Effects of Internal and External Carboxylic Acids on the Reaction Pathway of Organocatalytic 1,4-Addition Reactions between Aldehydes and Nitroolefins

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1. General aspects and materials

Materials and reagents were of the highest commercially available grade and used without further purification. Reactions were monitored by thin layer chromatography using Merck silica gel 60 F254 plates. Compounds were visualized by UV, KMnO₄ and ninhydrin. Flash chromatography was performed using Merck silica gel 60, particle size $40 - 63 \mu m$. ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker DPX 400, a VARIAN Mercury 300 MHz or a Bruker Advance DRX 500 spectrometer. Chemical shifts are reported in ppm using TMS or the residual solvent peak as a reference. HPLC analyses were performed on an analytical HPLC with a diode array detector from Shimadzu. *In-situ* FT-IR spectroscopy was carried out on a ReactIR R4000 (SiComb probe) with a spectral range of 4000–650 cm⁻¹. All measurements were performed at room temperature, collecting spectra every minute (154 scans) or every 5 minutes (256 scans).

2. Synthesis of the catalysts

2.1. Peptides 1 and 1b – 1f

General protocols for solid phase peptide synthesis

Peptide 1 and 1b - 1f were prepared on solid phase using Rink Amide resin as the solid support. The general protocol for Fmoc/tBu peptide synthesis was followed according to the procedures described below.

General procedure for peptide couplings: 'PrNEt₂ (4.5 eq) was added to a solution of Fmoc-Xxx-OH (1.5 eq) and HCTU (1.5 eq) in DMF. The activated amino acid was added as a solution in DMF (\approx 500 mM concentration) to the amino-functionalized resin, swollen in DMF and the mixture was agitated for 1.5 h before washing with DMF (3x) and CH₂Cl₂ (5x).

General procedure for Fmoc-deprotections: 40% piperidine in DMF was added to the resin (preswollen in DMF) and the reaction mixture was agitated for 10 min, drained and the piperidine treatment repeated for another 10 min. Finally the resin was washed with DMF (3x) and CH_2Cl_2 (5x).

General procedure for the cleavage of the peptide from the solid support: The solid supported peptide was cleaved from the Rink Amide resin by treatment with a mixture of TFA:CH₂Cl₂ 2:1 for 1 h and a second time for 20 min. Pooling of filtrates and removal of all volatiles under reduced pressure followed by precipitation with Et₂O afforded the peptide as its TFA salt. The TFA was removed by ion pair exchange using a VariPureTM IPE cartouche (Varian, Inc.).

H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu-NH₂ (1): Spectroscopic data are in agreement with published data.^{1,2}

H-D-Pro-Asp-NH₂ (1b): Spectroscopic data are in agreement with published data.¹

H-D-Pro-Pro-Aad-NH₂ (1c): Spectroscopic data are in agreement with published data.¹

H-D-Pro-Pro-Api-NH₂ (1d): Spectroscopic data are in agreement with published data.¹

H-D-Pro-Pro-Asu-NH₂ (1e): Spectroscopic data are in agreement with published data.¹

H-D-Pro-Pro-Ada-NH₂ (1f): ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.48 (t, J = 5.8 Hz, 1H), 4.55 (dd, J = 7.9, 2.5 Hz, 1H), 4.22 (t, J = 8.3 Hz, 1H), 3.87 – 3.77 (m, 1H), 3.41 (dd, J = 9.4, 7.8 Hz, 1H), 3.34 – 3.19 (m, 2H), 3.11 – 3.01 (m, 2H), 2.37 – 2.14 (m, 4H), 2.13 – 1.92 (m, 5H), 1.75 (dq, J = 12.5, 8.0 Hz, 1H), 1.64 – 1.51 (m, 2H), 1.51 – 1.39 (m, 2H), 1.34 – 1.19 (m, 16H). ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 179.1, 170.4, 170.4, 61.2, 58.8, 46.7, 45.4, 39.8, 35.8, 29.6, 29.3, 29.0, 29.0, 28.9, 28.8, 28.8, 28.7, 26.7, 26.0, 25.4, 24.0. HRMS (ESI, [M+H]⁺) Calcd for C₂₂H₄₀N₃O₄: 410.3013. Found: 410.3013.

2.2. Peptides 1a, 2 and 2a

Peptides **1a**, **2**, and **2a** were synthesized in solution phase according to the route shown in Scheme S-1.



