

# Difunctionalization of 1,3-Butadiene via Sequential Radical Thiol-ene Reaction and Allylation by Dual Photoredox and Titanium Catalysis

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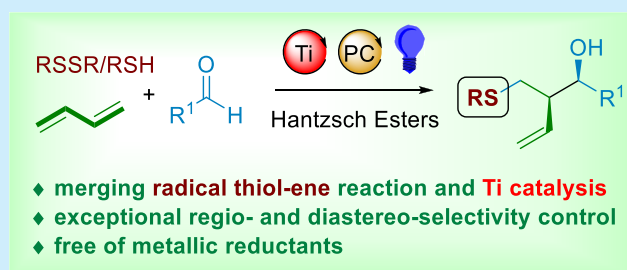


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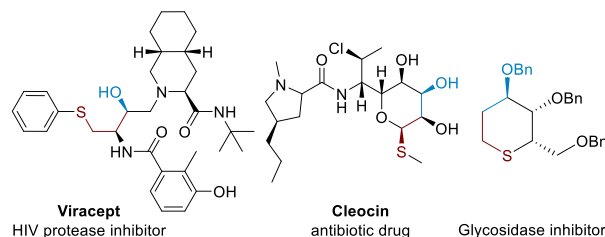
**ABSTRACT:** Recently, radical difunctionalization of the feedstock 1,3-butadiene has become an attractive strategy for increasing molecular complexity. Herein, we present a novel approach that effectively combines radical thiol-ene chemistry with Ti<sup>III</sup> catalysis to enable a three-component aldehyde allylation using 1,3-butadiene as an allyl group source under visible light conditions. This sustainable and straightforward method has facilitated the rapid production of diverse allylic 1,3-thioalcohols with exceptional regio- and diastereoselectivity.



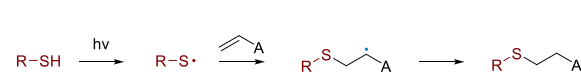
The direct difunctionalization of the cheap and abundant feedstock 1,3-butadiene is considered as one of the most appealing approaches for enhancing molecular complexity in synthetic organic chemistry.<sup>1,2</sup> Sulfur-containing compounds are known to exhibit unique biological activities and are of significant value in the pharmaceutical industry.<sup>3–5</sup> Many bioactive compounds, for example, Viracept,<sup>6</sup> Cleocin, and glycosidase inhibitor,<sup>7</sup> contain a similar 1,3-thioalcohol skeleton (Figure 1a). Thus, thiolation chemistry has attracted more interest, leading to the development of novel, cost-effective, and efficient methods for the synthesis of molecules with thiol moieties.<sup>8,9</sup> One of the effective strategies for introducing thiol motifs is the thiol-ene reaction between a thiol and an alkene to form a thioether (Figure 1b).<sup>10,11</sup> In the late 1990s, this reaction gained prominence in click chemistry and is used in sugar modification, complex molecules, material polymer synthesis, biomedical sciences, and other fields due to its mild reaction conditions, high yield, and thermodynamic driving force. Although significant progress has been made in thiol chemistry, difunctionalization of 1,3-butadiene with sulfur remains unexplored.<sup>12</sup>

Recently, there has been more interest in synthesizing high-value allyl compounds using the feedstock 1,3-butadiene as an inexpensive and easily accessible allyl source facilitated by transition-metal catalysis.<sup>13–23</sup> Although the addition of free carbon radicals to 1,3-butadiene has been extensively studied, to the best of our knowledge, the use of thiyl radicals as triggers for this reaction is unprecedented. This may be due to the strong nucleophilicity of thiols, which can sometimes hinder the reaction by coordinating with transition metals.<sup>24–26</sup> To overcome this limitation, herein, we report a radical-type three-component allylation of aldehydes with 1,3-butadiene and

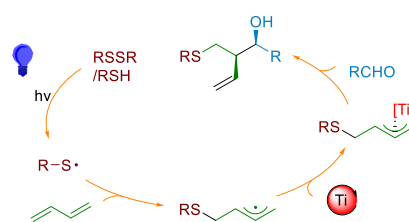
a) Thiol moieties in bio-active molecules



b) Established photoinduced radical thiol-ene reaction



c) This work: merging radical thiol-ene reaction and Ti catalysis



**Figure 1.** (a) Representative drugs and natural products containing thiol moieties. (b) Radical thiol-ene reaction. (c) Three-component allylation of carbonyls with 1,3-butadiene and sulfur.

