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### UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

# New bioorthogonal chemistries for multi-component detection

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

### DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Chemistry

by

David Michael Patterson

Dissertation Committee: Assistant Professor Jennifer A. Prescher, Chair Professor Gregory Weiss Professor Zhibin Guan

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# DEDICATION

То

my parents, Emmett and Karyn Patterson,

in recognition of their love and support

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- 5. Liang, Y.; Lopez, S. A.; **Patterson, D. M.**; Shih, H. W.; Kamber, D. N.; Prescher, J. A.; Houk K. N., *Manuscript in preparation*.
- 4. Patterson, D. M.; Jones, K. A.; Prescher, J. A. Improved cyclopropene reporters for probing protein glycosylation. *Mol. BioSyst.*, 2014, 10, 1693–1697.
- 3. Patterson, D. M.; Nazarova, L. A.; Prescher, J. A. Finding the right (bioorthogonal) chemistry. ACS Chem. Biol., 2014, 9 (3), 592–605.
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- 1. Patterson, D. M.; Nazarova, L. A.; Xie, B.; Kamber, D. N.; Prescher, J. A. Functionalized Cyclopropenes as bioorthogonal chemical reporters. J. Am. Chem. Soc. 2012, 134 (45), 18638–18643.

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### **ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION**

New bioorthogonal chemistries for multi-component detection

By

David Michael Patterson Doctor of Philosophy in Chemistry University of California, Irvine, 2015 Assistant Professor Jennifer A. Prescher, Chair

Bioorthogonal chemistries enable the selective visualization and identification of biomolecules in complex cellular environments. Significant advances in the speed and selectivity of these reactions have been reported over the past few years. Despite these successes, challenges remain in applying bioorthogonal chemistries to studies of complex biological functions. Many bioorthogonal reagents cross-react with one another, limiting their utility for visualizing multi-component processes. Additionally, many bioorthogonal reagents are not small or stable enough to label native biomolecules in living systems. To address these issues, I have developed new classes of functionalized cyclopropenes for bioorthogonal labeling experiments. These small motifs are stable in cells and other environments, yet robustly reactive with tetrazines and various 1,3-dipoles. Cyclopropenes can also be readily tuned to elicit desired covalent reactivity, facilitating the development of "mutually orthogonal" bioorthogonal transformations. I utilized these bioorthogonal cyclopropene chemistries to target glycans and proteins, as well as to tag cells with imaging agents for in vivo cell tracking.

### **CHAPTER 1:** Finding the right (bioorthogonal) chemistry

### **1.1 Introduction**

Interactions among proteins, glycans, and numerous other biopolymers and metabolites drive cellular processes. Thus, a complete understanding of living systems requires methods to probe biomolecules in real time. GFP and other genetically encoded reporters are available for tracking protein products in live cells and organisms. While powerful, such genetic tagging tools are not amenable to monitoring glycans, lipids, and other critical cellular components [1]. To address this need, the chemical biology community has developed a general platform to target cellular molecules with visual tags and other probes. This strategy relies on the installation of unique functional groups into target biomolecules and their selective reaction with covalent probes (Figure 1-1A). The chemistries employed in this approach must be selective and non-perturbing to biological systems. For these reasons, they have been collectively termed bioorthogonal [2].

The earliest work in bioorthogonal reaction development—nearly two decades ago focused on methods to covalently target unique amino acid sequences with small molecule probes [3, 4]. Since then, dozens more unique transformations have been added to the bioorthogonal toolkit. The majority of these chemistries are applicable not only to protein tagging, but also studies with glycans, lipids, and numerous other biomolecules. The reactions differ widely, though, in terms of their selectivities, rates, and other attributes, and choosing among them can be difficult.



**Figure 1-1. A bioorthogonal chemical reaction.** (A) A unique functional group (blue circle) appended to a target biomolecule is covalently ligated with a complementary probe (orange arc). The two reagents must react selectively with one another and be inert to the biological surroundings (i.e., bioorthogonal). Depending on the choice of probe (star), this method enables the selective visualization or identification of biomolecules in complex environments. (B) Two types of transformations are predominant in the bioorthogonal toolkit: polar reactions between nucleophiles and electrophiles and cycloaddition chemistries.

This chapter deconstructs the major classes of bioorthogonal chemistries and draws relevant comparisons and contrasts between them. Our focus is on those reactions that are applicable to tagging diverse types of molecules in complex environments. We first introduce the common bioorthogonal transformations and highlight their utility in various experiments. We then provide a general set of considerations for selecting a suitable reaction for a given application. Last, we highlight existing challenges to the development and implementation of bioorthogonal reactions. The continued use of these tools is painting a more complete picture of organismal biology.

