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Catalytic C−H Bond Alkylation of Azoles with Alkyl Halides Mediated by Nickel(II) Complexes of Phenanthridine-Based *N^N-^N* Pincer Ligands

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ABSTRACT

Ni(II) complexes supported by tridentate *N*^*N*-^*N* diarylamido pincer-type ligands have been demonstrated to act as active catalysts in the carbon-carbon bond forming alkylation of azoles using unactivated alkylhalides. Here, we show that benzannulated phenanthridine-containing ligands can form homogenous Ni(II) catalysts active with both benzoxazole and benzothiazole substrates. These precatalysts have been fully characterized in solution and the solid-state, including by cyclic voltammetry.

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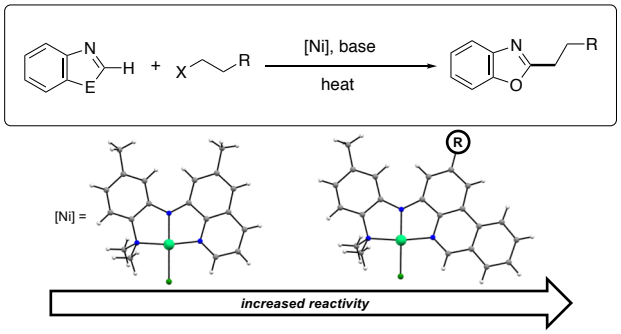


INTRODUCTION

The homogeneous catalytic conversion of C-H bonds to C-C bonds mediated by coordination complexes of first-row transition metals is of prime interest in the drive to increase sustainability in chemical synthesis.[1-2] First, direct functionalization of C-H bonds obviates the need for leaving groups that can limit atom economy.[3] Second, the use of first-row metal catalysts reduces reliance on less abundant precious metals for transformations that add value to organic substrates such as aromatic heterocycles.[4] With respect to these widely used synthetic building blocks, transition metal catalyzed C-H alkylation reactions using alkylhalides with ß-hydrogens can be challenging, as ß-hydride elimination can lead to unproductive side reactions.[5] As a result, a relatively limited number of examples of such cross-couplings have been reported, with palladium,[6-7] nickel[8-11] and copper[12-14] catalysts featuring most prominently.

Well-defined complexes of nickel supported by diarylamido *N^N-^N* pincer-type ligands, in particular, have been shown to direct the alkylation of oxazoles and thiazoles using unactivated alkyl halides (Figure 1).[8, 10] While Ni(II) complexes of *bis*(2-(dimethylamino)phenyl)amido ligands (**A**) show excellent catalytic activity, as reported by Hu and coworkers, addition of a copper co-catalyst is necessary to achieve high yields.[8] Moreover, decomposition of **A** was observed over time under the high temperature reaction conditions, depositing nanoparticulate metal into the reaction mixture.[8] Punji and coworkers elaborated this scaffold into a more robust quinolinyl-based pincer type analog. The corresponding Ni chloride complexes supported by a (2-(dimethylamino)phenyl)(8-quinolinyl)amido donor set (**B**) exhibit greater temperature stability and do not require a co-catalyst in the catalytic alkylation of benzothiazoles.[10]

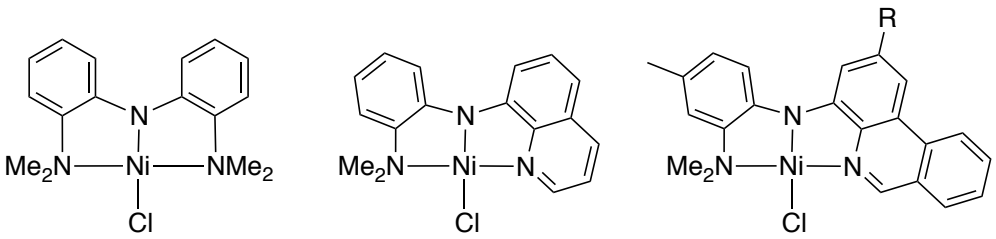


Figure 1. *N^N-^N* pincer-type ligand supported Ni complexes for the C-H alkylation of azoles (**A**, see ref.[8]; **B**, see ref.[10]; **C**, this work).

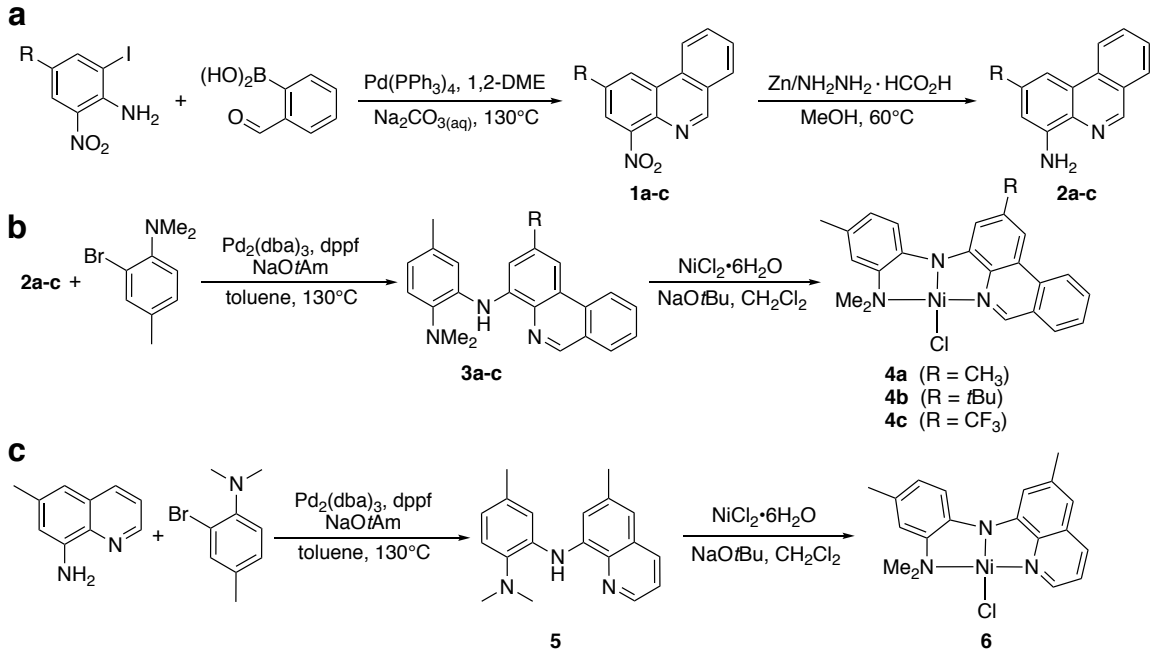
We recently described synthetic routes to tridentate, *N^N-^N* diarylamido pincer-type ligands bearing benzannulated phenanthridine (3,4-benzoquinoline) heterocyclic donor arms.[15] Compared with (8-amino)quinolines, a relatively broad range of 2-substituted (4-amino)phenanthridines can be easily accessed via tandem cross-coupling/condensation reactions using various 4-substituted anilines;[16] accessing 6-substituted (8-amino)quinolines can require less tractable Skraup reaction conditions.[17] Moreover, in these benzannulated pincer-type frameworks, the phenanthridinyl donor arm can act as an efficient Lewis base with strong π-acid character thanks to the presence of low-lying vacant orbitals[18] and are sterically less encumbered than isomeric acridines.[19] As mechanistic studies of azole alkylation reactions mediated by **B** suggest involvement of a Ni(II)/Ni(III) redox couple,[20] we decided to apply our phenanthridine-containing ligand architecture in the preparation of π-extended Ni(II) analogs (**C**) to probe the impact of π-extension on the stability of higher oxidation states[21] and potentially with it, catalytic activity. We report here that complexes of the type **C** are competent in the catalytic C-H bond alkylation of azoles with unactivated alkylhalides containing *β*-hydrogens, with

activity and good substrate scope comparable to **A** and **B** without the requirement of a Cu co-catalyst.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Synthesis and Characterization of Proligands and their Coordination complexes

To access the proligands used in this work, aminophenanthridines/quinolines suitable for elaboration into the target scaffolds were prepared. First, (4-nitro)phenanthridines were assembled via tandem cross-coupling/condensation reactions[15-16] to produce **1a-c** (Scheme 1). These were then reduced to the corresponding (4-amino)phenanthridines **2a-c** and coupled with (*N,N*-dimethyl)(2-bromo-4-methyl)aniline using Pd-catalyzed C-N bond formation to give proligands **3a-c** as yellow solids, which could be purified using column chromatography. For each of the amine proligands, the hydrogen in the 6-position of the phenanthridine framework resonates significantly downfield of the remaining aromatic resonances in the ^{1}H NMR spectrum, indicating formation of the tricyclic phenanthridine.[22] The appearance of a broad singlet assigned to an N-*H* signal similarly confirmed formation of the diarylamine unit. For comparison, the (6-methyl)quinolinyl analog **5** was also prepared via Pd-catalyzed C-N coupling.



