

# A radical hydrohaloalkylation of the ligand sphere of a chiral dehydroalanine Ni(II) complex: An asymmetric route to halogenated $\alpha$ -amino acid derivatives

Nadezhda V. Stoletova<sup>a</sup>, Alexander F. Smol'yakov<sup>a</sup>, Andrey A. Tyutyunov<sup>a</sup>,  
Victor I. Maleev<sup>a</sup>, Vladimir A. Larionov<sup>a,b,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup> A.N. Nesmeyanov Institute of Organoelement Compounds of Russian Academy of Sciences (INEOS RAS), Vavilov Str. 28, bld. 1, 119334, Moscow, Russian Federation

<sup>b</sup> Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Miklukho-Maklaya Str. 6, 117198, Moscow, Russian Federation

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## ABSTRACT

An asymmetric synthetic protocol for the access to chiral artificial halogenated  $\alpha$ -amino acid ( $\alpha$ -AA) derivatives was elaborated through the radical functionalization of a double bond in the ligand sphere of a robust chiral dehydroalanine Belokon's Ni(II) complex by hydrohaloalkylation reaction. A 4-cyano-pyridine/B<sub>2</sub>Pin<sub>2</sub> system promoted the *in situ* generation of radicals from halocarbons (including the hetero halogen atoms) for the subsequent coupling with the Ni(II) complex, providing the desired complexes with the yields in the range of 40–65%. The further post-modification of the side AA chain allowed to obtain the complexes with cyclopropane ring and to substitute the bromine atom on hydrogen one as well. Exemplary, two enantiopure  $\alpha$ -AAs, including (S)-2-amino-4,4,4-trichlorobutanoic acid, were isolated by an acidic decomposition of the single diastereomeric Ni(II) complexes along with the recovery of the chiral auxiliary.

## 1. Introduction

The halogen atom containing  $\alpha$ -amino acids ( $\alpha$ -AAs) are widely applied in biochemistry and in drug design due to their unique properties [1–5]. The introduction of halogen atoms into the molecules can affect on their electronic, physicochemical, steric properties, and, moreover, such compounds can be as bioisosteres [6,7]. For example, halogenated compounds have a wide range of biological activities; some natural and synthetic products based on halogenated AAs (*in most cases contain fluorine or chlorine atoms*) [8–14], such as sintokamide A [8], dysamide A [9], odanacatib [10], (–)-herbacin acid [11], agonist of mGluR4 [12] and norcoronamic acid analogues [13], are shown in Fig. 1. Voxilaprevir®, which contains the synthetic (1S,2S)-1-amino-2-(difluoromethyl)-cyclopropane carboxylic acid, has been approved by FDA as a drug for the treatment of hepatitis C virus (HCV) [14]. The increasing demand for halogenated  $\alpha$ -AAs is driving the development of new simple and efficient methods for their production [15–18].

The introduction of halocarbon groups into olefins is a prospective

and straightforward approach to effectively increase molecular complexity [19–22]. One of the most well-known and forceful methods is Kharasch addition, also known as atom transfer radical addition (ATRA) [23,24]. A variety of efficient catalytic systems have been developed for this reaction. Most of them are based on metal complexes [25–32]; however, the obstacle in this case is the competitive atom-transfer polymerization process [33]. The use of metal-free or organic catalytic systems, mainly operating under (photo)redox conditions, has been a promising alternative to the exchange of metal catalysts in the functionalization of alkenes or double bonds with halocarbon groups [34–45]. This approach allows for the production of a diverse range of valuable hydrohaloalkylation products in the presence of hydrogen atom donors, however, in most cases, the alkylating agents are limited to chloroform and tetrachloromethane [34–45]. To date, the persistent pyridine-boryl radical system [46–48] has become widely used as an initiator in radical reactions due to its mild reaction conditions, functional group tolerance and broad substrate scope [49–59]. Meanwhile, the asymmetric variants of the hydrohaloalkylation process

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\* Corresponding author. A.N. Nesmeyanov Institute of Organoelement Compounds of Russian Academy of Sciences (INEOS RAS), Vavilov Str. 28, bld. 1, 119334 Moscow, Russian Federation.

E-mail address: [larionov@ineos.ac.ru](mailto:larionov@ineos.ac.ru) (V.A. Larionov).

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for alkenes are still limited and underexplored [60–62] due to the high reactivity of radical intermediates, which presents a significant challenge [63–65].

