

Synergistic Photoenzymatic Anti-Markovnikov Hydroarylation of Olefins via Heteroaryl Radical Intermediates

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ABSTRACT: Heteroaromatic alkylations are indispensable reactions for synthesizing biologically active molecules. The anti-Markovnikov hydroarylation of olefins using heteroaryl halides furnishes the product as a single regioisomer; however, catalytic variants are ineffective at controlling the stereochemical outcome of these reactions. Here, we report a synergistic photoenzymatic hydroarylation of olefins using flavin-dependent “ene”-reductases with ruthenium photoredox catalysts. Enzyme homologues were identified, which provide access to both product enantiomers in greater than 80% yield with up to 99:1 er. This method is effective for styrenyl- and unactivated alkenes, highlighting the generality of this approach. The highest yielding system involves a carboxylated photocatalyst with increased affinity for the enzyme. This work expands the types of radical intermediates that enzymes can use for stereoselective intermolecular coupling reactions.

Heteroaromatics are essential structural components of small-molecule pharmaceutical and agrochemical compounds (Figure 1a).¹ As the percentage of sp³-hybridized

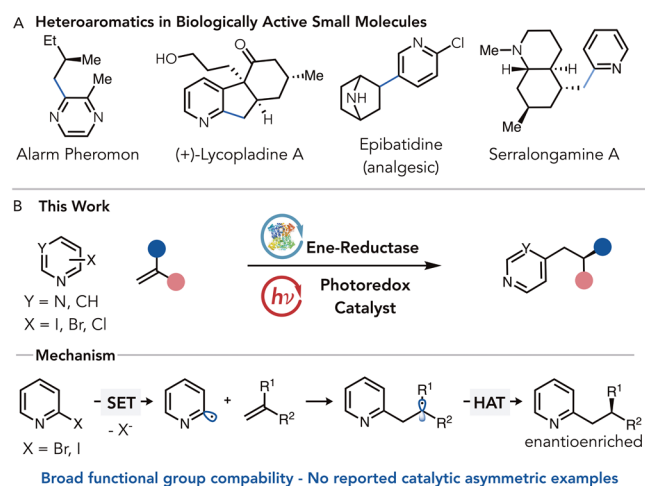


Figure 1. Synthesis of heteroaromatics with stereocenters. A) Examples of heteroaromatics in biologically active molecules. B) Olefin hydroarylation using aryl radicals. C) Synergistic photoenzymatic strategy for asymmetric hydroarylation.

atoms in drugs increases, there is an expanded need for pyridyl structures with adjacent stereocenters.^{2,3} Benzylic and homobenzylic stereocenters are traditionally set via asymmetric reduction of the corresponding alkene.^{4,5} While these methods offer unparalleled levels of enantioselectivity, they do not build molecular complexity. Transition-metal and Brønsted acid-catalyzed cross-couplings and conjugate additions to vinylpyridines also provide access to alkylated heterocycles; however, there remains a need for alternative asymmetric reactions that use readily available starting materials.^{6–14}

Olefin hydroarylations are attractive for preparing structurally complex alkyl-substituted pyridines with benzylic and homobenzylic stereocenters. This general coupling reaction can be achieved using a few distinct catalytic strategies, including aromatic C–H activation,^{15–17} reductive Heck reactions,¹⁸ metal-catalyzed hydrogen atom transfer to olefins,^{19–21} and reductive radical couplings using photoredox catalysts.^{22–25} Despite the bevy of synthetic methods, none of these reactions have been rendered asymmetric.

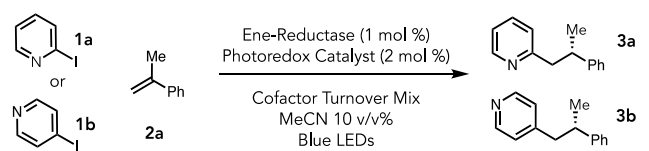
Enzymes are ideal scaffolds for asymmetric synthesis because they can use numerous noncovalent interactions to control the reaction trajectories of highly reactive intermediates.²⁶ Over the past decade, our group has pioneered the area of photoenzymatic catalysis, where photonic energy is used to drive biocatalytic transformations.²⁷ Our group and others demonstrated that flavin-dependent “ene”-reductases (EREDs) could generate alkyl- and nitrogen-centered radicals for olefin hydroalkylation and hydroamination reactions.^{28–43} Reactions occur with high levels of enantioselectivity because the protein can preferentially deliver a hydrogen atom to one prochiral face of the alkyl radical formed after C–C or C–N bond formation. Hydrogen atom transfer remains a challenging mechanistic step to render asymmetry, with reports only recently demonstrating the ability of small-molecule thiols to achieve this feat.^{44,45}