Scheme S-1. Synthesis of Peptide Catalysts 1a, 2 and 2a.

H-Glu(OtBu)NH-C₁₂H₂₅

¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.19 (t, *J* = 5.9 Hz, 1H), 3.30 (dd, *J* = 7.5, 5.0 Hz, 1H), 3.16 (td, *J* = 7.2, 5.9 Hz, 2H), 2.28 (t, *J* = 7.7 Hz, 1H), 2.27 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 1H), 2.01 (ddt, J = 14.0, 7.2, 5.0 Hz, 1H), 1.73 (dtd, J = 14.0, 7.7, 7.5 Hz, 1H), 1.37 (s, 9H), 1.29 – 1.10 (m, 20H), 0.81 (t, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 3H). ¹³C NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 174.3, 172.8, 80.5, 54.7, 39.1, 32.0, 31.9, 30.4, 29.7, 29.6, 29.6, 29.6, 29.4, 29.3, 28.1, 27.0, 22.7, 14.1. MS (ESI, [M+H]⁺) Calcd for C₂₁H₄₃N₂O₃: 371.3. Found: 371.3.

Boc-D-Pro-Pro-OH



Boc-D-Pro-OH (1.94 g, 9.00 mmol, 1.05 eq), HOBt·H₂O (1.65 g, 10.8 mmol, 1.2 eq) and EDC·HCl (2.07 g, 10.8 mmol, 1.2 eq) were dissolved in CH₂Cl₂ (24 mL) and cooled to 0°C. Then *i*Pr₂NEt (1.92 mL, 11.3 mmol, 1.3 eq) was added and the mixture was stirred for 10

min before H-Pro-OMe·HCl (1.42 g, 8.57 mmol, 1.0 eq) was added. The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 4 h. 0.1 M HCl (100 mL) was added and the layers were separated. The aqueous layer was extracted with CH_2Cl_2 (3 × 20 mL). The combined organic layers were washed with 10 % NaHCO₃ (30 mL), H₂O (20 mL) and brine (30 mL), dried over Na₂SO₄ and filtered through a short plug of silica gel. The solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The resulting colorless solid was dissolved in THF/MeOH 1:1 (15 mL), 4 M NaOH (8 mL) was added slowly and the reaction mixture stirred at room temperature for 1 h. The aqueous layer was washed with CH_2Cl_2 (3 × 10 mL), acidified (pH ≈ 2) with concentrated HCl and extracted with CH_2Cl_2 (3 × 10 mL). The combined organic layers were washed with brine (20 mL) and dried over Na₂SO₄. Removal of the solvent under reduced pressure yielded Boc-D-Pro-Pro-OH as a colorless solid (2.33 g, 87 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 10.21 (s br, 1 H), 4.54 (m, 1H), 4.39 (m, 1H), 3.95 – 3.28 (m, 4H), 2.45 – 1.68 (m, 8H), 1.37 and 1.33 (2 s, 9H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ = 175.6, 174.3, 172.0, 171.5, 154.9, 153.4, 143.7, 80.6, 80.4, 60.5, 57.9, 57.7, 47.5, 46.9, 46.6, 30.2, 29.1, 28.5, 28.4, 28.3, 28.1, 28.0, 27.0, 24.8, 24.7, 24.7, 23.7 (Mixture of two conformers in a ratio of approximately 2:1). MS (ESI, [2M+Na]⁺) Calcd for C₃₀H₄₈N₄NaO₁₀: 647.3. Found: 647.3.

H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu-NH-C₁₂H₂₅ (1a)



Boc-D-Pro-Pro-OH (1.00 g, 3.20 mmol, 1.0 eq) and EDC·HCl (736 mg, 3.84 mmol, 1.2 eq) were suspended in 20 mL EtOAc and *i*Pr₂NEt (660 μ L, 1.2 eq) was added. After stirring for 10 min at room temperature