Given the interest in halogenated AAs [1–5], it is valuable to develop an asymmetric route to them for both practical and fundamental reasons. For example, the trihalomethyl group has the potential to serve as a metabolically stable substitute for  $-\text{CH}_3$  group. With a long-standing research interest in the asymmetric synthesis of AAs using reliable and versatile metal-templated approach [66–73], especially through radical chemistry [74–77], we report here an asymmetric route to challenging halogenated  $\alpha$ -AAs via pyridine-boryl radical mediated functionalization of the ligand sphere of a robust chiral Belokon's dehydroalanine Ni (II) complex **1** [78] (Scheme 1). In contrast to our previous report [77], we have expanded the range of alkylating agents to include more challenging polyhalogenated alkyl bromides (containing hetero halogen atoms) and have demonstrated the further modification of the resulting complexes in order to increase their molecular complexity. In particular, the introduction of a bromo-containing fragment allowed the post-modification procedures such as formation of a cyclopropane ring and protodebromination process.

## 2. Results and discussion

We commenced our study by the reaction of a chiral dehydroalanine Ni(II) complex **1** with bromotrichloromethane ( $\text{CCl}_3\text{Br}$ ) **2a** (Table 1). The radical coupling reaction carried out in the presence of a 4-cyanopyridine/ $\text{B}_2\text{Pin}_2$  system as an initiator and *N,N*-diisopropylethylamine (DIPEA) in 1,4-dioxane at room temperature, resulted in the formation of diastereomeric complex **3a** in a ratio of 16:1 *dr* ((*S,S*)- and (*S,R*)-products) with 49% combined yield (Table 1, entry 1). The reactions performed in other solvents, such as MTBE, hexafluoroisopropanol (HFIP) and THF demonstrated very low efficiency (Table 1, entries 2–4). The reaction carried out in toluene afforded the Ni(II) complex **3a** in an acceptable yield of 30%, although diastereoselectivity was low (*dr* 7.9:1) (Table 1, entry 5). The most effective solvent was found to be EtOAc, providing the product **3a** in 49% yield and >20:1 *dr* (Table 1, entry 6). The change in reaction temperature did not improve yield (Table 1, entries 7,8). Next, other additives were investigated as proton sources

(Table 1, entries 9–12). The highest yield (51%) was obtained when 10 equivalents of HFIP were added to the reaction (Table 1, entry 12). The addition of 4 equivalents of **2a** in two portions slightly improved the yield of complex **3a** to 59% (Table 1, entry 13). The experiment using both DIPEA and HFIP produced **3a** with a similar yield of 60% (Table 1, entry 14). The structure and absolute configuration of the complex **3a** was determined unambiguously by single crystal XRD analysis (see Table 1).

In order to demonstrate the general applicability of this method, we then investigated the substrate scope of various halocarbons **2** under the conditions described in Entry 12 (Table 1) due to the differences in reactivity observed for other halocarbons (Scheme 2). The coupling of the complex **1** with carbon tetrabromide **2b** ( $\text{CBr}_4$ ) afforded the product **3b** in a moderate yield (40%). Mixed fluorobromocarbons **2c–2f** were also suitable for the reaction, yielding the desired products **3c–3f** in acceptable yields (41–47%). Interestingly, in the use of **2f**, in addition to the main product (*S,S*)-**3f**, side products were formed that contained a hydrogen atom and a hydroxyl group in place of a bromine atom (see the SI for details). The Ni(II) complex **3g** featuring a heptafluoroleucine appendage was obtained using alkylating agent – iodo fluorocarbon **2g** and DIPEA as an additive in 65% yield. The reaction of 1,2-dibromo-1,1,2,2-tetrafluoroethane **2h** with the complex **1** gave the complex **3h** with one remaining bromine atom in 41% yield. Only single diastereoisomers were found in all reactions (*dr* >20:1).

To further emphasize the scalability of our developed protocol, we conducted gram-scale reactions using halocarbons **2a** and **2h**. The single (*S,S*)-diastereomers of compounds **3a** and **3h** were isolated by standard silica chromatography in 46% (0.56 g) and 40% (0.54 g) yield, respectively.

It is known that the cyclopropyl-containing compounds are important in medicinal chemistry and drug design (see also Fig. 1) [79]. Therefore, we believed that the transformation of the linear halocarbon chain into a cyclopropyl ring in the complexes **3** would be a worthwhile aspiration (Scheme 3) [80,81]. Indeed, the intramolecular cyclization reaction of complex **3a** in the presence of 1,8-diazabicyclo(5.4.0)undec-7-ene (DBU) as a base produced the desired complex **4a** containing a cyclopropyl group with geminal chlorine atoms in 82% yield. Although the cyclopropanation reaction occurs under basic conditions, which may

