbutanenitrile (2f) [8]



Colourless oil

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz);  $\delta = 1.75$  (s, 3H), 2.26 (s, 1H), 2.77-2.84 (m, 2H), 7.29-7.32 (m,

1H), 7.38 (t, *J* = 7.7 Hz, 2H), 7.46-7.48 (m, 2H).

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (150 MHz); δ = 29.2, 33.8, 72.5, 117.2, 124.5, 128.1, 128.8, 144.7.

HPLC (Dialcel Chiralcel OJ-H, "hexane/  $^{i}$ PrOH = 90/10, flow rate 1.0 mL/min); t<sub>R</sub> =

28.3 min (*S*, minor),  $t_R = 34.9 min (R, major)$ .

 $[\alpha]_D^{26} = -25.1 \ (c = 1.02, \text{ CHCl}_3).$ 

(S)-3-Hydroxybutanenitrile (**2g**) [9] OHCN

Colourless oil

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz);  $\delta = 1.35$  (d, J = 6.2 Hz, 3H), 1.92 (br, 1H), 2.46-2.55 (m, 2H),

4.14-4.17 (m, 1H).

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (150 MHz); δ = 22.8, 27.5, 64.2, 117.4.

 $[\alpha]_{D}^{26} = -2.0 \ (c = 0.90, \text{CHCl}_3).$ 

(S)-3-(Benzyloxy)butanenitrile (**3g**) [10]



To a mixture of (*S*)-3-hydroxybutanenitrile **2g** (57.0 mg, 0.67 mmol), benzyl bromide (229 mg, 1.34 mmol) in dichloromethane (4 mL), Ag<sub>2</sub>O (348 mg, 1.5 mmol) was added. Then the reaction was stirred at room temperature in dark (foiled) for 4 h. After filtration, solvent was removed by evaporation and residue was purified by PTLC (<sup>*n*</sup>hexane/AcOEt = 10/1) to obtain **3g** (70.4 mg, 60% yield) as a colourless oil: <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz);  $\delta = 1.33$  (d, J = 6.2 Hz, 3H), 2.49-2.57 (m, 2H), 3.81-3.84 (m, 1H), 4.53-4.60 (dd, J = 11.7 Hz, 2H), 7.24-7.34 (m, 5H). <sup>13</sup>C NMR (150 MHz);  $\delta = 19.7$ , 25.1, 70.4, 71.0, 117.5, 127,7, 127.9, 128.5, 137.6. HPLC (Dialcel Chiralpak AD-H, <sup>*n*</sup>hexane/ <sup>*i*</sup>PrOH = 90/10, flow rate 1.0 mL/min); t<sub>R</sub> = 11.1 min (*R*, minor), t<sub>R</sub> = 13.0 min (*S*, major). [ $\alpha$ ]<sub>D</sub><sup>26</sup> = + 32.1 (*c* = 0.78, CHCl<sub>3</sub>).

(S)-3-(Benzyloxy)butanamide (4g) [10]



To a solution of (*S*)-3-(benzyloxy)butanenitrile **3g** (52.6 mg, 0.3 mmol) in AcOH (3 mL), TiCl<sub>4</sub> (113.8 mg, 0.6 mmol) and H<sub>2</sub>O (16.2 mg, 0.9 mmol) were added successively. Then the reaction was stirred at room temperature for 24 h and poured into water. The mixture was extracted by dichloromethane (20 mL) three times and organic phase was combined, dried by MgSO<sub>4</sub> and filtered. After removal of solvent by evaporation, the residue was purified by PTLC (<sup>*n*</sup>hexane/AcOEt = 4/1) to give **4g** (49.3 mg, 85% yield) as a colourless oil:

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz);  $\delta = 1.29$  (d, J = 6.2 Hz, 3H), 2.41-2.47 (m, 2H), 3.95-3.98 (m, 1H), 4.46 (d, J = 11.4 Hz, 1H), 4.61 (d, J = 11.4 Hz, 1H), 5.30 (br, 1H), 6.21 (br, 1H), 7.25-7.34 (m, 5H).

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (150 MHz); δ = 19.4, 43.3, 70.9, 72.2, 127.7, 127.8, 128.5, 138.0, 173.3.

HPLC (Dialcel Chiralpak AD-H, <sup>*n*</sup>hexane/ <sup>*i*</sup>PrOH = 90/10, flow rate 0.8 mL/min);  $t_R = 12.4 \text{ min} (R, \text{minor}), t_R = 14.2 \text{ min} (S, \text{major}).$ 

 $[\alpha]_{D}^{26} = +35.6 \ (c = 0.84, \text{CHCl}_3).$ 

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## 6. <sup>1</sup>H NMR, <sup>13</sup>C NMR and HPLC spectra



















































