DOI: 10.1002/ejoc.200600307

# Diastereoselective and Enantioselective Henry (Nitroaldol) Reaction Utilizing a Guanidine-Thiourea Bifunctional Organocatalyst

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**Keywords:** Organocatalysis / Bifunctional catalyst / Guanidine / Thiourea / Henry reaction

A highly enantio- and diastereoselective Henry reaction of various aldehydes with nitroethane was developed using the guanidine-thiourea bifunctional catalyst **1** (*syn* selectivity of 86:14 to 99:1 with 84–99 % *ee*). A variety of nitroalkanes was treated with unbranched and branched aldehydes and gave nitro alcohols with high *syn* diastereoselectivities (90:10 to 99:1) and high enantioselectivities (85–95 % *ee*). This reaction was successfully utilized in a straightforward synthesis of (4*S*,5*R*)-*epi*-cytoxazone.



The Henry (nitroaldol) reaction is an important carbon–carbon bond-forming reaction which affords valuable synthetic intermediates.[1] Much effort has been made to develop an asymmetric version of this reaction,[2] using prochiral aldehydes and nitromethane in the presence of a chiral metal catalyst[3] or organocatalyst.[4] Nevertheless, only one report has appeared on highly diastereo- and enantioselective catalytic Henry reactions of nitroalkanes and prochiral aldehydes by Shibasaki et al., utilizing LLB (La-lithium-BINOL) catalyst.[5] As part of our program to develop guanidine-containing organocatalysts,[6] we recently reported on the guanidine-thiourea bifunctional organocatalyst **1** that efficiently catalyzes the Henry reaction with high enantioselectivity.[6d] Here, we describe the first example of the organocatalyst **1** catalyzing the Henry reaction with high diastereo- and enantioselectivity. (Figure 1).

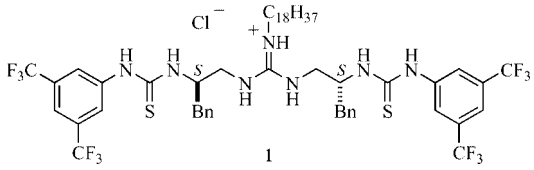


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Figure 1. Structure of guanidine-thiourea bifunctional catalyst **1**.

In the Henry reaction of nitromethane (**3a**) ($R^2$ = H, Figure 2) and prochiral aldehydes in the presence of the guanidine-thiourea bifunctional catalyst **1**, nitromethane and the aldehyde coordinate to the guanidine and thiourea groups[7] in **1**, respectively, and the Henry reaction proceeds via the *anti*-conformational transition state **I** rather than the *gauche* conformation **II** (Figure 2). Therefore, nitro alcohol adducts with (*R*) configuration were obtained as the major isomer when (*S*,*S*)-**1** was used. In the case of the Henry reaction with prochiral nitroalkanes ($R^2$ = alkyl groups etc., Figure 2), the *anti* conformation of the $R^2$ group with respect to the carbonyl group of the aldehyde is also considered to be more favorable (conformation **I**) than the *gauche* conformation **III**, and the diastereo- and enantioselectivities of the nitro alcohol adducts are expected to be well controlled, if the reaction proceeds via a transition state similar to that in the reaction with nitromethane (**3a**). On the basis of these speculations, the diastereo- and enantioselective Henry reaction with the bifunctional organocatalyst **1** was further explored.

First, the Henry reaction was examined with 3-phenylpropionaldehyde (**2a**) and nitroethane (**3b**) in the presence of (*S*,*S*)-**1**. After optimization of the reaction conditions,[8] the *syn*-nitro alcohol product (*R*,*R*)-**4a**[9] was obtained with high diastereo- and enantioselectivity (*syn*/*anti* = 90:10, 83 % *ee*) in 76 % yield, by using toluene/aqueous potassium hydroxide (10 mol-%)[10] in the presence of 10 mol-% of catalyst (*S*,*S*)-**1** at 0 °C for 48 h (Scheme 1).

The newly generated stereochemistry of the nitro alcohol **4a**, i.e. (*R*,*R*) configuration, is consistent with the proposed reaction transition state (Figure 2, conformation **I**). Since the *ee* value of **4a** is much higher than in the case of the Henry reaction with nitromethane (**3a**) and **2a** (55 % *ee*),[6d] the transition state of the reaction with nitroethane (**3b**) is considered to be strictly controlled by the methyl group (corresponding to the $R^2$ group in Figure 2).