Based on the ability of EREDs to control HAT, we questioned whether they could catalyze asymmetric hydroarylations using heteroaryl radicals (Figure 1b). Based on

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Table 1. Reaction Optimization^a


Entry	Product	ERED	Photocatalyst	Yield (%)	Enantiomeric Ratio (e.r.)
1 ^b	3a	OYE3	-	1	98:2
2	3a	OYE3	Ru(bpy) ₃ Cl ₂	25	96:4
3	3a	OYE3	Ru(bpy) ₂ (4,4'-CO ₂ Hbpy)Cl ₂ (PC7)	54	96:4
4 ^c	3a	GluER-T36A-Y177F	Ru(bpy) ₂ (4-CO ₂ Hbpy)Cl ₂ (PC6)	25	3:97
5 ^d	3b	OYE3	Ru(bpy) ₂ (4-CO ₂ Hbpy)Cl ₂	78	97:3
6 ^e	3b	OYE3	Ru(bpy) ₂ (4-CO ₂ Hbpy)Cl ₂	59	96:4
7 ^f	3b	OYE3	Ru(bpy) ₂ (4-CO ₂ Hbpy)Cl ₂	29	91:9
8 ^g	3b	OYE3	Ru(bpy) ₂ (4-CO ₂ Hbpy)Cl ₂	41	97:3
9 ^h	3b	OYE3	Ru(bpy) ₂ (4-CO ₂ Hbpy)Cl ₂	36	97:3

^aReaction conditions: 2-iodopyridine **1a** (20 μmol), **2a** (5 equiv), NADP⁺ (1 mol %), GDH-105 (1.5 mg), glucose (1 equiv), MES buffer (pH 6, 100 mM, 750 μL), acetonitrile (250 μL), blue LEDs, 17 h. ^b**2a** (3 equiv), GDH-105 (0.1 mg), glucose (1 equiv). ^cGlucose (2 equiv), acetonitrile (180 mL, 18% v/v). ^d4-Iodopyridine **1b** (20 μmol), **2a** (3 equiv), GDH-105 (0.1 mg), glucose (1 equiv). ^eOYE3 (0.5 mol %), 4-iodopyridine **1b** (20 μmol), **2a** (3 equiv), GDH-105 (0.1 mg). ^fOYE3 (0.1 mol %), 4-iodopyridine **1b** (20 μmol), ^g4-Bromopyridine was used instead of **1b**, **2a** (3 equiv), GDH-105 (0.1 mg). ^h4-Chloropyridine was used as a substrate instead of **1b**, **2a** (3 equiv), GSH-105 (0.1 mg).

pioneering studies by Jui, we hypothesized that aryl halides could be photochemically reduced to generate an aryl radical.^{22–25} This ambiphilic intermediate can react with electronically diverse alkenes to afford an alkyl radical which is reductively quenched via HAT from the flavin cofactor.⁴⁶

We began by exploring the coupling of 2-iodopyridine **1a** with α-methylstyrene using a series of ERED homologues in the presence of a cofactor turnover system to reduce the enzyme to the hydroquinone (FMN_{hq}) oxidation state while irradiating with blue LEDs (Table 1). While electron-deficient aryl halides are known to form charge transfer complexes with electron donors (amines, thiolates),^{47–50} no product was formed under these conditions (Supporting Information Table 24, entry 2). We hypothesized that the lack of product formation was due to back electron transfer from the aryl radical anion to the flavin semiquinone (FMN_{sq}) being fast compared to mesolytic cleavage of the C–I bond.^{51,52} To slow back electron transfer rates, we explore using exogenous photocatalysts for radical initiation. Previous studies found that exogenous photocatalysts could generate radicals when the biological cofactor alone was ineffective.^{28,32,35,53,54} When catalytic quantities of Ru(bpy)₃Cl₂ were added to a reaction containing old yellow enzyme 3 (OYE3), the hydroarylated product was formed in 25% yield with 96:4 e.r. favoring the (S)-enantiomer (Table 1, entry 2). We hypothesized that superior yields could be achieved by modifying the photocatalyst structure. Adding two carboxylates to the 4,4' positions of one of the bipyridine ligands increased the yield to 54% with no change in enantioselectivity (Table 1, entry 3). The (R)-enantiomer of the product can be formed in 29% yield using a previously identified variant of the ERED from *Gluconobacter oxidans* (GluER-T36A-Y177F) (Table 1, entry 4).