Scheme 1. Synthesis of (a) phenanthridine precursors, (b) phenanthridine-based *N^N(H)^N* proligands and nickel complexes, and (c) methyl-substituted quinolinyl analogs of **B**[10], described in this work.

The solid-state structures of the phenanthridine-containing proligands **3a-c** were determined using single crystal X-ray diffraction (Figure 2). Consistent with the general importance of 'imine-bridged biphenyl' resonance contributors to the ground-state structure of phenanthridines,[23] the C-N distance between the phenanthridinyl nitrogen and the adjacent carbon in the 6-position is quite short in all three proligands [**3a**: C(1)-N(1) 1.3034(11); **3b**: C(1)-N(1) 1.302(3); **3c**: C(1)-N(1) 1.291(4)] pointing to localization of imine C=N character at this site.[18] The localization of imine C=N π character at this site has been shown to temper the impacts of π-extension, for example, in emissive complexes of phenanthridinyl-based ligands.[22, 24]

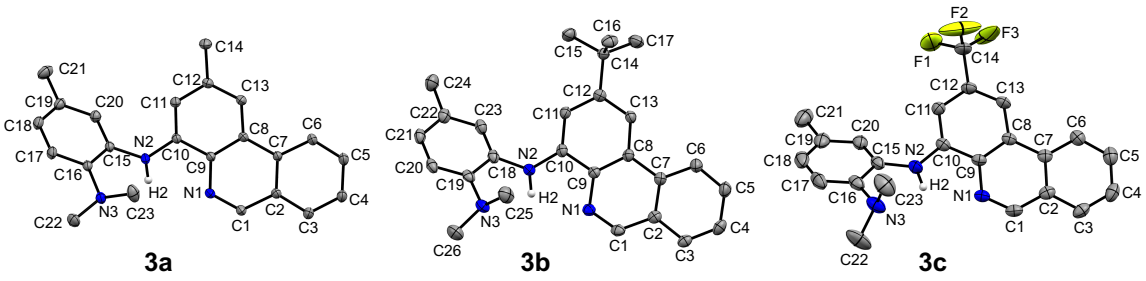


Figure 2. Solid-state structures of **3a-c** shown with thermal ellipsoids at 50 % probability levels. Hydrogens other than H2 are omitted for clarity. Selected bond distances (Å) and angles (°) for **3a**: C(1)-N(1) 1.3034(11), C(10)-N(2) 1.3957(10), C(15)-N(2) 1.4124(11), C(16)-N(3) 1.4168(12); C(10)-N(2)-C(15) 122.64(7), C(9)-C(10)-N(2) 117.25(7), C(16)-C(15)-N(2) 121.17(8). **3b**: C(1)-N(1) 1.302(3), C(10)-N(2) 1.386(3), C(18)-N(2) 1.397(3), C(23)-N(3) 1.425(3); C(10)-N(2)-C(18) 128.8(2), C(9)-C(10)-N(2) 115.4(2), C(19)-C(18)-N(2) 122.4(2). **3c**: C(1)-N(1) 1.291(4), C(10)-N(2) 1.374(3), C(15)-N(2) 1.395(4), C(16)-N(3) 1.430(4); C(10)-N(2)-C(15) 129.9(2), C(9)-C(10)-N(2) 116.2(2), C(16)-C(15)-N(2) 116.6(3).

With the proligands in hand, Ni(II) coordination complexes **4a-c** and the quinoline congener **6** were synthesized through metalation with $NiCl_2$•$6H_2O$ in the presence of base (sodium *tert*-butoxide) in dichloromethane at elevated temperatures, and isolated in good yields (83-93 %) as dark red solids. The disappearance of the signal assigned to the N-*H* resonance in the ^{1}H NMR spectrum and shifts to the remaining signals, including the diagnostic signals for the hydrogen nucleus in the 6-position of the phenanthridinyl/quinolinyl arms, confirmed installation of the ligand frameworks on the Ni(II) ion. The geometry and structures of the (*N^N^N*)NiCl complexes were determined

using single-crystal X-ray diffraction (Figure 3). In keeping with analogous complexes such as **B**,[10] the nickel ions in **4a**-**b** and **6** sit within the meridional pocket formed by the *N*^*N*-^*N* diarylamido ligand. All complexes are essentially flat (angles between planes formed by six carbon rings (e.g., C8-C13 and C15-C20 for **4a**) flanking the amido nitrogens: **4a** 9.43º, **4b** 3.49º, **6** 10.42º), but with distorted square-planar geometry resulting from tied-back bond angles formed by the two neutral donor arms [**4a**: N(1)-Ni(1)-N(3) 170.83(10); **4b**: N(1)−Ni(1)−N(3) 171.60(6); **6**: N(1)−Ni(1)−N(3) 170.93(10)°]. The Ni-N_{amido} distances (**4a**: 1.848(2); **4b**: 1.8511(14); **6**: 1.859(2) Å] are within range of those reported for **A**[25] and **B**[10], and shorter than between nickel and the neutral donor arms [**4a**: Ni(1)-N(1) 1.895(2), Ni(1)-N(3) 1.951(2); **4b**: Ni(1)-N(1) 1.8937(14), Ni(1)-N(3) 1.9512(15); **6** Ni(1)-N(1) 1.896(2), Ni(1)-N(3) 1.949(2) Å]. For these latter Ni-N distances, the Ni-NMe_2 distance is consistently longer than the Ni-$N_{heterocycle}$ distance. All three complexes show similar Ni-Cl distances (~2.2 Å), implying very similar *trans* influence to the amido nitrogens of the ligand frameworks.

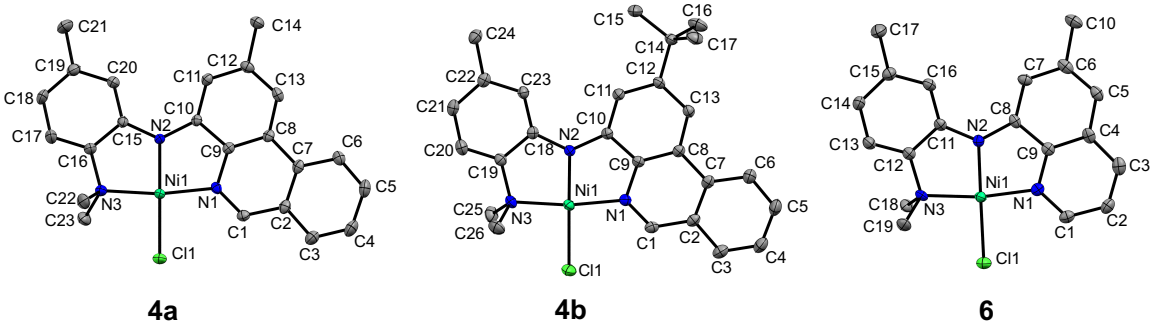


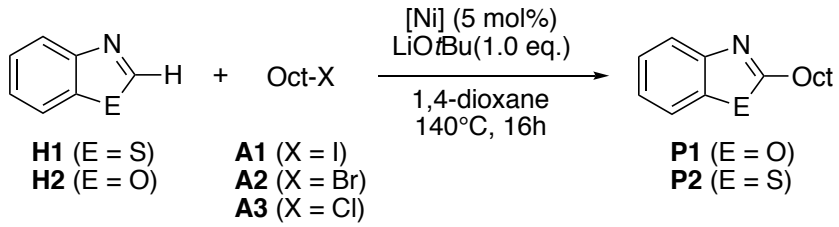
Figure 3. Solid-state structure of **4a**, **4b** and **6** shown with thermal ellipsoids at 50 % probability levels. Hydrogens are omitted for clarity. Selected bond distances (Å) and angles (°) for **4a**: Ni(1)-Cl(1) 2.1919(8), Ni(1)-N(1) 1.895(2), Ni(1)-N(2) 1.848(2), Ni(1)-N(3) 1.951(2), C(1)-N(1) 1.304(4); N(1)-Ni(1)-N(3) 170.83(10), Cl(1)−Ni(1)−N(2)