#### **1.2 Meet the candidates**

The selective, covalent tagging of biomolecules—especially in live cells and tissues—is no easy task. For one, the biological milieu is replete with functional groups that can interfere with the desired labeling reaction. The bioorthogonal probes must also be stable in aqueous environments, yet readily reactive with one another. Furthermore, the chemistries must be nontoxic. The challenges involved in designing such reactions have captured the imagination of several chemists, and over the past decade, transformations have emerged that meet most or all of the criteria for bioorthogonality. The majority can be classified as either polar reactions or cycloadditions, although notable exceptions exist (Figure 1-1B). The chemistries differ in terms of the functional groups employed, reaction rates, and overall selectivities, but all are suitable for use in aqueous environments and, in some cases, live cells and animals (Table 1-1).

Reaction type	Reactant 1	Reactant 2	Approximate rate (M <sup>-1</sup> s <sup>-1</sup> )	Comments	References		
			0.001 (H <sub>2</sub> O)	adducts prone to hydrolysis; aniline catalyst can be used	Jencks 1959		
Aldehyde/ketone condensation	O R H(CH₃)	0 H(CH <sub>3</sub> )	O I H(CH₃)	H <sub>3</sub> C-N-O N HO O Pictet- Spengler	0.26 (100 mM sodium phosphate)	reaction provides more stable C-C linkages	Agarwal <b>2013</b>
Staudinger ligation	R-N <sub>3</sub>	R PPh2	0.003 (PBS)	phosphines susceptible to oxidation	Saxon <b>2000</b>		
Cyanobenzothiazole condensation		S C≣N	9.19 (PBS)	side reactivity with free thiols	Rao <b>2009</b>		
CuAAC	-	==	k <sub>obs</sub> 10-100 (10-100 μΜ Cu)	copper catalyst required	Tornoe <b>2002</b>		
Strain-promoted azide-alkyne	R-N <sub>3</sub>	R OCT, DIFO, BCN	0.0012-0.14 (ACN)	no metal catalyst; some octynes	Agard <b>2004</b>		
cycloadditions (SPAAC)		BARAC, DIBO, DIBAC	0.17-0.96 (ACN)	susceptible to thiol attack	Baskin <b>2006</b>		
	→ N O H H	R	0.013-3.9 (ACN/H <sub>2</sub> O)	some nitrones susceptible to hydrolysis	McKay <b>2010</b>		
	R- <del>≡</del> N-O	H N O	30 (H <sub>2</sub> O)	nitrile oxide generated <i>in situ</i> (photolysis)	Gutsmiedl 2009		
Alternative 1,3-dipolar cycloadditions		OMe	0.15-58 (1:1 ACN:PBS)	nitrile imine generated in situ (photolysis)	Yu 2012		
	, =N=N R	R	13.5 (ACN/H <sub>2</sub> O)	diazo generated <i>via</i> Staudinger reduction	McGrath 2012		
	R-N <sub>3</sub>	O C C C C C C R	70,000-106,000 (H <sub>2</sub> O)	oxanorbornadiene susceptible to reactivity with basic amino acids	van Berkel <b>2007</b>		
	R		210-2,800,000 (PBS, 37°C)	TCO isomerizes over time	Blackman 2008		
Inverse Electron-Demand Diels-Alder	R	R-{N=N N-N	0.12-9.46 (95:5 H <sub>2</sub> O:MeOH)	norbornene and functionalized	Devaraj 2008		
(IED-DA)	H		0.03-13 (12-15% DMSO in PBS)	cyclopropenes are shelf stable	Yang 2012		
Hetero-Diels-Alder	RS	O N	0.0015 (5:1 H <sub>2</sub> O:MeOH)	quinone methide generated in situ	Li 2013		
	R	XR, Ru(II)	0.03-0.3 (PBS/tBuOH)	ruthenium catalyst required	Lin <b>2013</b>		
	R	Ph S S Ph Ni Ph S S Ph	0.25 (PBS/EtOH)	requires nickel-stabilization of pi-electrons	Sletten 2011		

Table 1-1. Bioorthogonal chemistries

$\overset{\oplus}{\underset{R}{\overset{\oplus}}} \overset{\ominus}{\underset{N}{\overset{\ominus}}}$	R	13.5 (ACN/H <sub>2</sub> O)	diazo generated <i>via</i> Staudinger reduction	McGrath 2012
$R-N_3$	O P R			