H-Glu(OtBu)NH-C₁₂H₂₅ (1.19 g, 3.2 mmol, 1.0 eq) was added and the suspension was stirred at room temperature for 3h. The reaction mixture was diluted with 40 mL of EtOAc, washed with 0.1 M HCl (2 x 10 mL), 5 % Na₂CO₃ (10 mL) and brine (10 mL) and dried over Na₂SO₄. The solvent was removed under reduced pressure to give a colorless oil which was purified by flash column chromatography on silica gel eluting with 7 % MeOH in EtOAc. The protected peptide was dissolved in 5 mL of TFA/CH₂Cl₂ 2:1 and stirred at room temperature for 30 min. All volatile components were removed under reduced pressure to afford peptide **1a** as the TFA salt (1.50 g, 75 %). The TFA was removed by ion exchange using a VariPureTM IPE cartouche (Varian, Inc.).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.02 (d, *J* = 6.0 Hz, 1H), 6.85 (t, *J* = 5.5 Hz, 1H), 4.54 (t, *J* = 7.7 Hz, 1H), 4.44 (dd, *J* = 6.9, 5.3 Hz, 1H), 4.30 (td, *J* = 6.0, 3.0 Hz, 1H), 3.95 (dt, *J* = 9.9, 5.9 Hz, 1H), 3.51 (dt, *J* = 9.8, 7.8 Hz, 1H), 3.43 – 3.31 (m, 1H), 3.31 – 3.13 (m, 3H), 2.45 – 1.84 (m, 9H), 1.58 – 1.43 (m, 1H), 1.38 – 1.13 (m, 22H), 0.87 (t, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 3H). ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 181.6, 170.7, 170.1, 169.4, 62.0, 59.3, 54.7, 47.5, 45.3, 39.7, 32.4, 32.1, 29.8, 29.8, 29.8, 29.5, 29.5, 29.5, 28.0, 27.1, 25.8, 25.0, 24.7, 22.8, 14.3. HRMS (ESI, [M+H]⁺) Calcd for C₂₇H₄₉N₄O₅: 509.3697. Found: 509.3709.

H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu(OMe)-NH-C₁₂H₂₅ (2a)



TFA·H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu-NH- $C_{12}H_{25}$ (150 mg, 240 µmol, 1.0 eq) was dissolved in MeOH (4 mL) and cooled to -5°C with an ice/NaCl bath. Thionyl chloride (68.0 µL, 960 mmol, 4.0 eq) was added carefully and the solution

was stirred for 90 min at -5 to 15 °C. The solution was added to 10 % NaHCO₃ (10 mL) and extracted with CH_2Cl_2 (5x 10 mL). The combined organic extracts were dried over Na₂SO₄ and the solvent was removed under reduced pressure. Flash column chromatography on silica gel eluting with CH_2Cl_2 :MeOH:NH₃(aq) 100:10:1 provided peptide **2a** as a colorless solid (82 %).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.70 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 6.88 (t, *J* = 5.6 Hz, 1H), 4.45 – 4.30 (m, 2H), 3.95 (dd, *J* = 8.6, 5.8 Hz, 1H), 3.90 – 3.80 (m, 1H), 3.66 (s, 3H), 3.50 (dt, *J* = 9.9, 7.7 Hz, 1H), 3.29 – 3.03 (m, 4H), 2.84 (dt, *J* = 10.8, 6.7 Hz, 1H), 2.53 – 2.32 (m, 1H), 2.23 – 2.02 (m, 5H), 2.04 – 1.91 (m, 2H), 1.89 – 1.63 (m, 3H), 1.58 – 1.39 (m, 2H), 1.35 – 1.15 (m, 18H), 0.85 (t, *J* = 6.7 Hz, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 175.4, 174.8, 171.5, 170.6, 61.5, 59.7, 53.2, 52.1, 47.6, 47.2, 39.8, 32.0, 30.5, 29.8, 29.8, 29.8, 29.7, 29.7, 29.5, 29.2, 27.0, 26.5, 26.1, 24.9, 22.8, 14.2. HRMS (ESI, [M+H]⁺) Calcd for C₂₈H₅₁N₄O₅: 523.3854. Found:523.3838.

H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu(OMe)-NH₂ (2)

Boc-D-Pro-Pro-OH (794 mg, 2.54 mmol, 1.0 eq) and EDC·HCl (584 mg, 3.05 mmol, 1.2 eq) were dissolved in EtOAc (12 mL) and DMF (1.2 mL). After adding iPr_2NEt (508 µL, 3.05 mmol, 1.20 eq) the mixture was stirred at room