179.08(8), N(1)−Ni(1)−N(2) 84.95(10), N(3)−Ni(1)−N(2) 86.35(10), N(1)−Ni(1)−Cl(1) 94.03(7), N(3)−Ni(1)−Cl(1) 93.62(7). **4b**: Ni(1)-Cl(1) 2.1950(5), Ni(1)-N(1) 1.8937(14), Ni(1)-N(2) 1.8511(14), Ni(1)-N(3) 1.9512(15), C(1)-N(1) 1.316(2); N(1)−Ni(1)−N(3) 171.60(6), Cl(1)−Ni(1)−N(2) 176.71(5), N(1)−Ni(1)−N(2) 85.12(6), N(3)−Ni(1)−N(2) 86.49(6), N(1)−Ni(1)−Cl(1) 94.50(5), N(3)−Ni(1)−Cl(1) 93.90(5). **6**: Ni(1)-Cl(1) 2.2094(9), Ni(1)-N(1) 1.896(2), Ni(1)-N(2) 1.859(2), Ni(1)-N(3) 1.949(2), C(1)-N(1) 1.326(4); N(1)−Ni(1)−N(3) 170.93(10), Cl(1)−Ni(1)−N(2) 176.84(8), N(1)−Ni(1)−N(2) 84.69(10), N(3)−Ni(1)−N(2) 86.25(10), N(1)−Ni(1)−Cl(1) 94.59(8), N(3)−Ni(1)−Cl(1) 94.42(7).

Catalytic Activity

We then screened the prepared coordination complexes for reactivity in the direct C-H activation of azoles using unactivated alkyl halides (Table 1). Comparing all four precatalysts, the 6-methyl substituted quinolinyl congener **6**, a direct analog of **B**[10], was found to give the highest yield (61 %, run 5) in the direct alkylation of benzothiazole (**H1**) with iodooctane (**A1**) using 5 mol % catalyst loading, 1 equiv. of Li*O*t*Bu, 1,4-dioxane solvent and 16 h reaction time at 140 °C. As noted, complex **B** has been previously shown to be highly competent in the coupling of alkylhalides with sulfur-containing benzothiazoles.[10] Phenanthridinyl-based analogs **4a-c** were competitive, but gave slightly lower yields (42-49 %; runs 1-4) under these conditions. In the coupling of alkyl halides with the oxygen-containing starting material benzoxazole (**H2**), **4c** began to significantly outperform all other precatalysts. Yields of the coupled product were found to reach as high as 87 % using octylchloride (**A3**) in the presence of NaI.

Table 1. Catalyst comparison for [Ni]-Catalyzed Alkylation of Benzannulated Azoles[a]



Entry	Catalyst	Heterocycle	Alkyl Halide	Yield[b]
1	**4a**	H1	A1	49
2	**4b**	H1	A1	49
3	**4c**	H1	A1	42
4	**6**	H1	A1	61
5	**4a**	H2	A1	46
6	**4b**	H2	A1	39
7	**4c**	H2	A1	73
8[c]	**4c**	H2	A1	63
9[d]	**4c**	H2	A1	55
10[e]	**4c**	H2	A1	65
11[f]	**4c**	H2	A1	0
12	**6**	H2	A1	39
13	**4c**	H2	A2	35
14[g]	**4c**	H2	A2	57
15[g]	**4c**	H2	A3	87

[a] Conditions unless otherwise specified: heterocycle (1.006 mmol), alkyl halide (1.509 mmol), LiO*t*Bu (1.06 mmol), solvent (2.0 mL); oil bath set to 140 °C, 16 h

[b] GC yield; average of two runs

[c] In the presence of 100 equivalents of elemental Hg

[d] In the presence of 500 equivalents of elemental Hg

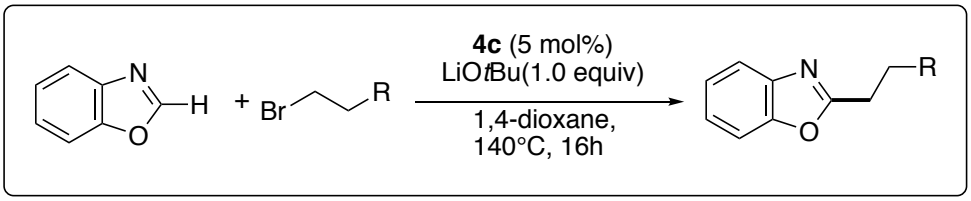
[e] Reaction mixture filtered after 1 h

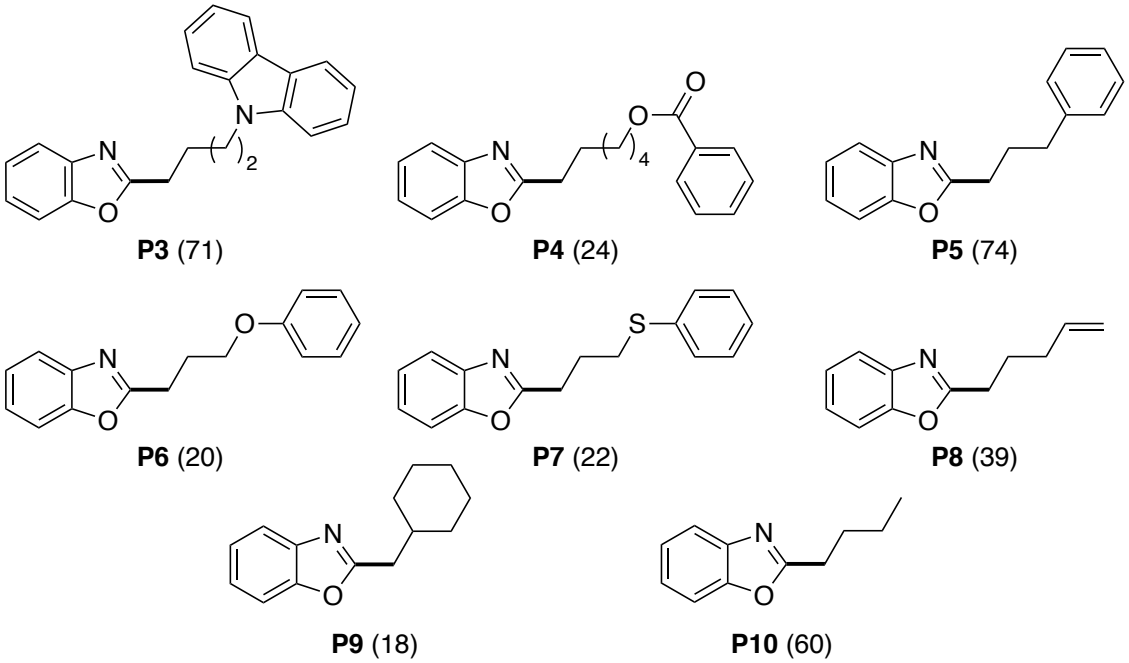
[f] In the presence of added TEMPO

[g] With 0.2 equivalents of NaI.

Having observed promising reactivity with benzannulated coordination complex **4c**, we next explored a brief substrate scope for **4c** as precatalyst (Table 2). The reaction conditions were found to be amenable to the coupling of benzoxazole with a variety of alkylhalides bearing carbazole (**P3**), ester (**P4**), aryl (**P5**), arylether (**P6**), thioether (**P7**), alkenyl (**P8**) and aliphatic (**P9**, **P10**) substituents. The catalysis mediated by **4a-c** and **6** likely proceeds analogously to what has been observed by Punji and coworkers using their related quinolinyl-supported precatalyst **B**.[10, 20] In support of this, participation of heterogeneous particulate nickel generated via catalyst decomposition appears to be minimal, as catalysis in the presence of added Hg (Table 1, runs 8-9) and following filtration (run 10) proceeded unimpeded. On the other hand, addition of the radical scavenger TEMPO (2,2,6,6-tetramethylpiperidine 1-oxyl) completely shut down reactivity (run 11). This is consistent with the homogenous radical rebound pathway proposed by Punji and coworkers, which involves on-cycle high-valent Ni(III) and Ni(IV) intermediates.[20] Accordingly, we collected electrochemical data for the precatalysts screened in this work in an attempt to correlate catalytic behavior with redox potentials.

