

Enzymes in Nonaqueous Solvents

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Enzymes in Nonaqueous Solvents

Methods and Protocols

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PREFACE

Enzymatic catalysis has gained considerable attention in recent years as an efficient tool in the preparation of natural products, pharmaceuticals, fine chemicals, and food ingredients. The high selectivity and mild reaction conditions associated with enzymatic transformations have made this approach an attractive alternative in the synthesis of complex bioactive compounds, which are often difficult to obtain by standard chemical routes. However, the majority of organic compounds are not very soluble in water, which was traditionally perceived as the only suitable reaction medium for the application of biocatalysts. The realization that most enzymes can function perfectly well under nearly anhydrous conditions and, in addition, display a number of useful properties, e.g., highly enhanced stability and different selectivity, has dramatically widened the scope of their application to the organic synthesis.

Another great attraction of using organic solvents rather than water as a reaction solvent is the ability to perform synthetic transformations with relatively inexpensive hydrolytic enzymes. It is worth reminding the reader that *in vivo*, the synthetic and hydrolytic pathways are catalyzed by different enzymes. However, elimination of water from the reaction mixture enables the “reversal” of hydrolytic enzymes and thus avoids the use of the expensive cofactors or activated substrates that are required for their synthetic counterparts. Also, one should bear in mind that water is by no means an ideal solvent for synthesis; it is relatively expensive to remove on a large scale and it often participates in unwanted side reactions. Thus, the use of enzymes in conventional industrial solvents generally makes it easier and cheaper to incorporate a biotransformation step into the overall synthetic sequence.

Indeed, there are numerous examples of the successful application of enzymes in low water media to industrial-scale production of pharmaceuticals, food ingredients, and fine chemicals.

Methods are very important in any area of research, even more so in a field like nonaqueous biocatalysis, where many methods have been developed relatively recently and have not yet been standardized completely in all laboratories. All too often, the format of standard research papers does not allow methods to be fully described. The importance of key details may be known in the originating laboratory, but may not be appreciated in another, because they cannot be stressed enough, nor reasons explained. The prime objective of *Enzymes in Nonaqueous Solvents* is to address this issue because it was com-

piled to communicate such details. There will also be critical features of methods that are at present not appreciated by anyone, but that may be causing different results in different laboratories. Here again, the fuller presentations in this book should be a basis for the identification of such differences.

For the convenience of the reader, the editors decided to split the submitted material into three parts; broadly, these deal with the biocatalysts, synthetic chemistry, and systems other than just neat organic solvents or solvent mixtures. Those familiar with the subject will no doubt appreciate that such a separation is to a large extent arbitrary and is bound to result in some overlaps. The editors felt, however, that this would provide the book with a certain structure and make it easier for the reader to find specific pieces of relevant information. In addition, each part has a short introduction that surveys the contributions included.

Authors of standard research papers are understandably keen to emphasise their interesting results. Some signs of this can perhaps be detected in contributions to this volume too. As editors, we have tried to encourage authors to include as much detail as possible in describing their methods, and not to dismiss this as rather boring or unnecessary. We hope the result of the authors' efforts will prove valuable to all who are interested in studying or using enzymes in nonaqueous media.