Using the optimized conditions in Scheme 1, the reactions with various aldehydes and nitroethane (**3b**) were examined (Table 1). Unbranched aliphatic butyraldehyde (**2b**)

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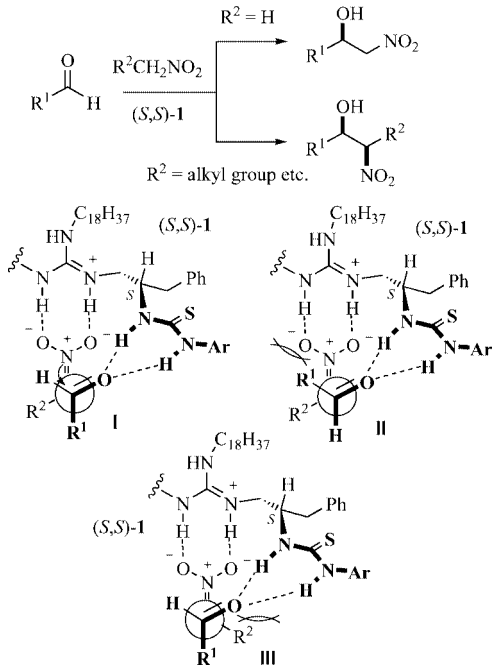
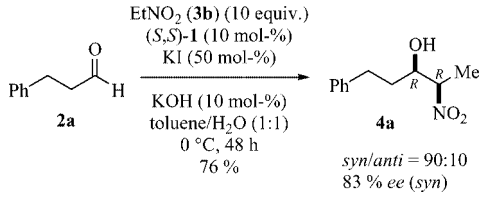



Figure 2. Transition state of the Henry reaction catalyzed by (*S*,*S*)-**1**. Conformation **I**: *anti* conformation (nitro group and $R^1$ are in an *anti* relationship, carbonyl group and $R^2$ are *anti*); conformation **II**: *gauche* conformation; conformation **III**: *gauche* conformation ($R^2$ and carbonyl group, and $R^2$ and $R^1$ are in *gauche* relationships).



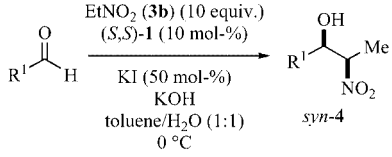

Scheme 1. Henry reaction of **2a** with nitroethane (**3b**) catalyzed by (*S*,*S*)-**1**.

gave **4b** with similar enantio- and *syn* selectivity to **2a** (Entry 1). In the case of the aliphatic α-branched-chain and cyclic aldehydes, the corresponding Henry adducts (*R*,*R*)-**4c**–**e** were obtained with high *syn* selectivity and high enantiomeric excess (Entries 2–4, 97:3 to 99:1, 90–93% *ee*). β-Substituted aliphatic aldehydes **2f** and α- and β-heteroatom-substituted aldehydes **2g** and **2h** also served as substrates and gave the nitro alcohols **4f**–**h** with high selectivity (Entries 5–7, 86:14 to 93:7, 92–99% *ee*).[11]

Other nitroalkanes **3c**–**3f** were treated with unbranched and cyclic-aliphatic aldehydes **2b** and **2e** (Table 2). In most instances, high *syn* selectivity and enantioselectivity were observed, with ratios of 90:10 to 99:1 (*syn*/*anti*) and 85–95% *ee*.

The success of the *syn*-selective enantioselective nitroaldol reaction led to a practical synthesis of (4*S*,5*R*)-*epi*-cytoxazone (**5**), a type-2 cytokine selective inhibitor[12] (Scheme 2). Nitroaldol reaction of **2g** with **3g**[13] (3 equiv.) in the presence of (*R*,*R*)-**1** gave the nitro alcohol (4*S*,5*R*)-**4q** with high *syn* selectivity (90:10) and 95% *ee* in 76% yield.