temperature for 10 min. Then H-Glu(OMe)-NH₂ (500 mg, 2.54 mmol, 1.0 eq) was added and the resulting cloudy mixture was stirred at room temperature for 12 h. The mixture was diluted with EtOAc (20 mL) and washed with 0.1 M HCl (10 mL), H2O (10 mL), 10 % NaHCO₃ (10 mL) and brine (2 × 10 mL). The aqueous layer was re-extracted with CH₂Cl₂ (30 mL). The combined organic layers were dried over Na₂SO₄. After removing all volatiles under reduced pressure, the crude product was filtered through a plug of silica gel eluting with 10 % MeOH in EtOAc. The solvents were removed under reduced pressure and the product dissolved in a mixture of TFA/CH₂Cl₂ 2:1 (5 mL). The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 2 hours. Then, the solvent was removed under reduced pressure and the peptide precipitated by the addition of Et₂O. The solvent was decanted and the resulting oil dried *in vacuo* to provide peptide **2** as the TFA salt (570 mg, 45 %). The TFA was removed by ion exchange using a VariPureTM IPE cartouche (Varian, Inc.).

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.74 (d, J = 8.2 Hz, 1H), 6.82 (s, 1H), 6.18 (s, 1H), 4.53 – 4.38 (m, 2H), 3.96 – 3.83 (m, 2H), 3.68 (s, 3H), 3.51 (dt, J = 10.8, 7.8 Hz, 1H), 3.22 – 3.07 (m, 1H), 2.81 (dt, J = 10.7, 7.0 Hz, 1H), 2.53 – 2.36 (m, 2H), 2.32 – 1.93 (m, 7H), 1.90 – 1.61 (m, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 174.8, 174.5, 173.8, 171.7, 61.6, 59.5, 52.4, 51.9, 47.2, 47.1, 30.6, 29.6, 29.3, 26.5, 25.8, 24.8. HRMS (ESI, [M+Na]⁺) Calcd for C₁₆H₂₆N₄NaO₅: 377.1795. Found: 377.1807.

3. In situ FT-IR studies

3.1. General

All experiments were carried out at room temperature using *n*-butanal and *trans*- β -nitrostyrene. Toluene was purchased in crown-cap quality and used as such. Chloroform was filtered through a plug of basic alumina prior to use. Reaction progress was monitored by following the N-O-stretching mode of the product γ -nitroaldehyde at 1554 cm⁻¹. The N-O-stretching mode at 1554 cm⁻¹ is an isolated band the intensity of which directly corresponds to the product concentration.³ Spectra were collected every minute (154 scans) for the first three hours and thereafter every 5 minutes (256 scans) until completion of the reaction. Upon completion of the reaction an aliquot (100 µL) was withdrawn from the reaction mixture, diluted with CDCl₃ and subjected to ¹H-NMR spectroscopic analysis to determine the diastereoselectivity. The remaining reaction mixture was used to isolate the γ -nitroaldehyde and determine the enantioselectivity of the reaction.

3.2. Reaction setup

A volumetric flask (1 mL) was charged with the catalyst (22 μ mol, 5 mol%) and *trans*-nitrostyrene (65.6 mg, 440 μ mol, 1.0 eq). Solvent was added and the resulting mixture was sonicated until a homogeneous solution was obtained. Then *n*-butanal was added followed by the addition of the solvent until the total volume of 1 mL was reached. The clear solution was immediately transferred to a 3 mL round bottom flask containing the IR probe and a magnetic stirrer. The reaction mixture was gently stirred during the reaction.

3.3. Conversion-time curves



Catalysts 1 and 1a in CHCl₃:*i*PrOH 9:1

Figure S 1 Conversion-time curves in the presence of catalysts 1 and 1a in CHCl₃: PrOH 9:1

Catalysts 2 and 2a in CHCl₃:*i*PrOH 9:1



Figure S 2 Conversion-time curves in the presence of catalysts 2 and 2a in CHCl₃: PrOH 9:1

Catalysts 1 and 2 in CHCl₃:*i*PrOH 9:1



Figure S 3 Conversion-time curves and their first derivatives in the presence of catalysts 1 and 2 in CHCl₃:PrOH 9:1.

Catalysts 1a and 2a in toluene



Figure S 4 Conversion-time curves and their first derivatives in the presence of catalysts 1a and 2a in toluene



Catalysts 1b - 1f in CHCl₃:*i*PrOH 9:1

Figure S 5 Conversion-time curves and their first derivatives in the presence of catalysts 1b - 1f in CHCl₃:iPrOH 9:1.

Catalysts 1 in CHCl₃:*i*PrOH 9:1 in the presence of acidic additives with different pKa values



Figure S 6 Conversion-time curves obtained in the presence of catalysts 1 in combination with acidic additives of different pK_a in $CHCl_3$; PrOH 9:1

3.4. Determination of Reaction Orders

3.4.1. Reaction of n-butanal with nitrostyrene in the presence of H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu-NH₂ 1 in CHCl₃:iPrOH 9:1.