When exploring other iodopyridine isomers, we found that 4-iodopyridine was more reactive, affording the coupled product in 78% yield with 97:3 er when using Ru(bpy)₂(4-CO₂Hbpy) as the photocatalyst (Table 1, entry 5). Lowering the enzyme loading to 0.5 and 0.1 mol % resulted in lower yields with a modest decrease in enantioselectivity (Table 1, entries 6 and 7). We were pleased that 4-bromo and 4-chloropyridines were effective radical precursors, producing 41

and 36% yields, respectively (Table 1, entries 8 and 9). Reactions can be run on a preparative scale using crude enzyme lysate, affording the product in 30% yield with 97:3 er, while reactions with purified enzyme formed the product in 60% yield with 97:3 er (Supporting Information Figures S2 and S3). We attribute lower yields to decreased photon flux due to lysate opacity.

We explored the alkene scope and limitations of the reaction using 4-iodopyridines as a radical precursor (Figure 2, 3b–3y). We tested different substituted α-methylstyrenes and found that the enzyme tolerates varying electron-donating groups on

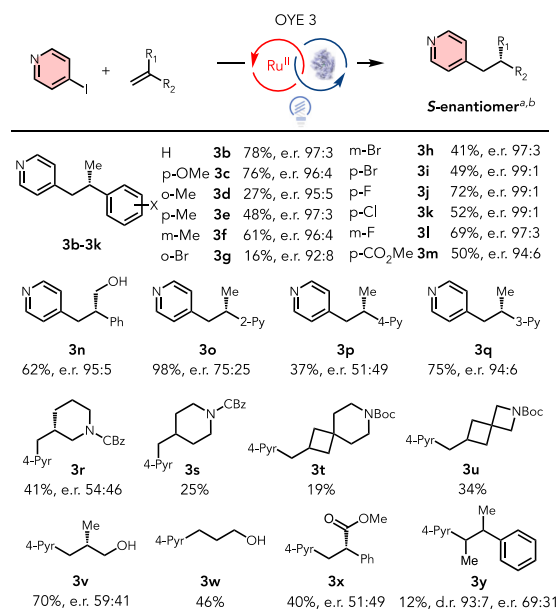


Figure 2. Scope of olefins. Reaction conditions for the (S)-enantiomers: aryl iodide (20 μmol, 1 equiv), olefins (60 μmol, 3 equiv), purified aliquots of the OYE 3 (200 nmol, 1 mol %), photocatalyst **6** (2 mol %), NADP⁺ (1 mol %), GDH-105 (0.1 mg), glucose (1 equiv), acetonitrile (250 μL, 25% v/v), and MES buffer (pH 6, 100 mM, 750 μL). The reaction mixture was stirred at 360 rpm and irradiated with blue LEDs for 17h.

the arene (Figure 2, 3b–3f). Halogen substituents are also tolerated on the alkene, affording the product in good yield with high enantioselectivity (Figure 2, 3g–3l). While *ortho*-substitution affords product in diminished yield, the high enantioselectivity indicates that these substituents impact the C–C bond formation more than the radical termination event (Figure 2, 3d and 3g). The enzyme tolerates unprotected aromatic allylic alcohols, highlighting the functional group tolerance of the reaction (Figure 2, 3n). Vinylpyridines were efficient coupling partners for this reaction, providing the product in up to 98% yield with excellent enantioselectivity (Figure 2, 3o–3q). Importantly, this reaction also accepts nonstyrenyl substrates, significantly expanding the types of products that can be accessed using this method. Protected piperidines bearing exocyclic methylenes were reactive (Figure 2, 3r and 3s). Spirocyclic cyclobutanes were also reactive but afforded products with lower yields (Figure 2, 3t and 3u). Unprotected aliphatic allylic alcohols are tolerated, producing products in good yields but low levels of enantioselectivity (Figure 2, 3v and 3w). The system accepts α,β -unsaturated alkenes but forms the product as a racemate (Figure 2, entry 3x). Finally, but-2-en-2-ylbenzene is a reactive coupling partner, affording a product with high diastereoselectivity and modest enantioselectivity (Figure 2, 3y).