Table 2. Scope for **4c** Catalyzed Alkylations of Benzoxazole with Alkylbromides[a]





[a] Conditions: heterocycle (1.006 mmol), 1-bromoalkane (1.509 mmol), LiO*t*Bu (1.060 mmol), solvent (2.0 mL); 140 °C, 16 h; GC yield in parentheses

Cyclic voltammograms (CVs) and differential pulse voltammograms (DPVs) of precatalysts **4a-c** and **6** were taken in a dichloromethane solution with 0.1 M [nBu$_4$N][PF$_6$] as the supporting electrolyte (Figure 4). A quasi-reversible anodic wave between 0 and +0.3 V (vs FcH$^{0/+}$; FcH = ferrocene) is observed for each compound, consistent with an overall 1e$^-$ oxidation. All compounds exhibit broad, irreversible reductions that overlap with the edge of the solvent window, making comparisons of these cathodic features within the series challenging. Accordingly, we focus here on the anodic electrochemical events. The oxidation potentials and peak parameters for the complexes are tabulated in Table 3.

The electron releasing *t*Bu group of **4b** shifts the oxidation potential to more accessible potentials compared with methyl analogs **4a** and **6**. In comparison, an anodically shifted oxidation is observed for **4c**, consistent with the presence of an electron withdrawing substituent on the ligand. The alkylation pathway catalyzed by **B** proposed by Punji and coworkers[20] invokes a one-electron Ni(II/III) pathway that occurs by oxidative addition of alkyl iodide via iodine atom transfer (IAT).[26] The lack of reactivity in the presence of the radical trap TEMPO (Table 1, run 11) supports a similar mechanism here. Oxidative addition by (inner-sphere) electron-transfer mechanisms are typically associated with metal centers with coordinative unsaturation to bind a substrate, and sufficiently cathodic electrochemical potentials to reduce the organic electrophile.[27] The observation of higher yields for the most electrophilic congener **4c** with a pronounced anodic shift to its oxidation event, suggests that the elevated π-acidicity of the CF_3-substituted phenanthridine ligand framework[18] may be key in this context.

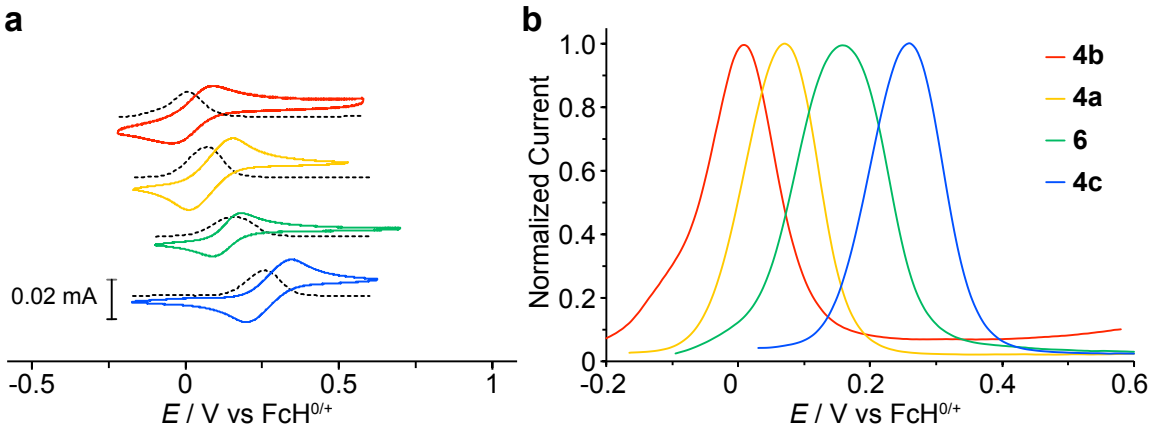


Figure 4. (a) Cyclic voltammograms (—) and corresponding differential pulse voltammograms (---) of **4a-c** and **6** in CH_2Cl_2 with 0.10 M [nBu$_4$N][PF_6] as the supporting electrolyte, glassy carbon working electrode. CV scan rates were 100 mV/s. Potentials are

referenced vs. the $FcH^{0/+}$ redox couple (FcH = ferrocene); (b) Normalized DPVs of **4a-c** and **6**.

Table 3. Electrochemical parameters for Ni complexes

Compound	$E_{1/2}$/V	Δ_{ptp}[a]/mV	i_{red}/i_{ox}
4b	0.01	133	1.17
4a	0.07	143	1.04
6	0.16	91	0.87
4c	0.26	147	0.92

[a]Δ_{ptp} = distance measured from 'peak-to-peak', showing the separation in mV between the peak maximum of the oxidation and corresponding reduction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we have demonstrated that the introduction of benzannulated phenanthridine ligands supporting Ni(II) coordination complexes maintain the high activity observed in the C-H alkylation of azoles observed with quinoline congeners,[10] for both benzoxazole and benzothiazole. The synthetic route to the *N^N(H)^N* proligand frameworks **3a-c** allows for facile incorporation of different substituents, whose electron-releasing/electron-withdrawing properties can be quantified in terms of the redox properties of their Ni complexes in solution. Comprehensive mechanistic studies, including investigating correlation of catalytic activity to the π-acidity of the benzannulated phenanthridine ligand frameworks,[18] and expansion of the scope of C-C bond forming reactions to other substrate classes is presently underway.

Experimental Section

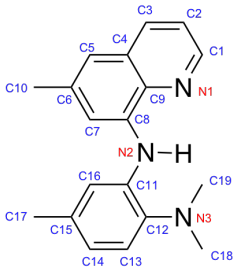
Unless otherwise specified, air sensitive manipulations were carried either in an N_2-filled glove box or using standard Schlenk techniques under Ar. (*N*,*N*-dimethyl)-*para*-toluidine (Sigma Aldrich), 2-formylphenyl boronic acid (AK Scientific), *N*-iodosuccinimide (AK Scientific), *N*-bromosuccinimide (Alpha Aesar), $Pd(PPh_3)_4$ (Sigma Aldrich), $Pd_2(dba)_3$ (Sigma Aldrich), 2-nitro-4-(trifluoromethyl)aniline (Sigma Aldrich), (1,1'-diphenylphosphino)ferrocene (dppf, Sigma Aldrich), (±)-2,2'-bis(diphenylphosphino)-1,1'-binapthalene (*rac*-BINAP, Sigma Aldrich), Na_2CO_3 (Alpha Aesar), trifluoroacetic acid (Sigma Aldrich), sodium *tert*-pentoxide (NaO*t*Am, Sigma Aldrich), sodium *tert*-butoxide (NaO*t*Bu, Sigma Aldrich), zinc (Alpha Aesar), hydrazine hydrate (Sigma Aldrich), formic acid (Alpha Aesar), $NiCl_2$•$6H_2O$ (Alfa Aesar) and all reagents used in precursor synthesis and catalytic trials were purchased and used without any further purification. (2-bromo-4,*N*,*N*-trimethyl)aniline,[28] (8-amino-4-methyl)quinoline,[29] (4-amino-2-methyl)phenanthridine (**2a**),[15] (4-amino-2-*tert*-butyl)phenanthridine (**2b**)[18] and 2-iodo-6-nitro-4-trifluoromethylaniline[30] were synthesized according to published procedures. Organic solvents were dried and distilled using appropriate drying agents, while distilled water was degassed prior to use. Multinuclear 1- and 2D NMR spectra were recorded on Bruker Avance 300 MHz or Bruker Avance – III 500 MHz spectrometers. ^1H and $^{13}C\{^1H\}$ NMR spectra were referenced to residual solvent peaks. Elemental analyses were performed by Microanalytical Service Ltd., Delta, BC, Canada, and at the University of Manitoba using a Perkin Elmer 2400 Series II CHNS/O Elemental Analyzer. High-resolution mass spectra were recorded using a Bruker microOTOF-QIII.