The reaction orders were determined previously.¹

3.4.2. Reaction of n-butanal with nitrostyrene in the presence of H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu-NH- $C_{12}H_{25}$ **1a** in toluene.



H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu-NH- $C_{12}H_{25}$

Experiments were carried out at constant initial concentrations of nitrostyrene (0.44 M) and *n*-butanal (0.44 M) varying the initial concentrations of H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu-NH-C₁₂H₂₅ (2.2 mM, 4.4 mM, 6.6 mM, 8.8 mM, 11.0 mM, 12.1 mM). To obtain initial rates, the first derivative of the product concentration vs. time curve was calculated at t = 15 min.

The product concentration vs. time curves, as well as the resulting log-log plot^{4,5} are shown below: first order dependence on the catalyst concentration is observed.



Nitrostyrene

Experiments were carried out at constant initial concentrations of H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu-NH-C₁₂H₂₅ **1a** (4.4 mM) and *n*-butanal (0.44 M) varying the initial concentrations of nitrostyrene (0.22 M, 0.44 M, 0.66 M, 0.88 M, 1.10 M, 1.21 M). To obtain initial rates, the first derivative of the product concentration vs. time curve was calculated at t = 15 min.

The product concentration vs. time curves, as well as the resulting $\log -\log \text{ plot}^{4,5}$ are shown below: a reaction order of 0.5 is observed.



n-Butanal

Experiments were carried out at constant initial concentrations of H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu-NH-C₁₂H₂₅ **1a** (4.4 mM) and nitrostyrene (0.44 M) varying the initial concentrations of butanal (0.22 M, 0.33 M 0.44 M, 0.66 M, 0.88 M, 1.10 M, 1.21 M). To obtain initial rates, the first derivative of the product concentration vs. time curve was calculated at t = 15 min.

The product concentration vs. time curves, as well as the resulting log-log plot^{4,5} are shown below: a zero order dependence on the aldehyde concentration is observed.



3.4.3. Reaction of n-butanal with nitrostyrene in the presence of H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu(OMe)-NH-C₁₂H₂₅ 2a in toluene.



Two reactions using different initial concentrations of butanal (0.66 M and 0.88 M) and nitrostyrene (0.44 M and 0.66 M) at a constant catalyst concentration (22 mM) show identical reaction progress confirming a zero order dependence on both substrates.



4. NMR-Experiments

Experimental setup: To a solution of the peptide (20 μ mol, 2.0 eq) in the respective solvent (0.5 mL) was added a solution of butanal (0.90 μ L, 10 μ mol, 1.0 eq) in the respective solvent (0.1 mL). After 5 min a ¹H NMR spectrum was recorded. Then *trans*-nitrostyrene (1.49 mg, 10 μ mol, 1.0 eq) was added as a solution in the respective solvent and again a ¹H NMR spectrum was collected after 5 min.



H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu-NH-C₁₂H₂₅ (1a) in CDCl₃



H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu-NH- $C_{12}H_{25}$ (1a) in C_6D_6



H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu(OMe)-NH-C₁₂H₂₅ (2a) in CDCl₃



H-D-Pro-Pro-Glu(OMe)-NH-C₁₂H₂₅ (2a) in C₆D₆

2D NMR spectroscopic analysis cyclobutane C derived from 2a

Conditions:

- 20 µmol of peptide **2a** (2.0 eq)
- Freshly activated 4Å molecular sieves
- 0.6 mL of solvent
- 10 µmol of butanal (1.0 eq)
- 10 µmol of nitrostyrene (1.0 eq)
- Room temperature, 5 min

Relevant excerpt in C₆D₆



Relevant excerpt in CDCl₃



Electron spray mass spectrometric analysis of NMR sample

A small aliquot of the NMR sample in C_6D_6 was diluted with MeOH and injected into an ESI-MS spectrometer. In the resulting spectra the mass of a protonated cyclobutane intermediate as well as the corresponding sodium adduct are observed.



NMR spectroscopic analysis cyclobutane C derived from 1f

Conditions:

- 20 µmol of peptide **1f** (10 mol%)
- 0.6 mL of C_6D_6
- 200 µmol of butanal (1.0 eq)
- 200 µmol of nitrostyrene (1.0 eq)
- Room temperature, 60 min





5. References

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