Next, we explore the scope and limitations of heteroaromatic halides (Figure 3, 3aa–3ar). This reaction accepts a diverse range of substituted iodoarylates decorated with electron-donating and -withdrawing groups on the pyridine ring (Figure 3, 3aa–3aj). Notably, the reaction accepts 2-, 3-, and 4-iodopyridines, forming the product in good yield and selectivity, suggesting that the locations of the basic nitrogen relative to the radical do not significantly impact the reaction. Beyond pyridines, the reaction also accommodates various iodoquinolines. While the yields are more modest, the enantioselectivity remains high (Figure 3, 3ak–3an). 2-Bromoquinoline can also afford the corresponding product in modest yields and selectivities (Figure 3, 3am). 2-Iodopyridazine and 2-bromopyrimidine are also reactive and provide the corresponding products in good yields and excellent enantioselectivity (Figure 3, 3ao and 3ap). Finally, electron-deficient nonheteroaromatic aryl iodide provided the products in moderate yield but with high enantioselectivity (Figure 3, 3aq and 3ar). As halopyridines have a similar reduction potential (between -1.85 and -2.29 V vs SCE) to that of 4-iodoacetophenone (-1.85 V vs SCE),²² these results suggest that the reduction potential is a better predictor of reactivity than the presence of a basic nitrogen. Moreover, as the photocatalyst cannot facilitate this reaction without the protein (Supporting Information Table 24), we hypothesize that binding to the protein active site attenuates the reduction potential of the substrate. GluER-T36A can be used to access the opposite product enantiomer by using the same starting materials. In general, this enzyme is less efficient, affording the product in lower yields with more modest levels of enantioselectivity.

Next, we investigated the improved performance of the carboxylated photocatalysts compared to that of Ru(bpy)₃. We hypothesized that the difference was due to enhanced binding of the photocatalyst to the protein. We conducted steady-state and time-resolved fluorescence quenching experiments to probe this possibility and observed static quenching, indicating an association between the photocatalyst and OYE3. From these experiments, we measured a dissociation constant of $K_d =$

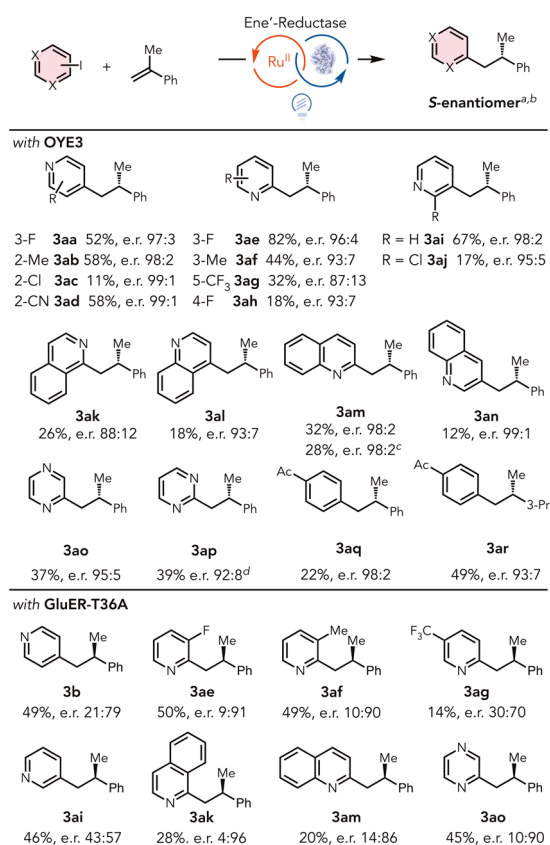


Figure 3. Scope of heterocycles. Reaction conditions for the (S)-enantiomers: aryl iodide (20 μ mol, 1 equiv), olefins (60 μ mol, 3 equiv), purified OYE 3 aliquot (200 nmol, 1 mol %), photocatalyst 6 (2 mol %), NADP⁺ (1 mol %), GDH-105 (0.1 mg), glucose (1 equiv), acetonitrile (250 μ L, 25% v/v), MES buffer (pH 6, 100 mM, 750 μ L). The reaction mixture was stirred at 360 rpm and irradiated with blue LEDs for 17 h. Photocatalyst 7 was used for entries 3ae–3ah. Reaction conditions for the (R)-enantiomers: aryl iodide (20 μ mol, 1 equiv), olefins (60 μ mol, 3 equiv), purified GluER T36A aliquot (200 nmol, 1 mol %), photocatalyst 6 (2 mol %), NADP⁺ (1 mol %), GDH-105 (0.1 mg), glucose (2 equiv), acetonitrile (180 μ L, 18% v/v), MES buffer (pH 6, 100 mM, 800 μ L). The reaction mixture was stirred at 360 rpm and irradiated with blue LEDs for 17 h. ^aThe yield (average of three runs) was determined using LCMS relative to internal standard 1,3,5-tribromobenzene. ^be.r. was determined by using HPLC on a chiral stationary phase. ^c2-Bromoquinoline was used as a radical precursor. ^d2-Bromopyrimidine was used as a radical precursor.