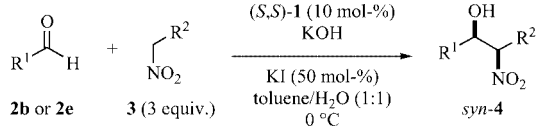
Table 1. Enantio- and *syn*-selective Henry reaction of aldehydes **2b**–**h** with nitroethane (**3b**) in the presence of **1**.




| Entry | $R^1$ | | KOH (mol-%) | Time (h) | Product yield (%) | *syn*/*anti*[a] | % *ee*[b,c] (*syn*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | $CH_3CH_2CH_2$ | **2b** | 20 | 24 | **4b** (91) | 87:13 | 84 |
| 2 | $(CH_3)_2CH$ | **2c** | 8 | 24 | **4c** (50) | 97: 3 | 90 |
| 3 | $Et_2CH$ | **2d** | 20 | 24 | **4d** (52) | 99: 1 | 91 |
| 4 | *c*-$C_6H_{11}$ | **2e** | 8 | 24 | **4e** (77) | 99: 1 | 93 |
| 5 | $(CH_3)_2CHCH_2$ | **2f** | 5 | 24 | **4f** (58) | 93: 7 | 99 |
| 6 | $TBSOCH_2$ | **2g** | 6 | 48 | **4g** (63) | 86:14 | 98 |
| 7 | $TBSOCH_2CH_2$ | **2h** | 8 | 24 | **4h** (50) | 90:10 | 92 |

[a] Diastereoselectivities were determined by $^1H$ NMR spectroscopy. The relative stereochemistry was determined from the $^1H$ NMR chemical shifts. [b] The enantiomeric excess was determined by HPLC using a chiral column. [c] In all cases, the enantiomeric excess of *anti* adducts was low (10–30% *ee*).

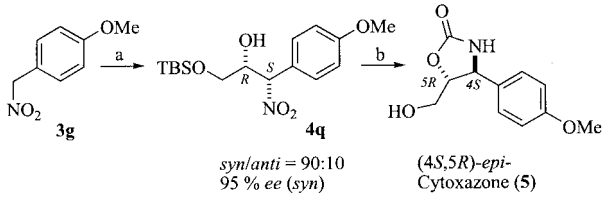
Table 2. Enantio- and *syn*-selective Henry reaction of **2b** or **2e** with nitroalkanes **3c**–**3f** in the presence of **1**.




| Entry | **2** | Nitroalkane | | KOH (mol-%) | Time (h) | Product Yield (%) | *syn*/*anti*[a] | % *ee*[b,c] (*syn*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1[d] | **2b** | $CH_3CH_2CH_2NO_2$ | **3c** | 5 | 48 | **4i** (63) | 90: 10 | 85 |
| 2 | **2b** | $TBSOCH_2CH_2NO_2$ | **3d** | 3 | 48 | **4j** (51) | 93: 7 | 87 |
| 3 | **2b** | $TIPSOCH_2CH_2NO_2$ | **3e** | 3 | 24 | **4k** (58) | 92: 8 | 87 |
| 4 | **2b** | $PhCH_2NO_2$ | **3f** | 10 | 24 | **4l** (70) | 91: 9 | 87 |
| 5[d] | **2e** | **3c** | | 5 | 40 | **4m** (61) | 99: 1 | 95 |
| 6 | **2e** | **3d** | | 7 | 48 | **4n** (63) | 99: 1 | 90 |
| 7 | **2e** | **3e** | | 6 | 48 | **4o** (60) | 99: 1 | 90 |
| 8 | **2e** | **3f** | | 7 | 48 | **4p** (67) | 99: 1 | 95 |

[a] Diastereoselectivities were determined by $^1H$ NMR spectroscopy. The relative stereochemistry was determined from the $^1H$ NMR chemical shifts. [b] The enantiomeric excess was determined by HPLC using a chiral column. [c] In all cases, the enantiomeric excess of *anti* adducts was low. [d] 10 equiv. of **3c** was used.

Reduction of **4q** with $NiCl_2/NaBH_4$,[14] followed by cyclization with *N*,*N*′-carbonyldiimidazole (CDI), and subsequent deprotection of the TBS group with HF gave **5** in 43% yield (3 steps).