Synthesis of 4-nitro-2-trifluoromethylphenanthridine (1c): A 500 mL Teflon-stoppered flask was charged with $Pd(PPh_3)_4$ (1.04 g, 0.90 mmol), and 50 mL of 1,2-dimethoxyethane (DME). After stirring briefly to mix, 2-iodo-6-nitro-4-trifluoromethylaniline (10.0 g, 30.1 mmol), 2-formylphenylboronic acid (4.97 g, 33.1 mmol) and an additional 70 mL of DME were added, followed by Na_2CO_3 (9.6 g, 90.4 mmol) dissolved in 100 mL of degassed water. The flask was then sealed and the mixture stirred vigorously for 6 h in an oil bath set to 130 °C. The flask was then allowed to cool, charged with 130 mL of 2M HCl, and refluxed for additional 2 h. The reaction mixture was cooled, neutralized with NaOH, and pumped to dryness. The residue was then taken up in dichloromethane (100 mL) and washed with brine (3 x 100 mL). The organic layer was separated, dried over Na_2SO_4 and volatiles removed. Column chromatography on neutral alumina gave a pale yellow solid (R_f = 0.41; 1:5 EtOAc/hexanes). Isolated yield = 7.86 g (89 %). ^{1}H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 300 MHz, 22 °C): δ 9.48 (s, 1H; $C_{Ar}H$), 9.01 (s, 1H; $C_{Ar}H$), 8.67 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.0 Hz; $C_{Ar}H$), 8.18 (overlapped m, 2H; $C_{Ar}H$), 8.05 (ddd, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.4, 7.2, 1.4 Hz; $C_{Ar}H$), 7.92 ppm (m, 1H; $C_{Ar}H$). $^{13}C\{^1H\}$ NMR ($CDCl_3$, 125 MHz, 22 °C): δ 158.0 (C_{Ar}), 149.8 (C_{Ar}), 137.5 (C_{Ar}), 133.1 (C_{Ar}), 131.2 (q, C_{Ar}), 130.0 (C_{Ar}), 129.8 (C_{Ar}), 128.4 (C_{Ar}), 126.9 (C_{Ar}), 126.0 (C_{Ar}), 124.3 (C_{Ar}), 123.2 (q, CF_3), 122.3 (C_{Ar}), 118.7 ppm (q, C_{Ar}). $^{19}F\{^1H\}$ NMR ($CDCl_3$, 282 MHz, 22 °C): δ -62.03 ppm.

4-amino-2-trifluoromethylphenanthridine (2c): To a stirred solution of **1c** (6.02 g, 20.5 mmol) in methanol (100 mL), Zn dust (2.68 g, 41.1 mmol), and hydrazinium monoformate solution (54 mL; prepared by slowly neutralizing equal molar amounts of hydrazine

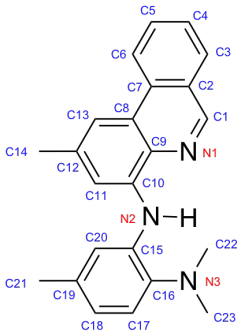
hydrate (50 mL) with 85% formic acid (4 mL) in an ice-water bath) were added and stirred vigorously at 60 °C. The resulting green suspension was cooled and filtered over Celite. The filtrate was pumped dry, the residue dissolved in dichloromethane (100 mL), and washed with brine (3 x 60 mL). The organic layer was separated, dried over Na_2SO_4 and dried to leave a brown solid. Column chromatography on neutral alumina gave a pale-yellow solid (R_f = 0.43; 1:5 EtOAc/hexane). Isolated yield = 3.74 g (86 %). ^{1}H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 300 MHz, 22 °C): δ 9.15 (s, 1H; $C_{Ar}H$), 8.50 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.3; $C_{Ar}H$), 8.07 (s, 1H; $C_{Ar}H$), 8.01 (dd, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.0, 1.3 Hz; $C_{Ar}H$), 7.83 (app t, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.4, 7.0 Hz; $C_{Ar}H$), 7.70 (app t, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.1, 7.0; $C_{Ar}H$), 7.13 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 1.8 Hz; $C_{Ar}H$), 5.22 ppm (br s, 2H; N*H*). ^{13}C{^{1}H} NMR ($CDCl_3$, 75 MHz, 22 °C): δ 152.2 (C_{Ar}), 145.6 (C_{Ar}), 134.5 (C_{Ar}), 132.7 (C_{Ar}), 131.3 (q, C_{Ar}), 128.9 (C_{Ar}), 128.1 (C_{Ar}), 126.9 (C_{Ar}), 124.3 (C_{Ar}), 122.5 (C_{Ar}), 107.9 (q, CF_3), 106.7 ppm (q, C_{Ar}). ^{19}F{^{1}H} NMR ($CDCl_3$, 282 MHz, 22 °C): δ -62.28 ppm.

Synthesis of ^{Me}QuinNN(H)NMe$_2$ (5): A 350 mL Teflon-stoppered flask was charged with $Pd_2(dba)_3$ (1.91 g, 2.09 mmol), dppf (2.69 g, 4.69 mmol), and toluene (30 mL). After stirring briefly, (8-amino-4-methyl)quinoline[29] (4.15 g, 26.1 mmol), (2-bromo-4,*N*,*N*-trimethyl)aniline[28] (6.70 g, 31.3 mmol) were combined with an additional 90 mL of toluene, followed by NaO*t*Am (4.30 g, 39.1 mmol). The mixture was then stirred vigorously for 72 h in an oil bath set to 130 °C. After cooling the flask and removing the volatiles, the residue was taken up in dichloromethane (120 mL), and the resulting suspension filtered over Celite and dried. Column chromatography gave a yellow oil which solidified on standing (neutral alumina; 1:10 EtOAc/hexane; R_f = 0.5). Isolated yield = 8.23 g (74%). ^{1}H NMR



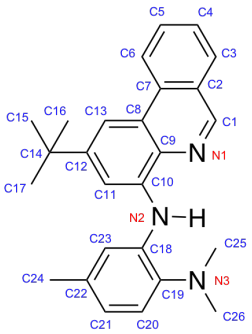
($CDCl_3$, 500 MHz, 22 °C): δ 8.76 (dd, 1H; J_{HH} = 4.2, 1.7 Hz, C_1H), 8.65 (brs, 1H; N*H*), 8.01 (dd, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.3, 1.7 Hz; C_3H), 7.50 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 1.9 Hz; $C_{16}H$), 7.46 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 1.7 Hz; C_7H), 7.38 (dd, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.2, 4.2 Hz; C_2H), 7.06 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.0 Hz; $C_{13}H$), 7.00 (s, 1H, C_5H), 6.81 (m, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.0, 2.0 Hz; $C_{14}H$), 2.72 (s, 6H; $N(C_{(18,19)}H_3)_2$), 2.51 (s, 3H; $C_{10}H_3$), 2.38 (s, 3H, $C_{17}H_3$). $^{13}C\{^1H\}$ NMR ($CDCl_3$, 125 MHz, 22 °C): δ 146.7 (C_1), 142.7 (C_{12}), 139.7 (C_8), 138.1 (C_9), 137.3 (C_6), 136.0 (C_{11}), 136.0 (C_3), 132.7 (C_{15}), 129.1 (C_4), 122.1 (C_{14}), 121.6 (C_2), 119.2 (C_{13}), 118.5 (C_{16}), 115.5 (C_5), 109.6 (C_7), 44.1 ($N(C_{18,19})_2$), 22.5 (C_{10}), 21.4 ppm (C_{17}).