6.7 nM for Ru(bpy)₂(4,4'-CO₂Hbpy) while Ru(bpy)₃ has a higher value of $K_d = 260$ nM (Supporting Information Figures S18–S25).²⁸ As these two photocatalysts have similar reduction potentials (Ru(bpy)₃^{II/I} = -1.175 V vs Ru(bpy)₂(4,4'-CO₂Hbpy)^{II/I} = -1.25 V) (Supporting Information Figures S16 and S17), we hypothesize that stronger binding to the enzyme makes electron transfer between the photocatalyst and substrate, bound within the protein active site, more kinetically feasible.

While optimizing the reaction, we found that the formation of coupled product 3a tracked closely with the consumption of 2-iodopyridine, indicating that hydrodehalogenation of the aryl halide is not favored under the reaction conditions (Figure 4a). Given the short lifetimes of aryl radicals, this observation suggests that both the alkene and aryl halide are bound within the protein active site prior to radical formation. To determine

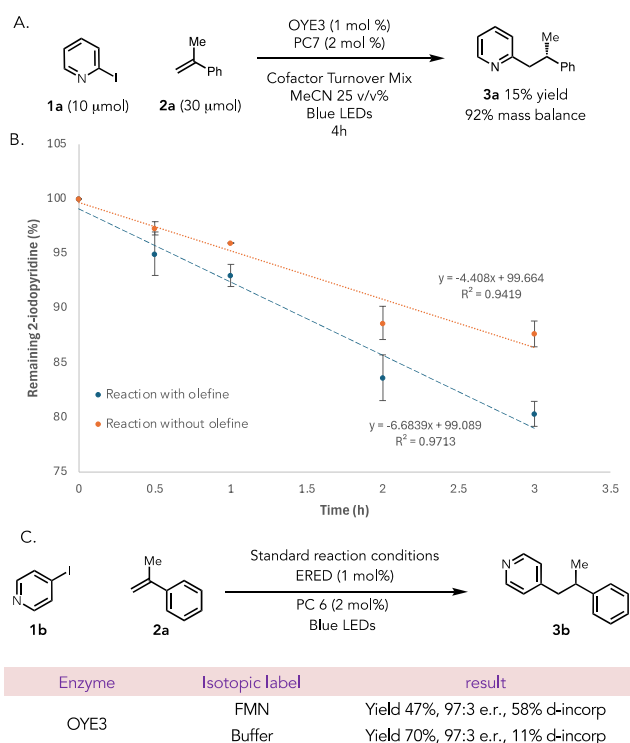


Figure 4. A) Formation of **3a** after 4 h. B) Kinetics of 2-iodopyridine consumption with and without alkene. C) Deuterium incorporation study.

whether the presence of an alkene accelerates the consumption of aryl halides, we explore the kinetics of the reaction with and without an alkene (Supporting Information Figure S4). During the initial rate of the reaction, we found that 2-iodopyridine is consumed 1.6 times faster in the presence of alkene than in its absence, indicating that the alkene is influencing the radical initiation event (Figure 4b).⁵⁵

Finally, we conducted isotope incorporation experiments to determine the mechanism of radical termination (Supporting Information Figures S5–S13 and Figure 4c). When using 4-iodopyridine with *D*-glucose-1-*d*₁ to isotopically label the N5-position of the flavin cofactor, the product is isolated with 58% deuterium incorporation (Figure 4c). In contrast, when a buffer made with D₂O is used to isotopically label the O–H bonds of tyrosine phenols, we observe 11% deuterium incorporation. These results suggest that flavin is terminating the reaction via hydrogen atom transfer from flavin. Moderate levels of deuterium incorporation when using N5-labeled flavin hydroquinone are presumably due to redox cycling the flavin cofactor by the photoredox catalyst, leading to label exchange with buffer.

In conclusion, we have developed a photoenzymatic system to catalyze an asymmetric hydroarylation of alkenes using aryl halides as radical precursors. This work expands the types of reactive intermediates that EREDs can use for alkene functionalization. We expect this reactivity mode to be compatible with other photoenzymes for other non-natural catalytic functions.

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/jacs.5c01066>.

Experimental procedures, characterization data, NMR spectra, and HPLC traces (PDF)

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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