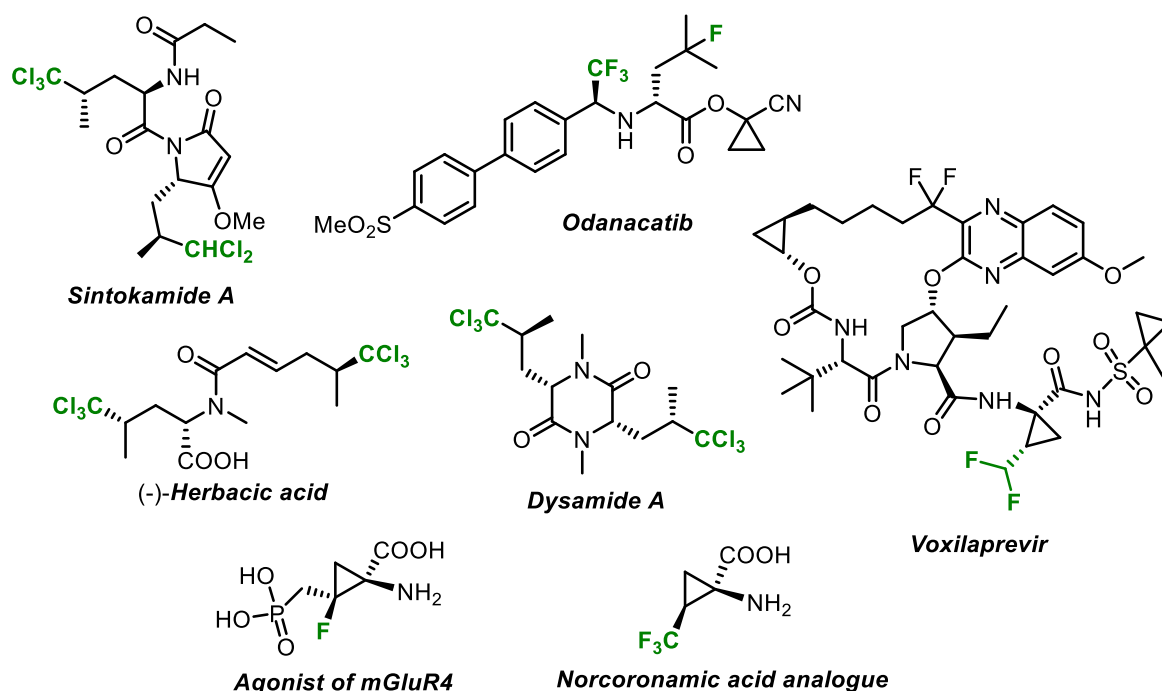
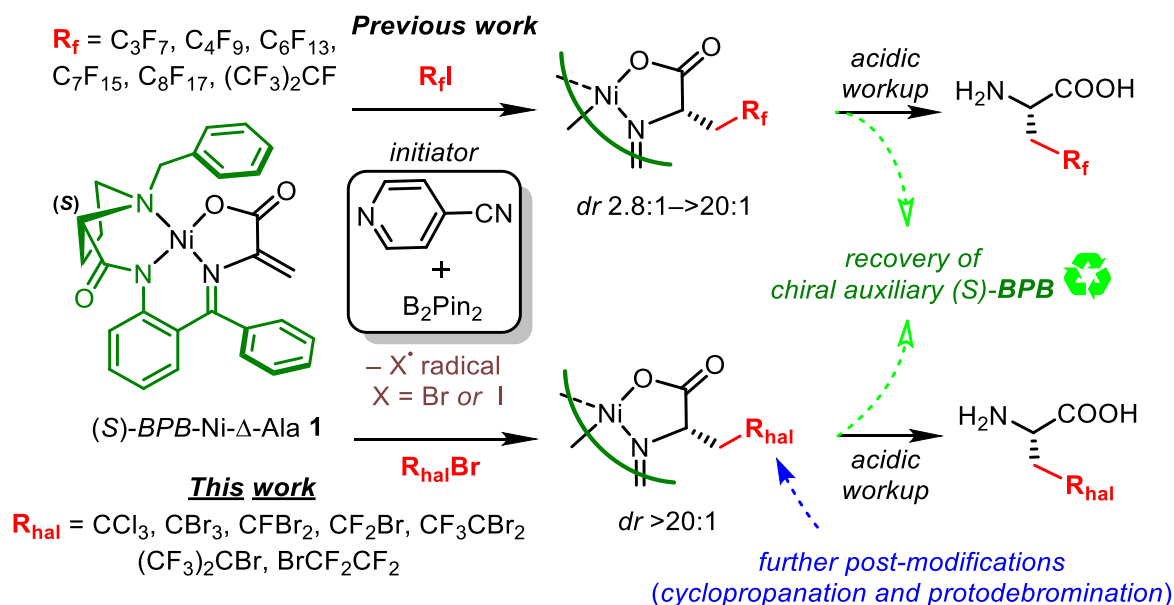