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Peter J. Halling

Herbert L. Holland

CONTENTS

Preface	v
Contributors	xiii

PART I CONTROL OF ENZYME ACTIVITY IN NONAQUEOUS SOLVENTS

Peter J. Halling	1
1 Salt-Induced Activation of Enzymes in Organic Solvents: <i>Optimizing the Lyophilization Time and Water Content</i> Michael T. Ru, Jonathan S. Dordick, Jeffrey A. Reimer, and Douglas S. Clark	3
2 Imprinting Enzymes for Use in Organic Media Joseph O. Rich and Jonathan S. Dordick	13
3 Entrapment of Biocatalysts by Prepolymer Methods Atsuo Tanaka and Takamitsu Iida	19
4 Microencapsulation of Enzymes and Cells for Nonaqueous Biotransformations Jeffrey A. Khan and Evgeny N. Vulfson	31
5 Immobilization of Lipases on Hydrogels Abu Bakar Salleh, Norhaizan M. Esa, Mahiran Basri, Che Nyonya A. Razak, Wan Md Zin W. Yunus, and Mansor Ahmad	41
6 Polyethylene Glycol-Modified Enzymes in Hydrophobic Media Ayako Matsushima, Yoh Kodera, Misao Hiroto, Hiroyuki Nishimura, and Yuji Inada	49
7 Chemical Modification of Lipase for Use in Ester Synthesis Mahiran Basri, Kamaruzaman Ampon, Che Nyonya A. Razak, and Abu Bakar Salleh	65
8 Preparation and Properties in Organic Solvents of Noncovalent PEG-Enzyme Complexes Francesco Secundo, Gianluca Ottlina, and Giacomo Carrea	77
9 Preparation of a Lipid-Coated Enzyme and Activity for Reverse Hydrolysis Reactions in Homogeneous Organic Media Toshiaki Mori and Yoshio Okahata	83

10	Very High Activity Biocatalysts for Low-Water Systems: <i>Propanol-Rinsed Enzyme Preparations</i> Barry D. Moore, Johann Partridge, and Peter J. Halling	97
11	Methods for Measurement and Control of Water in Nonaqueous Biocatalysis George Bell, Peter J. Halling, Lindsey May, Barry D. Moore, Donald A. Robb, Rein Ulijn, and Rao H. Valivety	105
12	Water Activity Control in Organic Media by Equilibration Through Membranes Ernst Wehtje and Patrick Adlercreutz	127
13	Water Activity Control for Lipase-Catalyzed Reactions in Nonaqueous Media Joon Shick Rhee, Seok Joon Kwon, and Jeong Jun Han	135
14	Immobilization of Enzymes and Control of Water Activity in Low-Water Media: <i>Properties and Applications of Celite R-640 (Celite Rods)</i> Lucia Gardossi	151
15	Enzyme Activity and Enantioselectivity Measurements in Organic Media Amélie Ducret, Michael Trani, and Robert Lortie	173
16	Calorimetric Methods in Evaluating Hydration and Solvation of Solid Proteins Immersed in Organic Solvents Mikhail Borisover, Vladimir Siroткин, Dmitriy Zakharychev, and Boris Solomonov	183
17	Detection of Structural Changes of Enzymes in Nonaqueous Media by Fluorescence and CD Spectroscopy Hideo Kise	203
18	The Effects of Crown Ethers on the Activity of Enzymes in Organic Solvents Dirk-Jan van Unen, Johan F. J. Engbersen, and David N. Reinhoudt	213
19	Control of Acid–Base Conditions in Low-Water Media Johann Partridge, Neil Harper, Barry D. Moore, and Peter J. Halling	227
20	Enzymatic Acylation of α -Butylglucoside in Nonaqueous Media Marie-Pierre Bousquet, René-Marc Willemot, Pierre Monsan, and Emmanuel Boures	235
PART II SYNTHETIC APPLICATIONS		
	Herbert L. Holland	241

21	Choosing Hydrolases for Enantioselective Reactions Involving Alcohols Using Empirical Rules <i>Alexandra N. E. Weissflock and Romas J. Kazlauskas</i>	243
22	<i>Candida antarctica</i> Lipase B: A Tool for the Preparation of Optically Active Alcohols <i>Didier Rotticci, Jenny Ottosson, Torbjörn Norin, and Karl Hult</i>	261
23	Enantioselective Lipase-Catalyzed Transesterifications in Organic Solvents <i>Fritz Theil</i>	277
24	<i>Pseudomonas cepacia</i> Lipase-Catalyzed Enantioselective Acylation of 2-Substituted-1-alkanols in Organic Solvents <i>Patrizia Ferraboschi and Enzo Santaniello</i>	291
25	Preparation of 2-, 3-, and 4-Methylcarboxylic Acids and the Corresponding Alcohols of High Enantiopurity by Lipase-Catalyzed Esterification <i>Per Berglund and Erik Hedenström</i>	307
26	Optimization of Enzymatic Enantiomeric Resolutions Through Solvent Selection <i>Gianluca Ottlina, Francesco Secundo, Giorgio Colombo, and Giacomo Carrea</i>	319
27	Chemoselective Amidification of Amino-Polyols Catalyzed with Lipases in Organic Solvents <i>Thierry Maugard, Magali Remaud-Simeon, and Pierre Monsan</i>	325
28	Synthesis of Esters Catalyzed by Lipases in Water-in-Oil Microemulsions <i>Haralambos Stamatidis, Aristotelis Xenakis, and Fragiskos N. Kolisis</i>	331
29	Enzymatic Conversion of Organosilicon Compounds in Organic Solvents <i>Takuo Kawamoto and Atsuo Tanaka</i>	339
30	Synthetic Applications of Enzymes in Nonaqueous Media <i>Valérie Rolland and René Lazaro</i>	357
31	Enzymes in Nonaqueous Solvents: <i>Applications in Carbohydrate and Peptide Preparation</i> <i>Shui-Tein Chen, Boonyaras Sookkheo, Suree Phutrahul, and Kung-Tsung Wang</i>	373
32	Interface Bioreactor: <i>Microbial Transformation Device on an Interface Between a Hydrophilic Carrier and a Hydrophobic Organic Solvent</i> <i>Shinobu Oda, Takeshi Sugai, and Hiromichi Ohta</i>	401