Synthesis of ^{Me}PhenNN(H)NMe$_2$ (3a): An identical procedure to the synthesis of **5** was employed, using $Pd_2(dba)_3$ (0.51 g, 0.55 mmol), dppf (0.67 g, 1.21 mmol), **2a** (2.30 g, 11.0 mmol), (2-bromo-4,*N*,*N*-trimethyl)aniline[28] (2.83 g, 13.3 mmol) and NaO*t*Am (1.82 g, 16.6 mmol). Column chromatography on neutral alumina gave a yellow solid (1:10 EtOAc/hexane; R_f = 0.5). Isolated yield = 1.34 g (97%). ^1H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 500 MHz, 22 °C): δ 9.18 (s, 1H; C_1H), 8.72 (br s, 1H; N*H*), 8.61 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.2 Hz; C_6H), 8.06 (d , 1H, J_{HH} = 7.7 Hz; C_3H), 7.84 (dd, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.4, 7.0 Hz; C_5H), 7.78 (s, 1H; $C_{20}H$), 7.71 (dd, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.0, 7.0 Hz; C_4H), 7.55 (s, 1H; $C_{13}H$), 7.51(s, 1H; $C_{11}H$), 7.07 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.0 Hz; $C_{17}H$), 6.82 (dd, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.0, 1.9 Hz; $C_{18}H$), 2.74 (s, 6H; $N(C_{22,23}H_3)_2$), 2.60 (s, 3H; $C_{14}H_3$), 2.38 ppm (s, 3H; $C_{21}H_3$). $^{13}C\{^1H\}$ NMR ($CDCl_3$, 75 MHz, 22 °C): δ 149.5 (C_1), 142.7 (C_{16}), 140.7 (C_{10}), 137.7 (C_{12}), 136.1 (C_{15}), 132.8 (C_9), 132.7 (C_{19}), 132.6 (C_2), 130.5 (C_5), 128.6 (C_3), 127.3 (C_4), 127.1 (C_8), 124.7 (C_7), 122.4

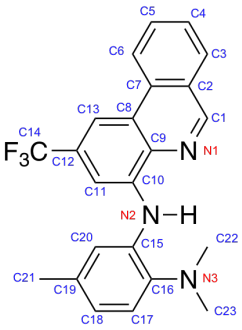


(C_6), 122.0 (C_{18}), 119.1 (C_{17}), 118.7 (C_{11}), 111.0 (C_{20}), 110.5 (C_{13}), 44.1 (N($C_{22,23}$)$_2$), 22.8 (C_{14}), 21.3 ppm (C_{21}).

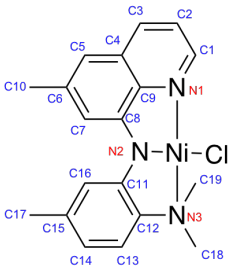
Synthesis of $^{t\text{Bu}}$PhenNN(H)NMe$_2$ (3b): An identical procedure to the synthesis of **5** was employed, using $Pd_2(dba)_3$ (0.55 g, 0.60 mmol), dppf (0.73 g, 1.32 mmol), **2b** (3.0 g, 11.9 mmol), (2-bromo-4,*N*,*N*-trimethyl)aniline[28] (2.87 g, 13.4 mmol) and NaO*t*Am (1.98 g, 17.9 mmol). Column chromatography on neutral alumina gave a yellow solid (1:10 EtOAc/hexane; R_f = 0.5). Isolated yield = 4.18 g (91%) ^{1}H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 300 MHz, 22 °C): δ 9.18 (s, 1H; C_1H), 8.73 (brs, 1H; N*H*), 8.65 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.4 Hz; C_6H), 8.11-7.97 (m, 2H; C_3H, $C_{23}H$), 7.96-7.80 (m, 2H; C_5H, $C_{13}H$), 7.69 (m, 1H; C_4H), 7.54 (s, 1H; $C_{11}H$), 7.08 (dd, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.0, 2.5 Hz; $C_{20}H$), 6.80 (dd, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.1, 2.2 Hz; $C_{21}H$), 2.78 (s, 6H; N($C_{25,\,26}H_3$)$_2$), 2.37 (s, 3H; $C_{24}H_3$), 1.52 ppm (s, 9H; ($C_{15,16,17}H_3$)$_3$). ^{13}C{^{1}H} NMR ($CDCl_3$, 75 MHz, 22 °C): δ 150.6 (C_{12}), 150.0 (C_1), 142.3 (C_{19}), 140.1 (C_{10}), 136.6 (C_{18}), 133.2 (C_9), 133.1 (C_2), 132.9 (C_{22}), 130.6 (C_5), 128.8 (C_3), 127.2 (C_4), 127.0 (C_8), 124.3 (C_7), 122.4 (C_6), 121.5 (C_{21}), 119.3 (C_{20}), 117.4 (C_{11}), 108.9 (C_{23}), 107.4 (C_{13}), 44.2 (N($C_{25,\,26}$)$_2$), 35.7 (C_{14}), 31.7 ($C_{15,\,16,\,17}$), 21.5 ppm (C_{24}).



Synthesis of ^{CF3}PhenNN(H)NMe$_2$ (3c): An identical procedure to the synthesis of **5** was employed, using $Pd_2(dba)_3$ (0.20 g, 0.22 mmol), dppf (0.27 g, 0.49 mmol), **2c** (1.16 g, 4.42 mmol), (2-bromo-4,*N*,*N*-trimethyl)aniline[28] (1.14 g, 5.30 mmol) and NaO*t*Am (0.73 g, 6.63 mmol). Column chromatography on neutral alumina gave a yellow solid (1:10 EtOAc/hexane; R_f = 0.5). Isolated yield = 1.50 g (85%) ^{1}H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 300 MHz, 22 °C): δ 9.30 (s, 1H; C_1H), 8.89 (brs, 1H; N*H*), 8.63 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.3 Hz; C_6H), 8.18 (s, 1H; $C_{13}H$), 8.11 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.0 Hz; C_3H), 7.92 (t, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.3, 6.9 Hz; C_5H), 7.83-7.73 (m, 2H; C_4H, $C_{11}H$), 7.46 (s, 1H, $C_{20}H$) 7.07 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.0, Hz; $C_{17}H$), 6.87 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.2; $C_{18}H$), 2.72 (s, 6H; N($C_{22,\ 23}H_3$)$_2$), 2.37 ppm (s, 3H; $C_{21}H_3$). ^{13}C{^{1}H} NMR ($CDCl_3$, 125 MHz, 22 °C): δ 152.3 (C_1), 143.2 (C_{10}), 141.9 (C_{16}), 135.2 (C_{15}), 135.1 (C_9), 133.1 (C_2), 133.0 (C_{19}), 131.5 (C_5), 129.6 (C_{14}, quartet), 129.0 (C_3), 128.2 (C_4), 127.1 (C_{12}), 125.8 (C_8), 123.7 (C_7), 123.3 (C_{18}), 122.6 (C_6), 119.5 (C_{17}), 119.4 (C_{20}), 108.0 (C_{13}), 104.2 (C_{11}), 44.14 (N($C_{22,\ 23}$)$_2$), 21.4 ppm (C_{21}). ^{19}F{^{1}H} NMR ($CDCl_3$, 282 MHz, 22 °C): δ -62.37 ppm (s, 3F; CF_3).

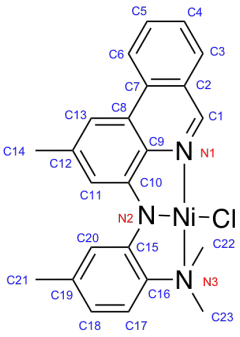


Synthesis of ^{Me}QuinNNNMe$_2$-Ni (6): To a stirred solution of compound **5** (1.01 g, 3.43 mmol) in 30 mL of dichloromethane, $NiCl_2$•$6H_2O$ (0.86g, 3.60 mmol), and NaO*t*Bu (0.35 g, 3.60 mmol) were added, and the mixture stirred vigorously at 65 °C for 18 h. The resulting red suspension was allowed to cool, and the volatiles removed *in vacuo*. The residue was then washed with diethylether (3 x 15 mL) to isolate red solid. The compound is further purified by redissolving in DCM and passed through Celite. Isolated yield = 1.17

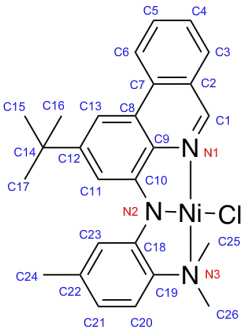


g (89%). ^{1}H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 500 MHz, 22 °C): δ 8.46 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 5.0 Hz; C_1H), 7.98 (dd, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.2, 1.5 Hz; C_3H), 7.34 (s, 1H; $C_{16}H$), 7.24 (s, 1H; $C_{7/5}H$), 7.17 (dd, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.2, 5.3 Hz; C_2H), 6.96 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.1; $C_{13}H$), 6.67 (s, 1H; $C_{5/7}H$), 6.47-6.40 (m, 1H; $C_{14}H$), 3.02 (s, 6H; $N(C_{19,18}H_3)_2$), 2.48 (s, 3H; $C_{10}H_3$), 2.36 ppm (s, 3H; $C_{17}H_3$). $^{13}C\{^{1}H\}$ NMR ($CDCl_3$, 125 MHz, 22 °C): δ 149.5 (C_1), 147.9 (C_8), 147.2 (C_{11}), 146.1 (C_9), 145.2 (C_{12}), 139.6 (C_6), 138.5 (C_{15}), 137.7 (C_3), 129.5 (C_4), 120.9 (C_2), 119.9 (C_{13}), 117.9 (C_{14}), 115.5 (C_{16}), 112.5 ($C_{5/7}$), 112.3 ($C_{5/7}$), 51.9 ($N(C_{18,\ 19})_2$), 22.6 (C_{10}), 21.7 ppm (C_{17}). Anal. Calcd for $C_{19}H_{20}ClN_3Ni$: C, 59.35; H, 5.24. Found: C, 59.07; H, 5.25.