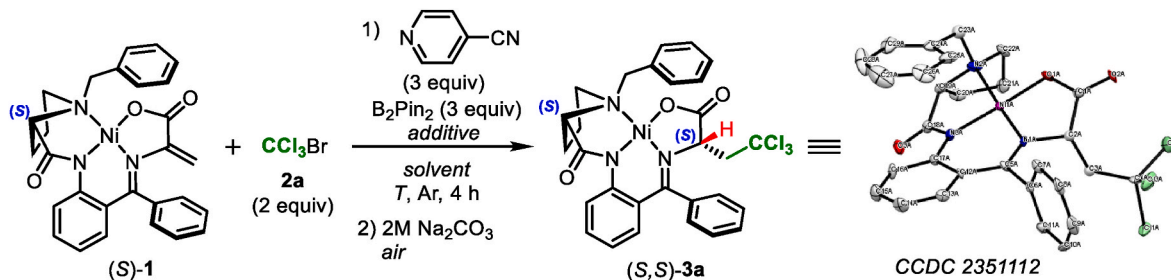
Fig. 1. Representative examples of bioactive compounds featuring halogenated amino acid motifs.



**Scheme 1.** Synthetic protocols for access to enantiomerically pure halogen atom containing  $\alpha$ -amino acids.

**Table 1**

Reaction condition screening for the radical coupling of a chiral Ni(II) complex **1** with  $CCl_3Br$  **2a**.<sup>a</sup>



Entry	Solvent	Additive (x equiv.)	T (°C)	Conv. <sup>b</sup>	dr <sup>c</sup>	Yield of <b>3a</b> (%) <sup>d</sup>
1	1,4-dioxane	DIPEA (1.0)	RT	full	16:1	49
2	MTBE	DIPEA (1.0)	RT	partial	ND	traces
3 <sup>e</sup>	HFIP	DIPEA (1.0)	RT	partial	ND	traces
4	THF	DIPEA (1.0)	RT	full	>20:1	16
5	toluene	DIPEA (1.0)	RT	full	7.9:1	30
6	EtOAc	DIPEA (1.0)	RT	full	>20:1	49
7	EtOAc	DIPEA (1.0)	80	full	>20:1	32
8	EtOAc	DIPEA (1.0)	0	full	>20:1	37
9	EtOAc	EtOH (10.0)	RT	full	>20:1	44
10	EtOAc	MeOH (10.0)	RT	full	>20:1	42
11	EtOAc	H <sub>2</sub> O (10.0)	RT	full	>20:1	43
12	EtOAc	HFIP (10.0)	RT	full	>20:1	51
13 <sup>f</sup>	EtOAc	HFIP (10.0)	RT	full	>20:1	59
14	EtOAc	HFIP (10.0) + DIPEA (1.0)	RT	full	>20:1	60

<sup>a</sup> Reaction conditions: Ni(II) complex (**S**)-**1** (51 mg, 0.1 mmol),  $CCl_3Br$  **2a** (0.2 mmol, 2 equiv.), 4-cyanopyridine (0.3 mmol, 3.0 equiv.),  $B_2Pin_2$  (0.3 mmol, 3.0 equiv.), additive (1.0 or 10.0 equiv.) and solvent (1.0 mL) were stirred in a sealed Schlenk tube at indicated temperature under Ar atmosphere for 4 h (4-cyanopyridine and  $B_2Pin_2$  added in two portions (first 1.5 equiv. each + 1.5 equiv. each after 2 h)). The structure of complex (**S,S**)-**3a** determined by single crystal XRD analysis (hydrogen atoms are omitted for clarity). Thermal ellipsoids are shown at the 50% probability level.

<sup>b</sup> Conversion determined by TLC analysis.

<sup>c</sup> A ratio of (**S,S**)/(**S,R**)-complexes **3a** determined by  $^1H$  NMR analysis of the crude reaction mixture.