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thiols by dual titanium and photoredox catalysis (Figure 1c). In this photocatalysis system, addition of the thiol radical to 1,3-butadiene generates allyl group radicals, which are then selectively trapped by  $\text{Cp}_2\text{TiCl}_2$  to form active allyl- $\text{Ti}^{\text{IV}}$  species for aldehyde allylation.<sup>27–31</sup> This approach offers several advantages, including the use of the readily available raw materials of butadiene, simple post-treatment, mild reaction conditions, a wide range of substrates, high functional group tolerance, and excellent yields of the valuable allylic 1,3-thioalcohols with exceptional regio- and diastereoselectivity.

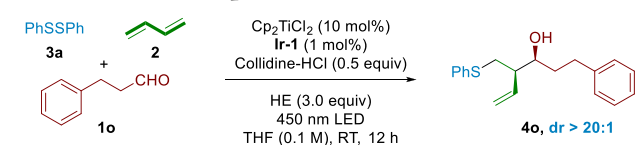
We commenced our work by employing 3-phenylpropanal (**1a**), 1,2-diphenyldisulfane (**3a**) as a template substrate, and a butadiene solution in THF (0.1 M). After considering different factors, fortunately, we discovered that using 0.5 equiv of collidine-HCl, 10.0 mol %  $\text{Cp}_2\text{TiCl}_2$ , 3 equiv of Hantzsch ester (HE) as an electron sacrificial agent, and Ir-1 as a photosensitizer, followed by exposure to a 450 nm LED lamp for 12 h, could produce **4o** in 47% yield [dr > 20:1 (Table 1, entry 1)]. Then, we screened the conditions to

dichloromethane, etc., led to decreased yields (entries 6–8). Decreasing the level of  $\text{Cp}_2\text{TiCl}_2$  to 5.0 mol % could suppress pinacol coupling, which is a major side reaction, and further increased the yield of **4o** to 87% (entry 9). The optimal amount of the electronic sacrificial agent was determined to be 1 equiv, which produced **4o** in 94% yield (entries 10 and 11). The optimal reaction concentration was determined to be 0.1 M (entries 11–13), and adding more additives would slightly decrease the level of product formation (entry 14). Notably, using different electron sacrificial agents did not result in product formation (entries 15 and 16). Finally, it was acknowledged that light, Ti, and electron sacrificial agents were vital for product formation (entry 17). Finally, the optimal conditions for synthesizing the product were determined as 1.0 equiv of disulfide, 1.0 equiv of aldehyde, 1.0 mol % photosensitizer Ir-1, 5.0 mol %  $\text{Cp}_2\text{TiCl}_2$ , 50 mol % collidine-HCl, and 1.0 equiv of HE. The catalytic amount of collidine-HCl is important for hydrolysis of the strong Ti–O bond and the release free  $\text{Ti}^{\text{IV}}$  species and alcohol products during the catalytic cycle. The reaction was performed in a 0.1 M toluene solution of 1,3-butadiene exposed to a 450 nm light source.