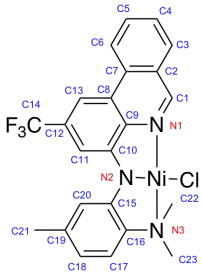
Synthesis of ^{Me}PhenNNNMe$_2$-Ni (4a): An identical procedure to the synthesis of **6** was employed, using **3a** (1.14 g, 3.33 mmol), $NiCl_2$•$6H_2O$ (0.81 g, 3.42 mmol), and NaO*t*Bu (0.34 g, 3.50 mmol) in 15 mL of dichloromethane. Isolated yield = 1.32 g (91 %). ^{1}H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 300 MHz, 22 °C): δ 8.88 (s, 1H; C_1H), 8.39 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.4 Hz; C_6H), 7.88 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.1 Hz; C_3H), 7.83 (t, 1H, J_{HH} = 7.8 Hz; C_5H), 7.61 (t, 1H, J_{HH} = 7.6 Hz; C_4H), 7.37 (s, 1H; $C_{20}H$), 7.31 (s, 1H; $C_{11}H$), 7.28 (s, 1H; $C_{13}H$), 6.96 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.1 Hz; $C_{17}H$), 6.43 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 7.8 Hz; $C_{18}H$), 3.05 (s, 6H; $N(C_{22,\ 23}H_3)_2$), 2.57 (s, 3H; $C_{14}H_3$), 2.36 ppm (s, 3H; $C_{21}H_3$). $^{13}C\{^{1}H\}$ NMR ($CDCl_3$, 125 MHz, 22 °C): δ 153.9 (C_1), 148.5 (C_{10}), 147.3 (C_{15}), 145.0 (C_{16}), 140.0 (C_9), 139.6 (C_{12}), 138.3 (C_{19}), 132.7 (C_2), 132.4 (C_5), 129.6 (C_3), 127.5 (C_4), 126.0 (C_8), 125.2 (C_7), 122.2 (C_6), 119.8 (C_{17}), 117.6 (C_{18}), 115.4 (C_{20}), 112.2 (C_{11}), 108.3 (C_{13}), 51.8 ($N(C_{22,\ 23})_2$), 22.8 (C_{14}) and 21.6 (C_{21}). Anal. Calcd for $C_{23}H_{22}ClN_3Ni$: C, 63.57; H, 5.10. Found: C, 63.60; H, 5.21.



Synthesis of $^{t\mathrm{Bu}}$PhenNNNMe$_2$-Ni (4b): An identical procedure to the synthesis of **6** was employed, using **3b** (1.01 g, 2.60 mmol), $NiCl_2$•$6H_2O$ (0.65 g, 2.74 mmol), and NaO*t*Bu (0.26 g, 2.74 mmol) in 15 mL of dichloromethane. Isolated yield = 1.17 g (93 %). ^{1}H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 500 MHz, 22 °C): δ 8.93 (s, 1H; C_1H), 8.51 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.3 Hz; C_6H), 7.94 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.1 Hz; C_3H), 7.88 (t, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.1 Hz; C_5H), 7.64 (m, 2H; $C_{4,\ 11/13}H$), 7.55 (s, 1H; $C_{11/13}H$), 7.40 (s, 1H; $C_{23}H$), 6.98 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.2 Hz; $C_{20}H$), 6.43 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.2 Hz; $C_{21}H$), 3.05 (s, 6H; $N(C_{25,\ 26}H_3)_2$), 2.36 (s, 3H; $C_{24}H_3$) and 1.49 ppm (s, 9H; $(C_{15,\ 16,\ 17}H_3)_3$). ^{13}C{^{1}H} NMR ($CDCl_3$, 125 MHz, 22 °C): δ 154.4 (C_1), 152.9 (C_{12}), 148.4 (C_{10}), 147.5 (C_{18}), 145.2 (C_{19}), 140.1 (C_9), 138.5 (C_{22}), 133.4 (C_2), 132.6 (C_5), 129.9 (C_3), 127.7 (C_4), 126.3 (C_8), 125.0 (C_7), 122.3 (C_6), 120.0 (C_{20}), 117.5 (C_{21}), 115.4 (C_{23}), 109.4 ($C_{11/13}$), 104.7 ($C_{11/13}$), 51.9 ($N(C_{25,\ 26})_2$), 35.7 ($C_{15,\ 16,\ 17})_3$), 31.8 (C_{14}), 21.9 ppm (C_{24}). Anal. Calcd for $C_{26}H_{28}ClN_3Ni$: C, 65.51; H, 5.92. Found: C, 65.35; H, 6.03.



Synthesis of ^{CF3}PhenNNNMe$_2$-Ni (4c): An identical procedure to the synthesis of **6** was employed, using **3c** (1.80 g, 4.56 mmol), $NiCl_2$•$6H_2O$ (1.14 g, 4.77 mmol), and NaO*t*Bu (0.46 g, 4.79 mmol) in 15 mL of dichloromethane. Isolated yield = 1.86 g (83 %). ^{1}H NMR ($CDCl_3$, 500 MHz, 22 °C): δ 9.10 (s, 1H; C_1H), 8.48 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.3 Hz; C_6H), 8.10-7.90 (m, 2H; $C_{3,\ 5}H$), 7.84-7.56 (m, 3H; $C_{4,\ 11,\ 13}H$), 7.36 (s, 1H; $C_{20}H$), 7.01 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.2 Hz; $C_{17}H$), 6.52 (d, 1H, J_{HH} = 8.2 Hz; $C_{18}H$), 3.06 (s, 6H; $N(C_{22,23}H_3)_2$), and 2.37 (s, 3H; $C_{21}H_3$). ^{13}C{^{1}H} NMR ($CDCl_3$, 125 MHz, 22 °C): δ 156.1 (C_1), 149.0 (C_{10}), 146.5 (C_{15}), 145.3



(C_{16}), 142.6 (C_9), 138.8 (C_{19}), 133.4 (C_5), 132.9 (C_2), 131.1 (C_{14}, quartet), 130.1 (C_3), 128.5 (C_4), 126.1 (C_{12}), 125.5 (C_8), 123.4 (C_7), 122.4 (C_6), 120.1 (C_{17}), 119.0 (C_{18}), 115.8 (C_{20}), 105.9 (C_{13}), 105.1 (C_{11}), 52.0 (N($C_{22, 23}$)$_2$), 21.7 ppm (C_{21}). $^{19}F\{^1H\}$ NMR ($CDCl_3$, 470 MHz, 22 °C): δ -62.27 ppm (s, 3F; CF_3). Anal. Calcd for $C_{23}H_{19}ClF_3N_3Ni$: C, 56.54; H, 3.92. Found: C, 56.33; H, 3.63.

X-Ray Crystallography

X-ray crystal structure data was using collected from multi-faceted crystals of suitable size and quality selected from a representative sample of crystals of the same habit using an optical microscope. In each case, crystals were mounted on MiTiGen loops with data collection carried out in a cold stream of nitrogen (150 K; Bruker D8 QUEST ECO; Mo K_α radiation). All diffractometer manipulations were carried out using Bruker APEX3 software.[31] Structure solution and refinement was carried out using XS, XT and XL software, embedded within the Bruker SHELXTL suite.[32] For each structure, the absence of additional symmetry was confirmed using ADDSYM incorporated in the PLATON program.[33] CCDC Nos. 1985563-1985568 contain the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. The data can be obtained free of charge from The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/structures.