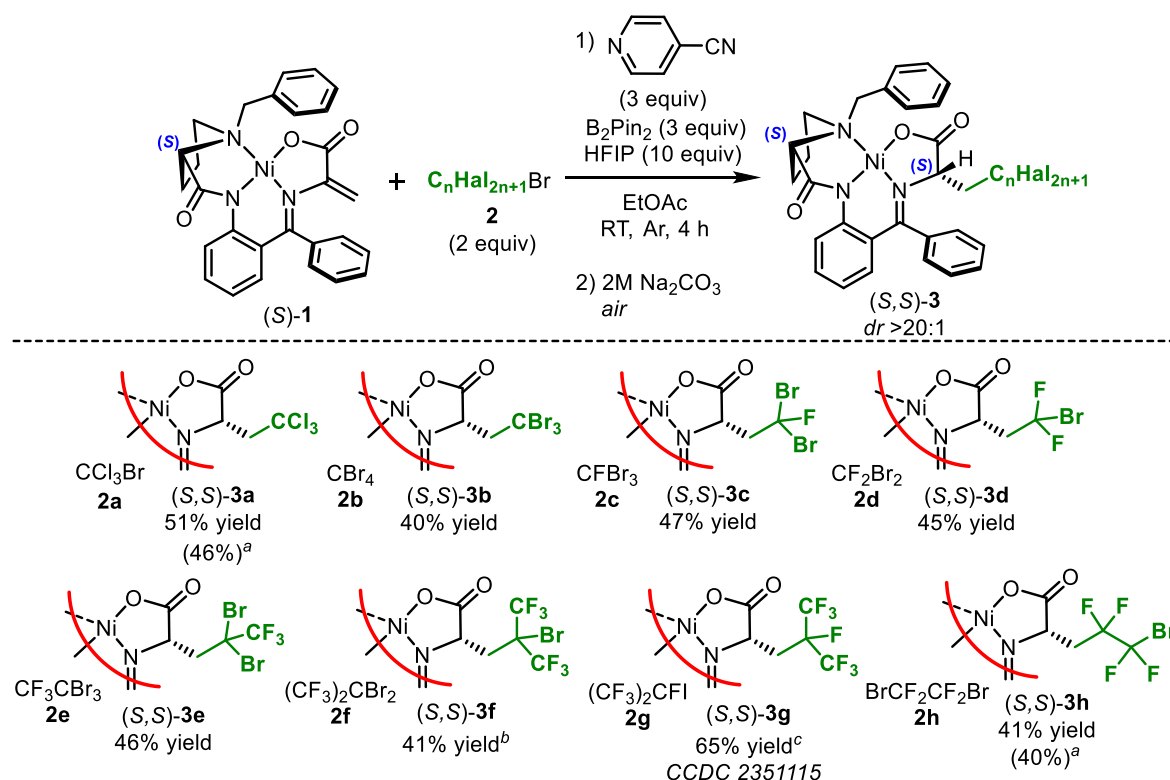
<sup>d</sup> Isolated yields.

<sup>e</sup> 20 h.

<sup>f</sup> 4 equivalents of **2a** were added in two portions. MTBE = methyl *tert*-butyl ether. DIPEA = *N,N*-diisopropylethylamine. HFIP = hexafluoroisopropanol.

cause the racemization of the stereocenter at the  $\alpha$ -carbon atom of the AA residue during the cyclization step, the *face*-selectivity enforced by the chiral auxiliary through the  $\pi$ -Ni(II) interaction of the Bn group

[82–84] ensures the formation of only one diastereomer. In a similar manner, the complex **3b** was converted into product **4b** with geminal bromine atoms in 87% yield. In the case of the transformation of



**Scheme 2.** Substrate scope: evaluation of various halocarbons **2**. Isolated yields are provided. <sup>a</sup>The yields for gram-scale reactions are given in the parentheses. <sup>b</sup>In addition to the main product (S,S)-3f, side products are formed, which contains a hydrogen atom and hydroxyl group instead of a bromine atom (see the SI for details). <sup>c</sup>DIPEA was used as an additive instead of HFIP.

complexes **3c** and **3e** into compounds **4c** and **4d**, a new stereogenic center was formed at the  $\beta$ -carbon atom. The complex **4c** was isolated in 71% yield with a poor diastereoselectivity of 1.4:1. On the other hand, a single diastereomeric complex **4d** was obtained with 51% yield from **3e**. The complex **3f** was successfully converted into product **4e** with geminal CF<sub>3</sub> groups in 82% yield. The structure and absolute configuration of the complexes **4a**, **4c** and **4d** were determined unambiguously by single crystal XRD analysis (Scheme 3). Notably, the configuration at the  $\alpha$ -carbon atom in the AA moiety of the complexes **4a–4e** differs due to a change in the order of substituents, following the Cahn-Ingold-Prelog (CIP) rules.

Another valuable and synthetically useful process is the removal of a terminal bromine atom from a molecule through hydrodehalogenation reaction [85]. First, we effected a Na<sub>2</sub>S<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub>/NaHCO<sub>3</sub> system mediated protodebromination reaction [86] of the complex (S,S)-3d (Method A, Scheme 4). Unexpectedly, we observed the formation of the cyclized Ni(II) complex (S,S)-5a as the major product with 56% yield. The structure and absolute configuration of the complex **5a** were determined unambiguously by single crystal XRD analysis (Scheme 4). On the other hand, the reaction of complex (S,S)-3h provided a similar product (S,S)-5b in 49% yield accompanied by the protodebrominated complex (S,S)-6a in 36% yield. Interestingly, in the case of the transformation of complex **3f**, a mixture of two products was formed: protodebrominated complex (S,S)-6b (25% yield) and dehydrofluorinated complex [87] (S,S)-7 (24% yield). The steric hindrance of CF<sub>3</sub> groups probably prevents the formation of the cyclized complex.

