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# Photoredox Organocatalysis for the Enantioselective Synthesis of 1,7-Dicarbonyl Compounds

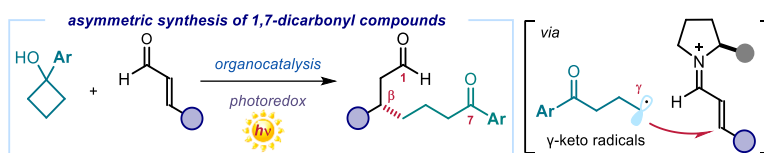
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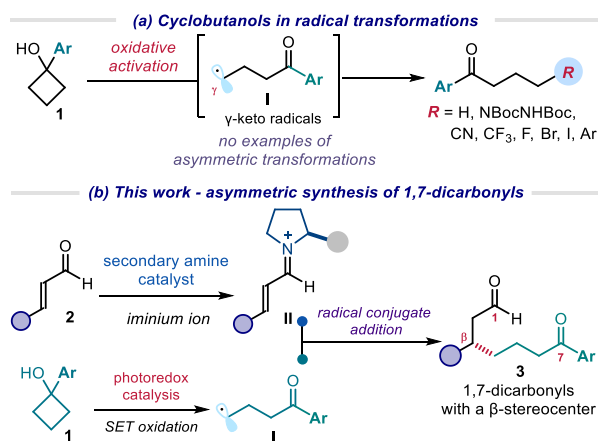
Supporting Information Placeholder



**ABSTRACT:** We describe an asymmetric organocatalytic method to synthesize 1,7-dicarbonyl compounds containing a  $\beta$ -stereocenter. The chemistry relies on the formation of  $\gamma$ -keto radicals, generated upon oxidative ring-opening of cyclobutanols mastered by an organic photoredox catalyst. These non-stabilized primary radicals are stereoselectively intercepted by an iminium ion intermediate, formed upon activation of aliphatic and aromatic enals by a chiral secondary amine catalyst. This organocatalytic photoredox method served to prepare scaffolds found in natural products and drug molecules.

Cyclobutanols **1** have recently found wide synthetic application as versatile radical precursors.<sup>1</sup> Upon oxidative activation and strain-promoted ring opening, they offer access to  $\gamma$ -keto radicals **I**, which can be leveraged to realize the formal remote functionalization of carbonyl compounds (Figure 1a).<sup>1,2</sup> The activation of cyclobutanols can be achieved using catalytic transition metals, stoichiometric oxidants, and photoredox catalysts. The resulting  $\gamma$ -keto radicals **I** have been used in a wide range of C-C bond forming processes (including alkylation,<sup>2g</sup> formylation,<sup>2i</sup> allylation,<sup>2i</sup> vinylation,<sup>2e</sup> alkylation,<sup>2e,f</sup> and arylation<sup>2j</sup>), and functional group introductions (i.e., amination,<sup>2b,d</sup> halogenation,<sup>2a,h,j,l</sup> cyanation,<sup>2f</sup> and trifluoromethylation<sup>2m</sup>). Yet, to the best of our knowledge, enantioselective methods for the stereocontrolled interception of  $\gamma$ -keto primary radicals **I** derived from cyclobutanols **1** have not been reported.<sup>3</sup>

In this study, we close this gap in asymmetric methodology by developing an organocatalytic strategy to accomplish the enantioselective trap of  $\gamma$ -keto primary radicals **I**, generated upon oxidative ring-opening of cyclobutanols **1** (Figure 1b). This exploration was motivated by our recent finding that a chiral iminium ion **II**, generated by activation of aliphatic and aromatic enals with a chiral secondary amine catalyst, could effectively intercept radicals with high stereocontrol.<sup>3d,4</sup>