33	Yeast-Mediated Reactions in Organic Solvents <i>Andrew J. Smallridge and Maurie A. Trewella</i>	417
34	Biocatalysis in Pharmaceutical Process Development: <i>SCH56592, a Case Study</i> <i>Brian Morgan, David R. Dodds, Michael J. Homann, Aleksey Zaks, and Robert Vail</i>	423
PART III REACTION SYSTEMS AND BIOREACTOR DESIGN		
	<i>Evgeny N. Vulfson</i>	469
35	Enzymatic Solid-to-Solid Peptide Synthesis <i>Markus Erbeldinger, Uwe Eichhorn, Peter Kuhl, and Peter J. Halling</i>	471
36	Enzymatic Synthesis and Hydrolysis Reactions of Acylglycerols in Solvent-Free Systems <i>Cristina Otero, Jose A. Arcos, Hugo S. Garcia, and Charles G. Hill, Jr.</i>	479
37	Solid–Gas Catalysis at Controlled Water Activity: <i>Reactions at the Gas–Solid Interface Using Lipolytic Enzymes</i> <i>Sylvain Lamare and Marie Dominique Legoy</i>	497
38	Solvent-Free Biotransformations of Lipids <i>Tsuneo Yamane</i>	509
39	Lipase-Catalyzed Synthesis of Sugar Fatty Acid Esters in Supercritical Carbon Dioxide <i>Haralambos Stamatidis, Vasiliki Sereti, and Fragiskos N. Kolisis</i>	517
40	Transformations in Frozen Aqueous Solutions Catalyzed by Hydrolytic Enzymes <i>Marion Haensler and Hans-Dieter Jakubke</i>	523
41	Enzymatic Synthesis of Sugar Fatty Acid Esters in Solvent-Free Media <i>Douglas B. Sarney and Evgeny N. Vulfson</i>	531
42	Biotransformations in Supersaturated Solutions <i>David A. MacManus, Anna Millqvist-Fureby, and Evgeny N. Vulfson</i>	545
43	Enzymatic Transformations in Suspensions (I): <i>One Solid Substrate and Product</i> <i>Volker Kasche and Antje Spieß</i>	553
44	Biotransformations in Supercritical Fluids <i>Nuno Fontes, M. Conceição Almeida, and Susana Barreiros</i>	565

45	Reverse Micellar Systems: <i>General Methodology</i> <i>Andrey V. Levashov and Natalia L. Klyachko</i>	575
46	Enzymatic Transformations in Supercritical Fluids <i>Alain Marty and Jean-Stéphane Condoret</i>	587
47	Enzymatic Transformations in Suspensions (II) <i>Adrie J. J. Straathof, Mike J. J. Litjens, and Joseph J. Heijnen</i>	603
48	Characterization and Operation of a Micellar Membrane Bioreactor <i>Cristina M. L. Carvalho, Maria Raquel Aires-Barros, and Joaquim M. S. Cabral</i>	611
49	Immobilization of Lipase Enzymes and Their Application in the Interesterification of Oils and Fats <i>Alan D. Peilow and Maha M. A. Misbah</i>	627
	Index	651

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