Next, the protodebromination process was investigated using the Zn dust/Cu(OAc)<sub>2</sub> system (Method B, Scheme 4). A mixture of the complexes (S,S)-6b and (S,S)-7 was obtained starting from complex **3f** with 18% and 51% yields, respectively. On the other hand, this method allowed us to obtain predominantly the target product (S,S)-6a with an improved 49% yield.

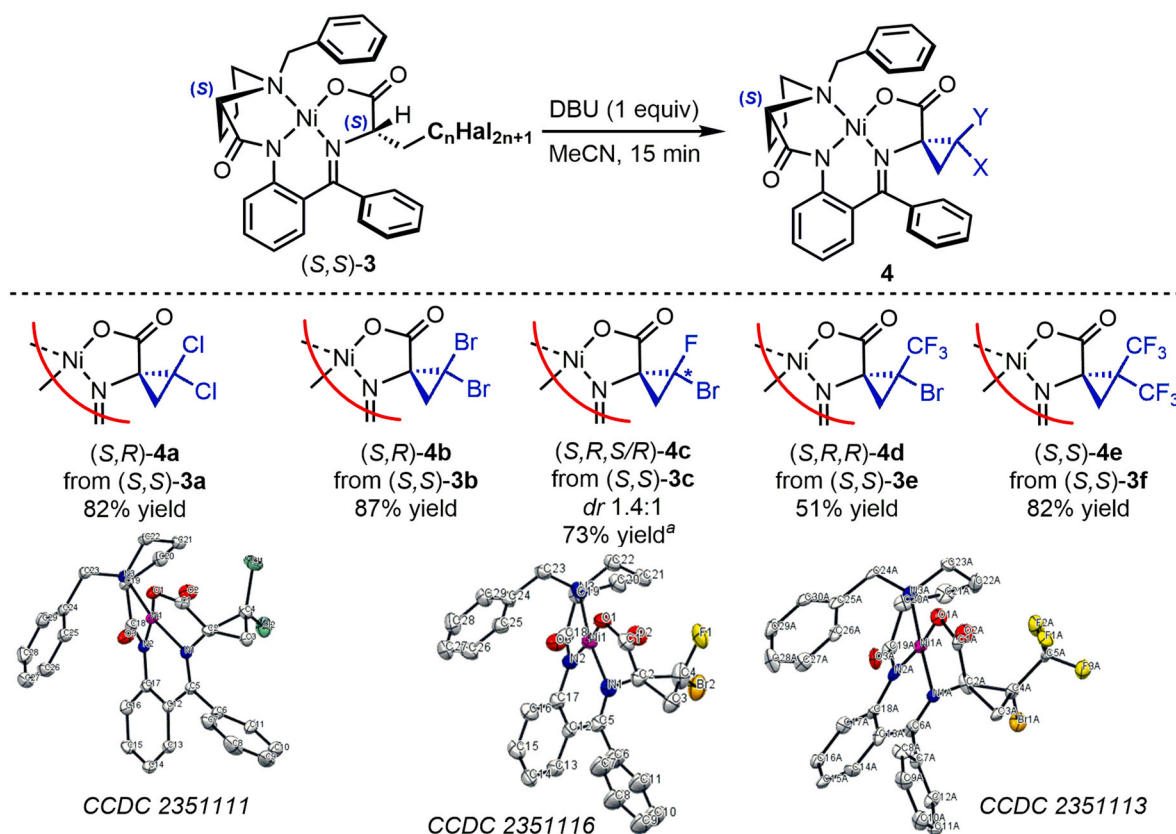
Based on literature data [46–59], a mechanism for the radical

hydrohaloalkylation reaction has been proposed (Scheme 5). The process begins with a 4-cyano-pyridine reacting with B<sub>2</sub>Pin<sub>2</sub> to form an *in situ* pyridine-boron radical I. This radical then undergoes a single-electron transfer process (SET), activating a halocarbon molecule **2** to generate a polyhaloalkyl radical II. Next, a double bond in complex **1** acts as a radical acceptor, reacting with II to form intermediate complex III. This complex undergoes another SET reaction with another equivalent of radical I, resulting in a carbanion IV. Finally, the carbanion is stereoselectively protonated with alcohol, completing the desired product (S,S)-3.