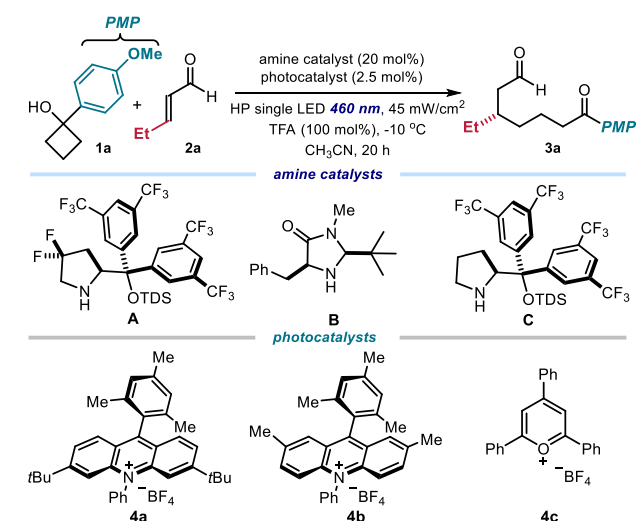
**Figure 1.** (a) Oxidative ring-opening of cyclobutanols **1** to afford  $\gamma$ -keto radicals **I** and the ensuing functionalization. (b) Design plan for the enantioselective catalytic synthesis of 1,7-dicarbonyl compounds via stereocontrolled iminium ion trap of primary radicals **I**.

Specifically, we wondered if, upon single-electron transfer (SET) oxidation and ring opening of cyclobutanol **1**, mastered by a light-activated photoredox catalyst, radical **I** could be effectively captured by the chiral iminium ion **II**. This is not a trivial target since non-stabilized primary radicals, such as **I**, are generally recalcitrant to asymmetric bond-forming processes,<sup>5</sup> due to their high reactivity. If successful, our protocol would enable direct access to 1,7-dicarbonyl compounds **3** with a  $\beta$ -stereogenic center. 1,7-

Dicarbonyls are found in natural products and pharmaceutically relevant compounds, and they are useful intermediates to prepare bioactive molecules.<sup>6</sup> While some methods are available for the synthesis of these scaffolds,<sup>7</sup> they do not provide stereocontrolled entries into chiral 1,7-dicarbonyl compounds. Our proposed strategy, which combines photoredox catalysis and organocatalysis, can offer a direct asymmetric route to chiral 1,7-dicarbonyls.

We started our investigation using cyclobutanol **1a** ( $E_{ox} = +1.56$  V vs Ag/AgCl) and pentenal **2a** as the model substrates (Table 1). We selected 3,6-di-*tert*-butyl-9-mesityl-10-phenylacridinium tetrafluoroborate **4a** as the organic photocatalyst ( $E_{ox} = +2.08$  V vs SCE),<sup>8</sup> since it has the required redox potential to effectively activate **1a** via an SET oxidation. The experiments were conducted at  $-10$  °C in CH<sub>3</sub>CN under irradiation by a single high-power light-emitting diode (HP LED,  $\lambda_{max} = 460$  nm) with an irradiance at 45 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>, as controlled by an external power supply. Trifluoroacetic acid (TFA, 1 equiv.) was used to secure the effective formation of the chiral iminium ion of type **II**.