Scheme 2. Synthesis of (4*S*,5*R*)-*epi*-cytoxazone (**5**): a) **2g**, (*R*,*R*)-**1**, KOH, KI, toluene/$H_2O$, 0 °C, 76%; b) (1) $NiCl_2$, $NaBH_4$, MeOH, 0 °C, (2) CDI, $CH_3CN$, 80 °C, (3) HF, $CH_3CN$, 0 °C, 43% (3 steps).

In conclusion, highly enantio- and *syn*-selective Henry reactions have been achieved by using the guanidine-thiourea bifunctional organocatalyst **1** under mild biphasic reaction conditions. This reaction is applicable to a variety of aldehydes and nitroalkanes, and was successfully utilized in a straightforward synthesis of (4*S*,5*R*)-*epi*-cytoxazone (**5**).

## Experimental Section

**Typical Procedure for Enantioselective and *syn*-Selective Henry Reaction of 2e with 3b:** To a mixture of (*S*,*S*)-**1e** (12.9 mg, 0.0112 mmol), KI (9.3 mg, 0.0558 mmol) and nitroethane (**3b**) (80.1 μL, 1.12 mmol) in toluene (1.12 mL)/8 mM KOH(aq) (1.12 mL) was added cyclohexanecarboxaldehyde (**2e**) (13.4 μL, 0.112 mmol) at 0 °C. The resulting mixture was stirred vigorously at 0 °C for 24 h. Then saturated $NH_4Cl$(aq) was added, and the organic layer was extracted with ethyl acetate. The extracts were dried with $MgSO_4$, filtered, and concentrated in vacuo, and the residue was purified by column chromatography on silica gel (*n*-hexane/ethyl acetate, 20:1, 10:1, and chloroform/methanol, 9:1) to give **4e** (16.0 mg, 77%); **1e** was recovered (12.8 mg, 99%). Relative stereochemistry and diastereoselectivity (*syn*/*anti* = 99:1) of **4e** were determined based upon the reported $^1$H NMR data.[15] $[\alpha]_D^{26}$ = –6.7 (*c* = 0.52, $CHCl_3$). IR (neat): $\tilde{\nu}$ = 2925, 2852, 1552, 1450, 1391 cm$^{-1}$. $^1$H NMR (400 MHz, $CDCl_3$): $\delta$ = 4.72 (dq, *J* = 6.8, 6.8 Hz, 1 H), 3.65 (dd, *J* = 6.8, 4.9 Hz, 1 H), 2.13 (br. s, 1 H), 1.78–1.65 (m, 4 H), 1.53 (d, *J* = 6.7 Hz, 3 H), 1.48–0.94 (m, 7 H) ppm. $^{13}$C NMR (100 MHz, $CDCl_3$): $\delta$ = 85.5, 77.2, 39.9, 30.0, 26.3, 26.2, 26.1, 25.9, 16.6 ppm. The enantiomeric excess of **4e** (93% *ee*) was determined by means of chiral HPLC analysis [CHIRALPAC AD-H; 0.46 cm (diameter) × 25 cm (length); *n*-hexane/2-propanol, 97:3; 1.0 mL/min; minor: 16.8 min, major: 25.3 min].

**Supporting Information** (see footnote on the first page of this article): Spectroscopic data for **4a**–**d** and **4f**–**4p**, and synthesis of **5**.

## Acknowledgments

This research was supported by the Nagase Science and Technology Foundation. Y. S. is grateful for a JSPS Research Fellowship for Young Scientists. We thank Dr. Sakamoto (RIKEN) for kindly providing the spectra of synthetic (4*S*,5*R*)-*epi*-cytoxazone (**5**).

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[8] As in the Henry reaction of nitromethane (**3b**);[6d] potassium iodide was effective to improve the enantiomeric excess of the nitro alcohol adduct **4a**.
[9] Relative stereochemistry and absolute stereochemistry of **4a** were determined based upon the reported $^1$H NMR chemical shift and $[\alpha]_D$ value.[5]
[10] The concentration of potassium hydroxide strongly influences the enantioselectivities of the nitro alcohols **4**.
[11] In the case of benzaldehyde, diastereo- and enantioselectivity were low (*dr* = 63:37, 16% and 0% *ee*, respectively). Application of alternative catalysts to aromatic aldehydes is under investigation.
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Received: April 8, 2006
Published Online: May 8, 2006

  