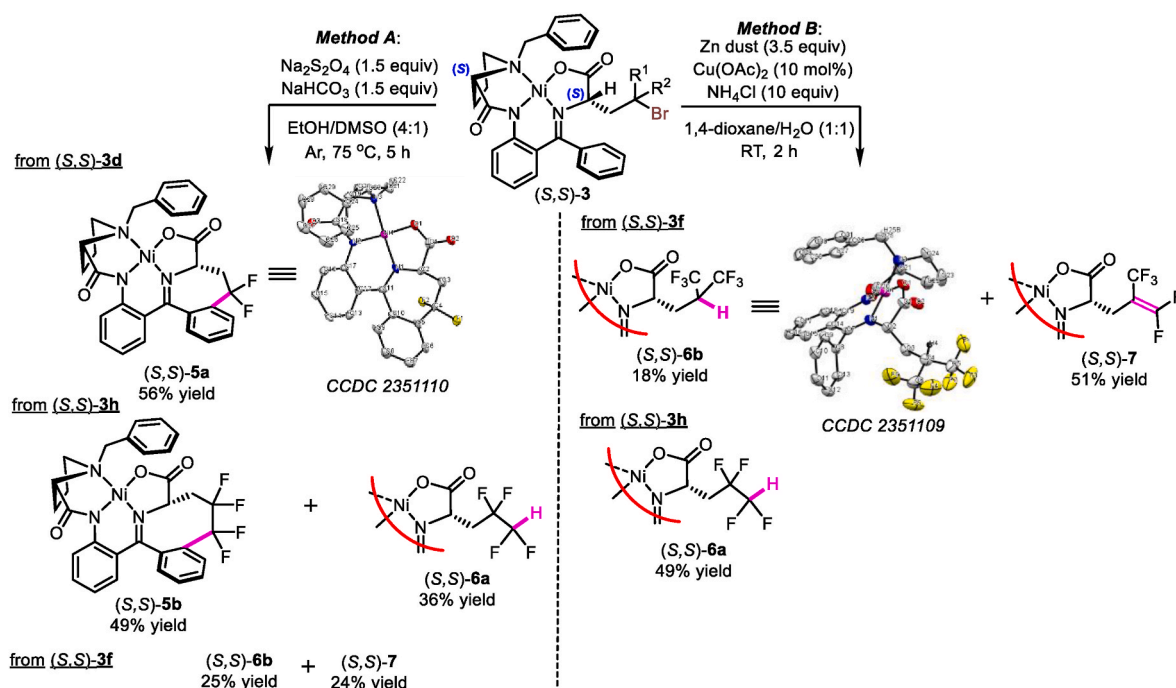
Finally, the practical applicability of the method was demonstrated through the exemplary isolation of two AAs, (S)-2-amino-4,4,4-trichlorobutanoic acid **8a** and **8b**, by the standard decomposition [66–78] of diastereomeric Ni(II) complexes (S,S)-3a and (S,S)-3h, respectively (Scheme 6). The heating of the corresponding complexes **3a** and **3h** in a mixture of 1N HCl and MeOH afforded the desired AAs **8a** and **8b** in 97% and 64% yields, respectively (Scheme 6). It is well-established that the acid-induced decomplexation of the corresponding chiral Ni(II) complexes in the presence of HCl results in the formation of  $\alpha$ -AAs with preserving of enantiomeric purity [66–78] (see HPLC traces in the SI, Figs. S57 and S58). Importantly, the chiral auxiliary ligand can be readily recovered in enantiopure form as the hydrochloride salt from the decomposed reaction mixture with a yield of >90%. This can be achieved through subsequent filtration and extraction processes, and the recovered ligand can then be reused for the synthesis of a new batch of the starting Ni(II) complex **1**.

### 3. Conclusion

In summary, we have described a practical and useful radical hypohaloalkylation reaction of an easily available and robust chiral Belokon's dehydroalanine Ni(II) complex to access challenging enantiopure halogenated AAs. Coupling of the complex **1** with various