**Table 1. Optimization of the reaction conditions.<sup>a</sup>**



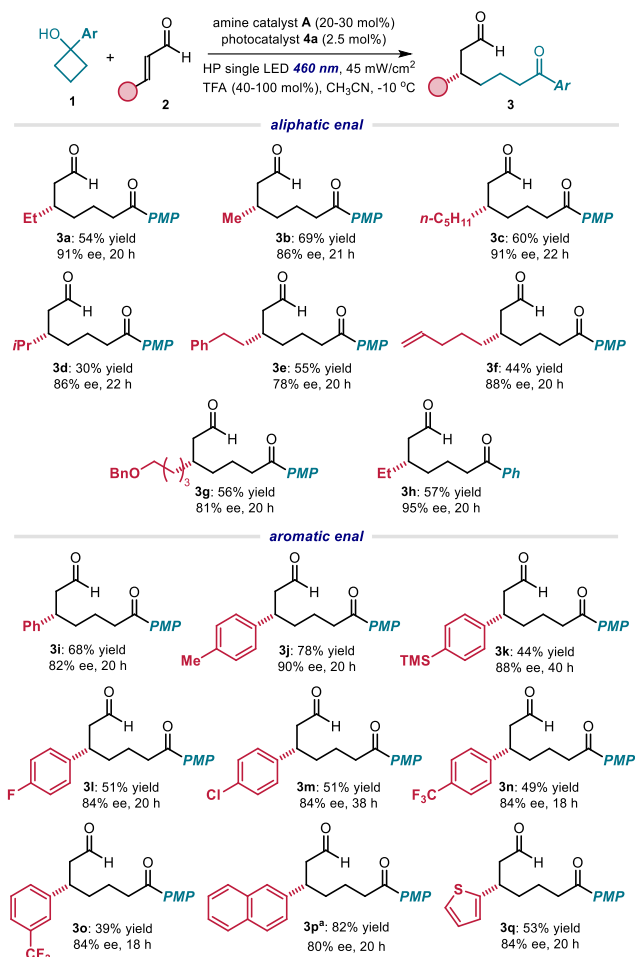
entry	amine	4	yield (%) <sup>b</sup>	ee (%) <sup>c</sup>
1	A	<b>4a</b>	65 (54)	91
2	B	<b>4a</b>	53	8
3	C	<b>4a</b>	30	5
4	A	<b>4b</b>	17	N.D.
5	A	<b>4c</b>	37	82
6 <sup>d</sup>	A	<b>4a</b>	15	57
7	A	none	0	-
8 <sup>e</sup>	A	<b>4a</b>	0	-
9	none	<b>4a</b>	12	0

<sup>a</sup> Reactions performed on a 0.1 mmol scale for 20 h using 3 equiv. of **2a**, 20 mol% of aminocatalyst, 2.5 mol% of photocatalyst, and 100 mol% of TFA in 0.2 mL of CH<sub>3</sub>CN under illumination by a single high-power (HP) LED ( $\lambda_{max} = 460$  nm, 45 mW/cm<sup>2</sup>) at  $-10$  °C. <sup>b</sup> Yield determined by <sup>1</sup>H NMR analysis of the crude mixture using BnCl as the internal standard; yield of the isolated product **3a** is reported in brackets. <sup>c</sup> Enantiomeric excess of **3a**. <sup>d</sup> Reaction at ambient temperature. <sup>e</sup> Reaction in the dark. TDS: hexyldimethylsilyl; N.D.: not determined.

The *gem*-difluorinated diarylprolinol silylether organocatalyst **A**, which we previously designed for the photoactivation of iminium ions,<sup>4</sup> afforded the expected product **3a** with high enantioselectivity and good yield (Table 1, entry 1, 54% yield and 91% ee). Notably, catalyst **A** was uniquely competent for high stereoselection, since other amine catalysts with an established profile in promoting asymmetric iminium-ion-mediated processes, including catalyst **B** and **C**, offered reduced catalytic activity and stereoselectivity (entries 2 and 3, respectively). Other photoredox catalysts (**4b-c**) were not suitable to efficiently promote the model reaction (entries 4-5). Temperature was also important in securing efficiency: when performing the model reaction catalyzed by **A** at ambient temperature, both yield and enantioselectivity of product **3a** dropped drastically (entry 6). We also performed control experiments: photocatalyst **4a** (entry 7) and light (entry 8) were found essential. A low reactivity was also observed in the absence of catalyst **A** (entry 9). For entries 7-9, decomposition of cyclobutanol **1a** was observed.<sup>9</sup>

Using the optimized conditions (Table 1, entry 1), we next explored the generality of the method for the asymmetric synthesis of chiral 1,7-dicarbonyl compounds **3** (Figure 2). We found that enals bearing a variety of saturated aliphatic substituents at the  $\beta$  position, including ethyl (product **3a**), methyl (**3b**), *n*-pentyl (**3c**), and isopropyl (**3d**) moieties, were suitable substrates. In all cases, the corresponding products were obtained in excellent enantioselectivity (86-91% ee), while the yields slightly decreased with increasing steric hindrance of the  $\beta$  substituent. Enals bearing a homobenzyl (adduct **3e**), a terminal olefin (**3f**), and a benzyl ether (**3g**) functionality were compatible with the reaction conditions. In addition to cyclobutanol **1a**, the less electron rich analogue bearing a phenyl substituent offered a similar reactivity, effectively leading to product **3h** in 57% yield and 95% ee. Attempts to intercept tertiary radicals, generated from suitable cyclobutanol precursors, met with failure. A list of unsuccessful substrates is reported in Figure S1 of the Supporting Information.