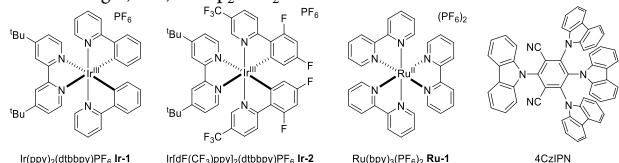
With the optimized reaction conditions in hand, a series of substrates were examined. Initially, we studied the applicability of aromatic aldehydes. To our delight, both electron-rich aryl groups (**4b**, **4e**, and **4f**) and electron-poor aryl groups (**4c** and **4g–4i**) exhibited high reactivity under the optimized conditions (Scheme 1). Additionally, heterocyclic aldehydes **4m**, **4n**, and **5b** did not interfere with the reactions and displayed smooth and efficient functionality. Moreover, **4j** containing naphthalene rings was also employed as a substrate. Later, we explored the applicability of the aliphatic aldehydes. Straight chain (**4o** and **4q**) or cyclic (**4r**) aliphatic aldehydes did not affect the acquisition of the desired product. Subsequently, we investigated the scope of thiol radical precursor. Importantly, under similar reaction conditions, various thiophenols can be used for coupling. For instance, when there were fluorine, chlorine, or bromine atoms or a methyl group in the *para* position of thiophenol, allylic alcohols were obtained with excellent regio- and diastereoselectivity (**5d–5g**). Notably, strongly coordinating 2-thiopyridine was also well-tolerated, giving the product in satisfactory yield (**5j**). Furthermore, the reaction of aliphatic phenylmethanethiol proceeded smoothly, yielding the desired product (**5e**). Interestingly, phenylacetyl disulfide was also coupled to give the desired products **5k** and **5n**. The derivatization of bioactive products is crucial in the pharmaceutical industry. The selected optimal conditions were capable of accommodating structurally complex architectures bearing multiple functional groups such as oxaprozin (**5l**) and gemfibrozil (**5m**). The corresponding products were obtained with satisfactory yield and selectivity, highlighting the potential of this reaction in complex product derivatization. Overall, this reaction system displays favorable reactivity toward different types of thiol radical precursors, yielding structurally diverse allylic alcohols with notable yields and selectivities.

Both sulfone and sulfoxide structures are commonly found in natural products and bioactive drugs. To investigate the usefulness of allylic 1,3-thioalcohols, Oxone was used to oxidize product **4e** (Figure 2). By controlling the amount of Oxone and the duration of the reaction, we were able to