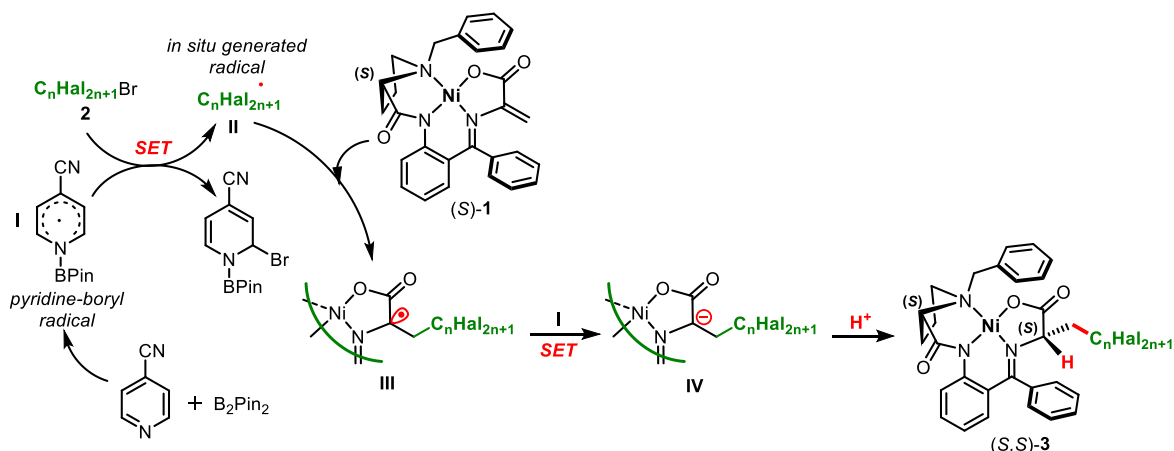


**Scheme 3.** Post-modification of complexes 3: the intramolecular cyclization reaction. Isolated yields are provided. <sup>a</sup>The combined yields of (*S,S,S*)-4c and (*S,S,R*)-4c. The *dr* was determined by <sup>1</sup>H NMR analysis. The structures of complexes 4a, 4c and 4d as determined by single crystal XRD analysis (hydrogen atoms are omitted for clarity). Thermal ellipsoids are shown at the 50% probability level.

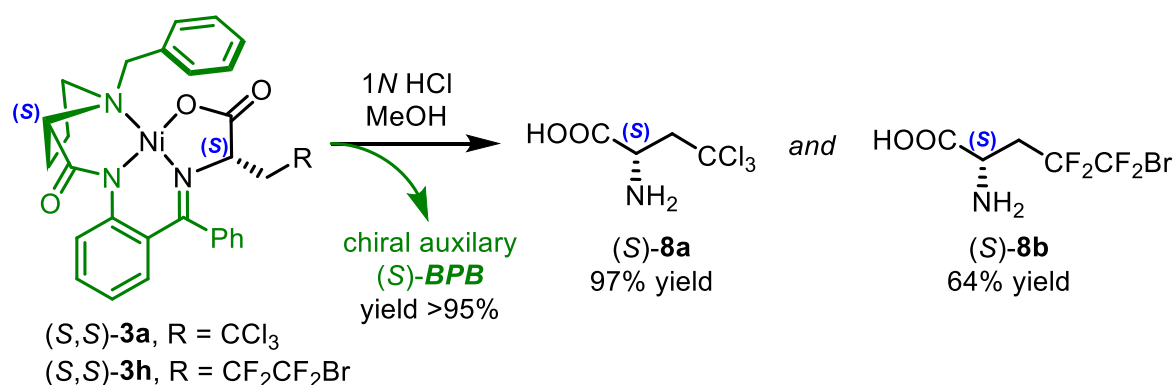


**Scheme 4.** Post-modification of complexes 3: the protodebromination reaction. Isolated yields are provided. The structures of complexes 5a and 6b as determined by single crystal XRD analysis (hydrogen atoms are omitted for clarity). Thermal ellipsoids are shown at the 50% probability level.





Scheme 5. A proposed mechanism for the radical coupling reaction of complex 1 with halocarbons 2.



Scheme 6. Isolation of AAs **8a** and **8b** after decomposition of the Ni(II) complexes **3a** and **3h**.

halocarbons mediated by a 4-cyano-pyridine/ $B_2Pin_2$  system resulted in a library of functionalized diastereomeric complexes in the range of 31–65% yields. The practicality of the developed protocol was demonstrated by the further post-modification of the AA side chain, leading to the formation of complexes with a cyclopropane ring and products containing a protodebromination group. Finally, two enantiomerically pure  $\alpha$ -AAs, including (S)-2-amino-4,4,4-trichlorobutanoic acid, were obtained through acid-induced decomposition of the corresponding chiral diastereomeric Ni(II) complexes along with the recovery of the chiral auxiliary.

#### Accession codes

Deposition Numbers 2351109–2351116 contain the supplementary crystallographic data for Ni(II) complexes. These can be obtained free of charge via [www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data\\_request/cif](http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif), or by emailing [data\\_request@ccdc.cam.ac.uk](mailto:data_request@ccdc.cam.ac.uk), or by contacting The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1EZ, UK; fax: +44 1223 336033.

#### CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Nadezhda V. Stoletova:** Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation. **Alexander F. Smol'yanov:** Formal analysis, Data curation. **Andrey A. Tyutyunov:** Methodology. **Victor I. Maleev:** Writing – review & editing, Project administration, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Vladimir A. Larionov:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Project administration, Formal analysis,

Conceptualization.

#### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare the following financial interests/personal relationships which may be considered as potential competing interests: Victor I. Maleev reports financial support was provided by Russian Science Foundation. If there are other authors, they declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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#### Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tchem.2024.100118>.

## Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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