Aromatic enals were also competent substrates, although they required 30 mol% of catalyst **A** (optimization studies are detailed in Table S1 within the Supporting Information). Cinnamaldehyde was successfully transformed into product **3i** in 68% yield and 82% ee. Substituents on the phenyl ring of different electronic nature, including the electron-donating methyl (adduct **3j**) and electron-withdrawing fluorine (**3l**) group, had little effects on enantioselectivity. *Para*- and *meta*-trifluoromethyl-phenyl enals offered similar results (**3n** and **3o**), showing that the reaction system tolerates substituents at different positions of the aromatic ring. Aromatic enals bearing a trimethyl silyl (TMS, product **3k**) and a chlorine (**3m**), which can serve as synthetic handles for further modifications, could also be used. In addition to the basic phenyl ring, other aromatic systems, including naphthalene (**3p**) and thiophene (**3q**), were compatible with the protocol.

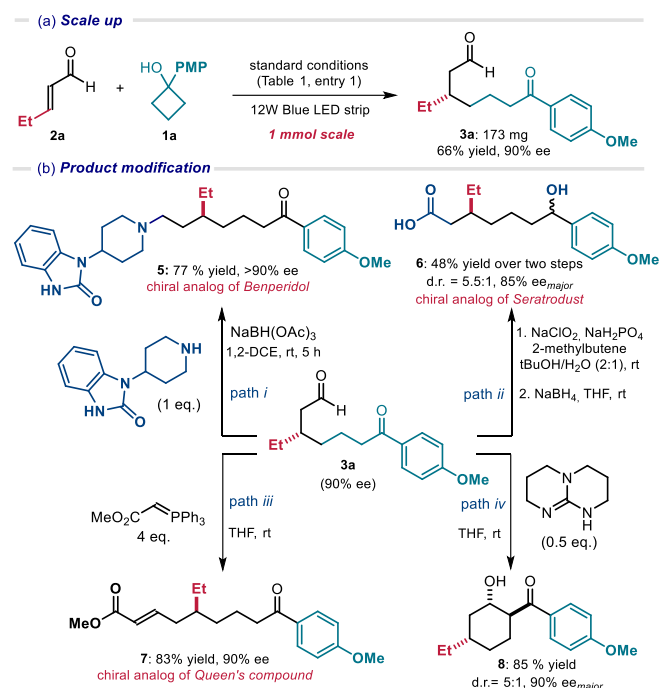


**Figure 2.** Substrate scope for the asymmetric synthesis of 1,7-dicarbonyl compounds **3**. Reactions performed on a 0.1 mmol scale using 3 equiv. of enal **2** in 0.2 mL of CH<sub>3</sub>CN under illumination at 460 nm. Yields and enantiomeric excesses of the isolated products **3** are reported below each entry (average of two runs per substrate). For aliphatic enal, 20 mol% of aminocatalyst **A** and 100 mol% of TFA were used; for aromatic enal, 30 mol% of aminocatalyst **A** and 40 mol% of TFA were used. <sup>a</sup> Using 5 mol% of photocatalyst **4a** in a CH<sub>3</sub>CN:CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> mixture (4:1) as solvent. PMP = *p*-methoxy phenyl.