Table 1. Reaction Optimization<sup>a,b</sup>

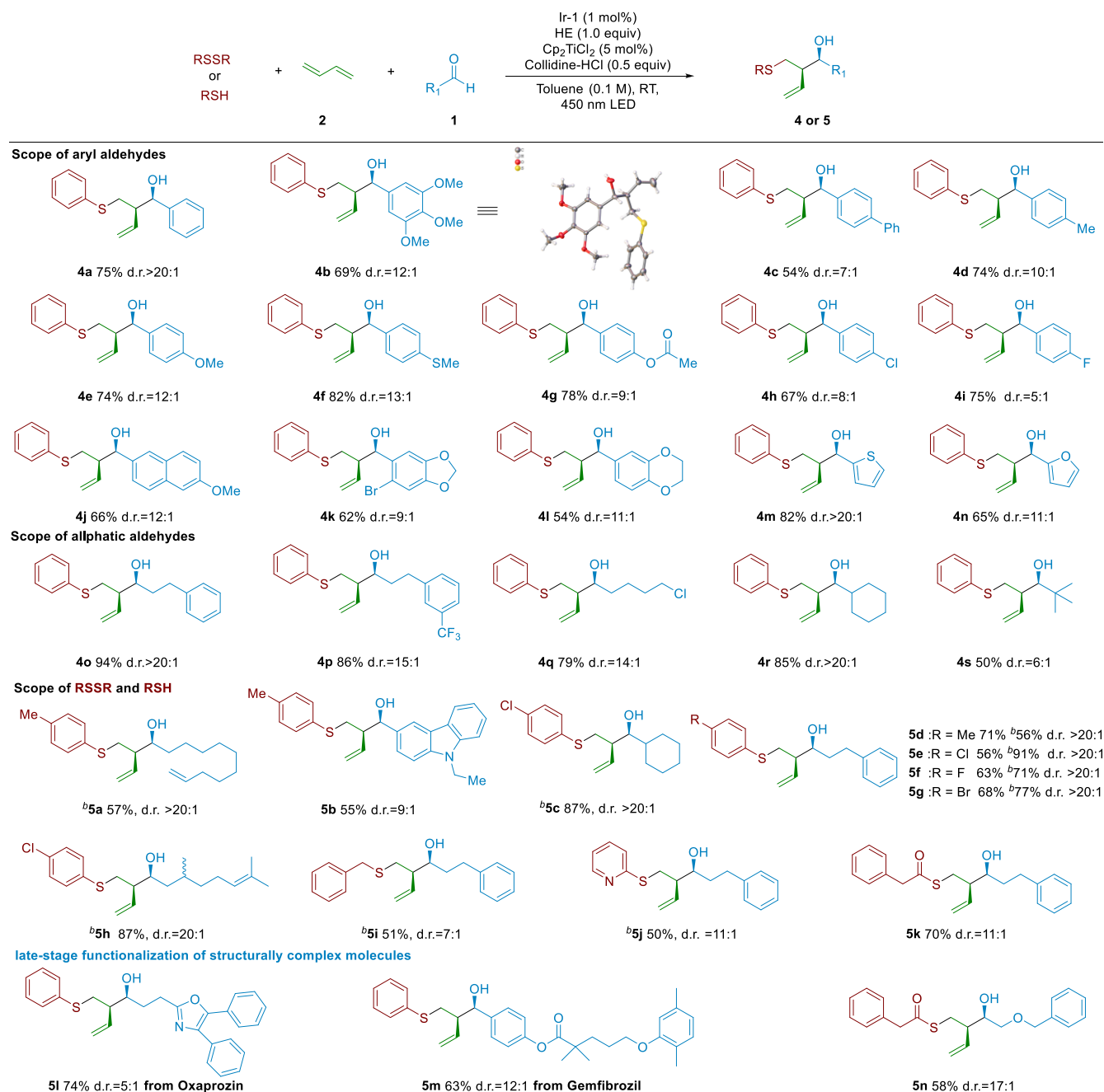


| entry | variation from standard conditions                                                     | yield (%) |
|-------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1     | none                                                                                   | 47        |
| 2     | no photosensitizer                                                                     | NR        |
| 3     | Ir-2 instead of Ir-1                                                                   | 44        |
| 4     | 4CzIPN instead of Ir-1                                                                 | 39        |
| 5     | Ru-1 instead of Ir-1                                                                   | 27        |
| 6     | PhMe instead of THF                                                                    | 62        |
| 7     | DMF instead of THF                                                                     | trace     |
| 8     | DCM instead of THF                                                                     | 30        |
| 9     | PhMe (0.1 M) and 5% $\text{Cp}_2\text{TiCl}_2$                                         | 87        |
| 10    | PhMe (0.1 M), HE (1 equiv), and 5% $\text{Cp}_2\text{TiCl}_2$                          | 94        |
| 11    | PhMe (0.1 M), HE (0.5 equiv), and 5% $\text{Cp}_2\text{TiCl}_2$                        | 64        |
| 12    | PhMe (0.05 M), HE (1 equiv), and 5% $\text{Cp}_2\text{TiCl}_2$                         | 86        |
| 13    | PhMe (0.2 M), HE (1 equiv), and 5% $\text{Cp}_2\text{TiCl}_2$                          | 84        |
| 14    | PhMe (0.1 M), collidine-HCl (1 equiv), HE (1 equiv), and 5% $\text{Cp}_2\text{TiCl}_2$ | 81        |
| 15    | DIPEA (1 equiv) instead of HE                                                          | NR        |
| 16    | $\text{Et}_3\text{N}$ (1 equiv) instead of HE                                          | NR        |
| 17    | no light, HE, or $\text{Cp}_2\text{TiCl}_2$                                            | NR        |