Crystal structure data for **3a** (CCDC No. 1985568): X-ray quality crystals were grown following diffusion of diethylether vapor into a saturated $CHCl_3$ solution of the compound at room temperature. Crystal structure parameters: $C_{23}H_{23}N_3$ 341.44 g/mol, monoclinic, space group $P2_1/c$; a = 17.2243(11) Å, b = 14.7273(9) Å, c = 7.1219(5) Å, α = 90°, β =

99.910(3)°, γ = 90°, V = 1779.6(2) Å^3; Z = 4, ρ_{calcd} = 1.274 g cm^{-3}; crystal dimensions 0.266 x 0.200 x 0.150 mm^3; θ_{max} = 39.509°; 114196 reflections, 10645 independent (R_{int} = 0.0597), intrinsic phasing; absorption coeff (μ = 0.076 mm^{-1}), absorption correction semi-empirical from equivalents (SADABS); refinement (against F_o^2) with SHELXTL V6.1, 239 parameters, 0 restraints, R_1 = 0.0553 ($I > 2\sigma$) and wR_2 = 0.1722 (all data), Goof = 1.046, residual electron density 0.620/−0.610 e Å^{-3}.

Crystal structure data for **3b** (CCDC No. 1985565): X-ray quality crystals were grown following diffusion of diethylether vapor into a saturated $CHCl_3$ solution of the compound at room temperature. Crystal structure parameters: $C_{26}H_{29}N_3$ 383.52 g/mol, trigonal, space group $P3_2$; a = 10.2023(3) Å, b = 10.2023(3) Å, c = 17.7612(6) Å, α = 90°, β = 90°, γ = 120°, V = 1061.03(11) Å^3; Z = 3, ρ_{calcd} = 1.193 g cm^{-3}; crystal dimensions 0.100 x 0.050 x 0.050 mm^3; θ_{max} = 30.499°; 37488 reflections, 6534 independent (R_{int} = 0.0833), intrinsic phasing; absorption coeff (μ = 0.070 mm^{-1}), absorption correction semi-empirical from equivalents (SADABS); refinement (against F_o^2) with SHELXTL V6.1, 269 parameters, 1 restraints, R_1 = 0.0533 ($I > 2\sigma$) and wR_2 = 0.1243 (all data), Goof = 1.032, residual electron density 0.294/−0.245 e Å^{-3}.

Crystal structure data for **3c** (CCDC No. 1985563): X-ray quality crystals were grown following diffusion of diethylether vapor into a $CHCl_3$ solution of the compound at room temperature. Crystal structure parameters: $C_{23}H_{20}F_3N_3$ 395.42 g/mol, triclinic, space group P-1; a = 7.8443(4) Å, b = 9.5831(4) Å, c = 13.4612(6) Å, α = 89.4932(18)°, β = 78.5285(18)°, γ = 87.8849(19)°, V = 991.02(8) Å^3; Z = 2, ρ_{calcd} = 1.325 g cm^{-3}; crystal

dimensions 0.280 x 0.150 x 0.040 mm^3; θ_{max} = 27.721°; 23306 reflections, 4645 independent (R_{int} = 0.0560), intrinsic phasing; absorption coeff (μ = 0.099 mm^{-1}), absorption correction semi-empirical from equivalents (SADABS); refinement (against F_o^2) with SHELXTL V6.1, 265 parameters, 0 restraints, R_1 = 0.0793 ($I > 2\sigma$) and wR_2 = 0.2179 (all data), Goof = 1.050, residual electron density 1.031/−0.771 e $Å^{-3}$.

Crystal structure data for **4a** (CCDC No. 1985564): X-ray quality crystals were grown following diffusion of diethylether vapor into a $CHCl_3$ solution of the compound at room temperature. Crystal structure parameters: $C_{23}H_{22}Cl_1N_3Ni_1$ 434.59 g/mol, triclinic, space group *P*-1; *a* = 6.9170(4) Å, *b* = 11.9707(8) Å, *c* = 12.3017(11) Å, α = 72.668(3)°, β = 82.739(3)°, γ = 89.465(3)°, V = 964.12(11) $Å^3$; Z = 2, ρ_{calcd} = 1.497 g cm^{-3}; crystal dimensions 0.200 x 0.100 x 0.030 mm^3; θ_{max} = 27.979°; 39487 reflections, 4613 independent (R_{int} = 0.0453), intrinsic phasing; absorption coeff (μ = 1.159 mm^{-1}), absorption correction semi-empirical from equivalents (SADABS); refinement (against F_o^2) with SHELXTL V6.1, 257 parameters, 0 restraints, R_1 = 0.0424 ($I > 2\sigma$) and wR_2 = 0.1011 (all data), Goof = 1.137, residual electron density 0.806/−0.637 e $Å^{-3}$.

Crystal structure data for **4b** (CCDC No. 1985566): X-ray quality crystals were grown following diffusion of diethylether vapor into a $CHCl_3$ solution of the compound at room temperature. Crystal structure parameters: $C_{26}H_{28}Cl_1N_3Ni_1$ 476.67 g/mol, monoclinic, space group $P2_1/c$; *a* = 14.9402(10) Å, *b* = 16.7884(11) Å, *c* = 8.9308(6) Å, α = 90°, β = 98.074(3)°, γ = 90°, V = 2217.8(3) $Å^3$; Z = 4, ρ_{calcd} = 1.428 g cm^{-3}; crystal dimensions 0.200 x 0.150 x 0.050 mm^3; θ_{max} = 33.129°; 68772 reflections, 7415 independent (R_{int} =

0.0419), intrinsic phasing; absorption coeff (μ = 1.014 mm^{-1}), absorption correction semi-empirical from equivalents (SADABS); refinement (against F_o^2) with SHELXTL V6.1, 286 parameters, 0 restraints, $R_1 = 0.0453$ ($I > 2\sigma$) and $wR_2 = 0.0915$ (all data), Goof = 1.054, residual electron density 0.647/−0.642 e $Å^{-3}$.

Crystal structure data for **6** (CCDC No. 1985567): X-ray quality crystals were grown following diffusion of diethylether vapor into a $CHCl_3$ solution of the compound at room temperature. Crystal structure parameters: $C_{19}H_{20}Cl_1N_3Ni_1$ 384.54 g/mol, triclinic, space group *P*-1; a = 9.8825(13) Å, b = 14.352(3) Å, c = 24.736(4) Å, α = 90.844(12)°, β = 94.338(10)°, γ = 102.995(13)°, V = 3406.9(10) $Å^3$; Z = 8, ρ_{calcd} = 1.499 g cm^{-3}; crystal dimensions 0.300 x 0.200 x 0.050 mm^3; θ_{max} = 30.679°; 97358 reflections, 20976 independent (R_{int} = 0.1012), intrinsic phasing; absorption coeff (μ = 1.300 mm^{-1}), absorption correction semi-empirical from equivalents (SADABS); refinement (against F_o^2) with SHELXTL V6.1, 881 parameters, 0 restraints, $R_1 = 0.0601$ ($I > 2\sigma$) and wR_2 = 0.1253 (all data), Goof = 1.021, residual electron density 0.770/−0.722 e $Å^{-3}$.

Representative Procedure for Catalytic Trials: To a 50 mL Teflon stoppered flask catalyst **4c** (0.012 g, 0.05 mmol), LiO*t*Bu (0.081 g, 1.01 mmol), benzoxazole (**H2**; 0.12 g, 1.01 mmol), and 1-iodooctane (**A1**; 0.291 g, 0.75 mmol), added 1,4-dioxane (2.0 mL) inside an N_2-filled glovebox. The resulting reaction mixture was stirred in a preheated oil bath set to 140 °C for 16 h. An aliquot (10 μL) of the reaction mixture diluted with 1 mL acetone was injected to GC instrument to analyze the products. GC yields of the products

were obtained from the calibration curves plotted for pure reactants and products, with biphenyl as an internal standard, and are reported as an average of two runs.

ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Supporting Information. Extended experimental details (preparation of precursors, GC method details, additive experiments) and full characterization data (multi-nuclear NMR spectra and HR-MS spectra of all new compounds); crystallographic information files containing X-ray data with embedded structure factors and .res file. CCDC entries 1985568 (**3a**), 1985565 (**3b**), 1985563 (**3c**), 1985564 (**4a**), 1985566 (**4b**) and 1985567 (**6**) contain the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge from The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/structures.

The following files are available free of charge:

Supporting Information File (PDF)

Crystallographic Information Files for **3a**, **3b**, **3c**, **4a**, **4b** and **6** (CIF)

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Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare no competing financial interests.

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