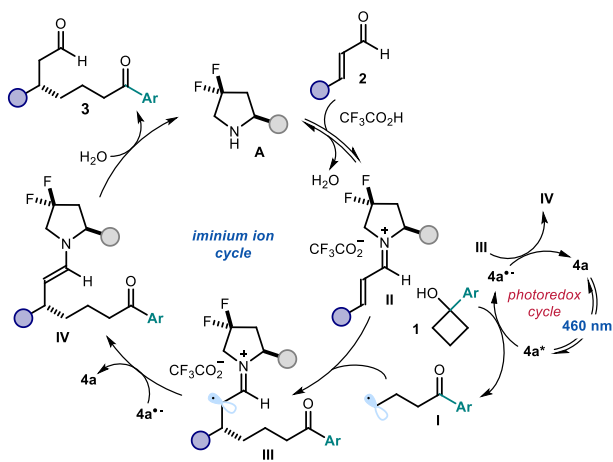
To examine the utility of the method, we performed the model reaction on a 1 mmol scale, which offered product **3a** in synthetically useful amount (Scheme 1a, **3a** formed in 66% yield and 90% ee, 173 mg). We then sought to convert adduct **3a** into analogues of straight-chain pharmacophores through functional group interconversion (Scheme 1b). Firstly, a reductive amination with 1-(4-piperidinyl)-1,3-dihydro-2H-benzimidazol-2-one smoothly afforded the chiral adduct **5** bearing an (*S*)-2-ethyl-7-oxoheptamine skeleton without erosion of enantiopurity (path *i*). Product **5** is an analogue of *Benperidol*, a neuroleptic used as selective ligand for dopaminergic D<sub>2</sub>-receptors.<sup>10</sup> In addition, after redox manipulation (path *ii*), the two carbonyl groups within **3a** could be selectively altered to achieve a 7-hydroxylheptanoic acid **6**, an intermediate in the preparation of asthma medication *Seratroduct*.<sup>11</sup> The dicarbonyl skeleton in **3a** could also be diversified through a Wittig-olefination (path *iii*), which afforded the 1,9-dicarbonyl product **7**

with a  $\delta$  stereogenic center. This structure resembles the backbone of the Queen substance, a honeybee pheromone.<sup>12</sup> Lastly (path *iv*), a Lewis base-catalyzed intramolecular aldol reaction<sup>13</sup> led to the cyclohexanol scaffold **8**, decorated with three stereogenic centers, with good yield and diastereoselectivity. The relative configuration of the major diastereoisomer of **8** was assigned by means of NMR studies, as detailed in section J of the Supporting information, while the absolute configuration of the minor isomer of **8** was unambiguously assigned by X-ray crystallographic analysis.<sup>14</sup>

### Scheme 1. Synthetic applications



To glean insight into the mechanism, we conducted Stern-Volmer fluorescence quenching experiments (details in section F of the Supporting Information). We found that cyclobutanol **1a** efficiently quenched the fluorescence of the excited photocatalyst **4a** ( $K_{SV} = 70.3 \text{ M}^{-1}$ ). Cyclic voltammetry established the thermodynamic feasibility of an SET oxidation of cyclobutanol **1a** ( $E_{ox} = +1.56 \text{ V vs Ag/AgCl}$ ) by the excited **4a** ( $E_{ox} = +2.08 \text{ V vs SCE}$ ).<sup>8</sup> Based on these investigations, we propose the mechanism detailed in Figure 3. The light-activated photocatalyst **4a** would activate cyclobutanol **1a** through SET oxidation to afford the  $\gamma$ -keto radical **I**. This non-stabilized primary radical is then captured by the chiral iminium ion **II** in a stereocontrolled fashion. The emerging  $\alpha$ -iminyl radical cation **III** is quenched by the reduced photocatalyst **4a**<sup>-</sup>, thus closing the photoredox catalytic cycle. Hydrolysis of the ensuing enamine **IV** leads to the desired chiral 1,7-dicarbonyl compound **3** while turning over the chiral amine catalyst **A**. We measured a quantum yield ( $\Phi$ ) for the model reaction as low as 0.04. This value is consistent with our mechanistic proposal, suggesting that a radical chain propagation, if present, is not a dominant path.<sup>15</sup>



**Figure 3.** Proposed mechanism.

In summary, we have developed a catalytic enantioselective method that offers a rare entry into chiral 1,7-dicarbonyl compounds. The chemistry requires visible light, an organic photocatalyst, and a chiral secondary amine catalyst. Key for success is the stereocontrolled trap of non-stabilized primary radicals, generated upon oxidative ring opening of cyclobutanols. Synthetic elaboration of the 1,7-dicarbonyl products served to easily prepare chiral analogues of known bioactive molecules.<sup>16</sup>

## ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website.

Experimental procedures and spectral data (PDF)

X-ray crystallographic data for the minor diastereoisomer of product **8** (CIF)

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## Author Contributions

The manuscript was written through contributions of all authors.

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