<sup>a</sup>Reaction conditions: **1a** (0.2 mmol), **3a** (0.2 mmol). <sup>b</sup>Yields were determined by  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectroscopy vs an internal standard (1,2,3-trimethoxybenzene).

optimize the yield. The exclusion of the photos

Scheme 1. Scope of Allylation with Butadiene<sup>a-c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Reactions were performed with a toluene solution of butadiene (0.1 M). Condition A (for RSSR): 1 (0.20 mmol, 1.0 equiv), RSSR (0.20 mmol, 1.0 equiv), Cp<sub>2</sub>TiCl<sub>2</sub> (5.0 mol %), Ir-1 (1.0 mol %), HE (1 equiv), collidine-HCl (0.5 equiv), 450 nm LED, 12 h. <sup>b</sup>With RSH (0.40 mmol, 2.0 equiv). <sup>c</sup>Isolated yields. dr values were determined by <sup>1</sup>H NMR analysis of the crude products.

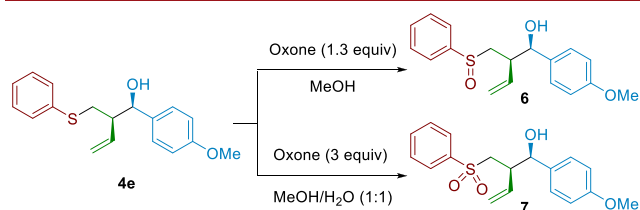


Figure 2. Functional transformation of 4e.

convert sulfur into sulfone 6 and sulfoxide 7 without affecting the integrity of the allylic alcohol structure.

To explore the possible pathways involved in the reaction, several mechanistic experiments were carried out. Fluorescence quenching shows that the photosensitizer \*Ir<sup>III</sup>-1 in the excited state can effectively undergo an electron transfer process with Cp<sub>2</sub>TiCl<sub>2</sub> ( $K_q = 2.3 \times 10^9 \text{ L mol}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ ) and HE ( $K_q = 1.6 \times 10^8 \text{ L mol}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ ) (Figure 3).<sup>32–34</sup> Although the quenching rate of photosensitizer \*Ir<sup>III</sup>-1 and Cp<sub>2</sub>TiCl<sub>2</sub> in the excited state is slightly faster than that of HE, due to its higher concentration, the excited \*Ir<sup>III</sup>-1 will preferentially undergo an electron transfer process with HE and then be oxidized by Cp<sub>2</sub>TiCl<sub>2</sub> to return to the ground state. However, fluorescence quenching was not obviously observed between Ir-1 and diphenyl

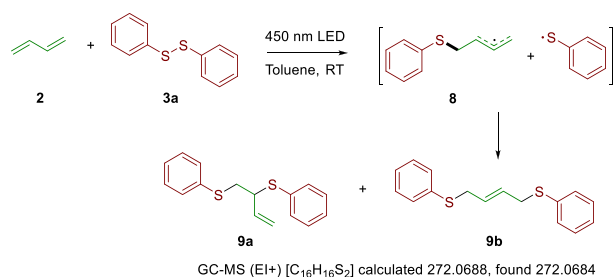


Figure 3. Production of thiyl radicals.

disulfide. To further investigate the mechanism for the production of thiyl radicals, a solution containing diphenyl disulfide and 1,3-butadiene in toluene was subjected to 450 nm light irradiation, as shown in Figure 3. The reaction was analyzed using mass spectrometry, which revealed the formation of two compounds (9a and 9b). These results suggest that the S–S bond in diphenyl disulfide breaks upon irradiation, generating both a thiyl radical and an allyl radical 6 intermediate.<sup>35,36</sup> Additionally, because 1,3-butadiene is a good radical acceptor, it is also possible for the free thiyl radical to add to butadiene and produce allyl radical 6.

