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Citation for the original published paper:

Olofsson, B., Aggarwal, V. (2006)

Enantioselective alfa-Arylation of Ketones: Application to the Synthesis of (-)-Epibatidine.

In: *Organikerdagarna, Kalmar, Sweden* (pp. Le21, P47-).

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

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# Enantioselective $\alpha$ -Arylation of Ketones: Application to the Synthesis of (-)-Epibatidine

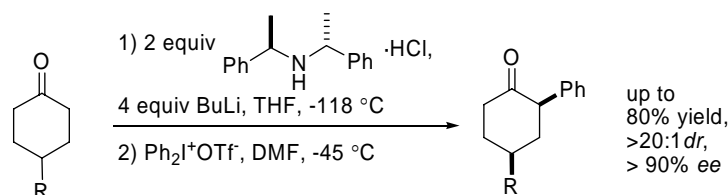
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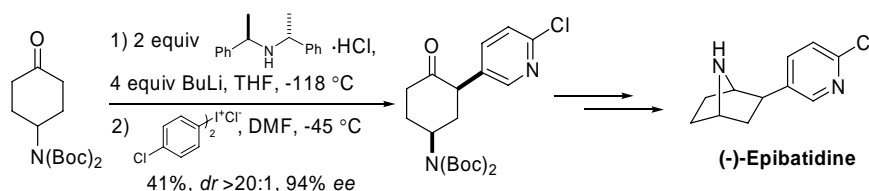
The enantioselective introduction of electrophiles  $\alpha$  to carbonyl compounds occupies a central position in asymmetric synthesis. Although asymmetric  $\alpha$ -alkylations have been well developed, high enantioselectivity in  $\alpha$ -arylation of ketones has only been achieved in a limited number of cases.

We have developed a direct arylation reaction of cyclohexanones, employing diaryl iodonium(III) salts as electrophiles. The reaction was made enantioselective by the use of a chiral base, resulting in 2,4-substituted cyclohexanones in high yields and with high enantiomeric excesses and diastereoselectivities (Scheme 1).



**Scheme 1.** Asymmetric coupling with Simpkins' base.

This methodology was applied in a short, enantioselective synthesis of (-)-Epibatidine, an alkaloid recently isolated from the Ecuadorian poison frog *Epipedobates tricolor*. The synthesis was accomplished in 6 steps and 31% overall yield, thus providing the shortest and most efficient asymmetric route to this important compound to date (Scheme 2).



**Scheme 2.** Synthesis (-)-Epibatidine.

V. K. Aggarwal and B. Olofsson, *Angew. Chem. Int. Ed.* **2005**, *44*, 5516-5519.