On the basis of the findings presented in this work and previous research, a plausible mechanism can be proposed and is illustrated in Figure 4. Initially, the excited state  $^*Ir^{III}$

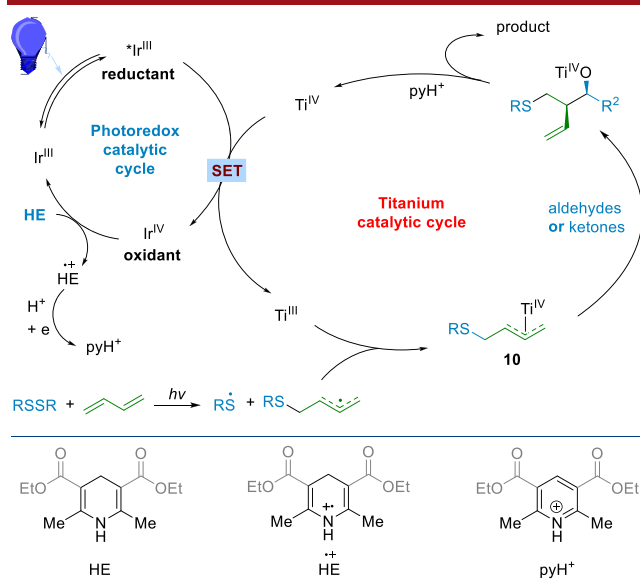


Figure 4. Proposed catalytic mechanism.

[ $E_{1/2}(^*Ir^{III}/Ir^{IV}) = -0.96$  V vs SCE] reduces  $Cp_2TiCl_2$  [ $E_{1/2}(Ti^{IV}/Ti^{III}) = -0.76$  V vs SCE] to  $Cp_2Ti^{III}Cl$  while oxidizing the photosensitizer to  $Ir^{IV}$ . The highly oxidizing  $Ir^{IV}$  is then reduced by HE [ $E_{1/2}(HE^{•+}/HE) = 0.97$  V vs SCE], returning to its ground state and completing the photocatalytic cycle.<sup>28,37</sup> Meanwhile, HE is converted into a radical cation ( $HE^{•+}$ ) and participates in the photocatalytic process, ultimately leading to the formation of Hantzsch pyridine.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, under light irradiation, the disulfide bonds undergo homolytic cleavage, resulting in the formation of thiyl radicals. These thiyl radicals react with 1,3-butadiene to form allylic radicals, which undergo subsequent reactions with  $Cp_2Ti^{III}Cl$  to form allyl- $Ti^{IV}$  intermediates 10. The latter attack aldehydes to produce homoallylic alcohols, which upon proton

decomposition by collidine-HCl yield the desired product and release  $Ti^{VI}$ , thus completing the catalytic cycle. The excellent regio- and diastereoselectivity provided by Ti catalysis may be due to the two cyclopentadienyl rings around the titanium metal, increasing steric hindrance and thereby enhancing selectivity.

In this study, a successful combination of radical thiol-ene chemistry and  $Ti^{III}$  catalysis facilitated a three-component aldehyde allylation using 1,3-butadiene as an allyl group source under visible light conditions. This sustainable and simple approach enabled the rapid generation of a wide array of valuable and structurally diverse allylic 1,3-thioalcohols with outstanding regio- and diastereoselectivity. With its broad substrate scope, this method presents a promising strategy for converting 1,3-butadiene and other essential raw materials into high-value fine chemicals while also being ecofriendly and operationally easy.

## ■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

### Data Availability Statement

The data underlying this study are available in the published article and its Supporting Information.

### Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.orglett.3c01822>.

Experimental details, characterization data of compounds, and NMR spectra (PDF)

### Accession Codes

CCDC 2268540 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data 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.

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### Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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### DEDICATION

Dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Henan Normal University.

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