-					
Inverse Electron-Demand Diels-Alder (IED-DA)	R	$ \begin{array}{c}                                     $	210-2,800,000 (PBS, 37°C)	TCO isomerizes over time	Blackman 2008
	R		0.12-9.46 (95:5 H <sub>2</sub> O:MeOH)	norbornene and functionalized cyclopropenes are shelf stable	Devaraj <b>2008</b>
	H Me		0.03-13 (12-15% DMSO in PBS)		Yang <b>2012</b>
Hetero-Diels-Alder	RS	O N	0.0015 (5:1 H₂O:MeOH)	quinone methide generated <i>in situ</i>	Li <b>2013</b>
Miscellaneous ligations	R	XR, Ru(II)	0.03-0.3 (PBS/tBuOH)	ruthenium catalyst required	Lin <b>2013</b>
	R	Ph Ni Ph S S Ph	0.25 (PBS/EtOH)	requires nickel-stabilization of pi-electrons	Sletten 2011
	⊕ ⊝ R−N≡C	R-K-R' N-N	0.12-0.57 (THF/H <sub>2</sub> O)	products hydrolyze in water	Stockmann 2011
	Ar-X	R-B(OH) <sub>2</sub> , [Pd]	N/A	palladium catalyst required; boronic acids are moderately cytotoxic	Chalker 2009
	Ar-X	──R, [Pd]		palladium catalyst required	Kodama <b>2007</b>

#### **1.2a Polar reactions**

Reactions between nucleophiles and electrophiles (i.e., polar reactions) are omnipresent in organic synthesis, but only a handful are suitable for use in biological settings. Among the most well established for biomolecule labeling are aldehyde and ketone condensations [5, 6]. Aldehydes and ketones—as electrophiles—are rare commodities on proteins and other biopolymers, and they can be selectively ligated with alpha-effect nucleophiles (e.g., hydrazides and aminooxy compounds) to form relatively stable Schiff bases [7-12]. Ketones and aldehydes have been appended to a variety of biomolecules, including proteins [13, 14] and glycans, [15, 16] and ultimately targeted with functionalized hydrazides or aminooxy compounds for visualization or retrieval.

While versatile, these chemistries have some liabilities with regard to biomolecule labeling. For example, the reaction products—hydrazones, in particular—are susceptible to hydrolysis in cellular environments [17]. To generate more stable adducts, Bertozzi and colleagues recently developed an aldehyde condensation that exploits aminoxy-tryptamines [18, 19]. This transformation is a variant of the classic Pictet-Spengler reaction: the aldehyde and tryptamine initially react to form an oxyiminium ion; this intermediate is subject to further indole attack and ultimately C-C bond formation. Ketone and aldehyde condensations are also not 'bioorthogonal' in the truest sense of the word. Aldehydes are present in glucose and other abundant intracellular metabolites; ketones are found in mammalian hormones and microbial natural products. These endogenous molecules can be inadvertently labeled when cells are exposed to aminooxy or hydrazide probes.

To avoid cross-reactivity altogether, reactions that employ non-natural functional groups are highly prized. The quintessential example of this sort is the Staudinger ligation of organic azides and triaryl phosphines [20]. Organic azides are mild electrophiles and have yet to be found in eukaryotes. Similarly, triaryl phosphines—as soft nucleophiles—are virtually absent in living systems [21, 22]. While tolerant of biological functionality, azides and phosphines react readily with one another [23, 24]. In the case of the Staudinger ligation, the reaction forges stable amide linkages between the two reactants. This transformation is slower than most bioorthogonal chemistries, but remains a popular choice for *in vivo* work, owing to its remarkable selectivity and compatibility with cells, tissues, and even live animals [25-29].

#### 1.2b Cycloadditions

Nearly all recent additions to the bioorthogonal toolkit comprise cycloadditions. Two classes, in particular—dipolar cycloadditions and Diels-Alder chemistries—have emerged as excellent options for derivatizing biomolecules with visual tags and other probes.

*Dipolar cycloadditions.* The most popular bioorthogonal cycloadditions also capitalize on the unique features of azides [30]. In addition to being mild electrophiles, organic azides are 1,3-dipoles capable of reacting with terminal alkynes [31-33]. To proceed at a reasonable rate, though, this reaction requires a Cu(I) catalyst. The copper-catalyzed azide-alkyne cycloaddition (CuAAC)—or "click" chemistry—occurs readily in aqueous environments and provides chemically robust triazoles [34-36]. The speed and relative simplicity of this transformation has been widely exploited for biomolecule visualization (mostly in fixed cells) [37-39] and biomolecule retrieval in various "-omics" studies [40-43]. Azides and alkynes also rank among the smallest bioorthogonal motifs and are non-perturbing to most biomolecules. For this reason, CuAAC has been the "go-to" choice for monitoring the activities and targets of numerous small molecules, including enzyme inhibitors and therapeutic drugs [44-47].

While routinely applied *in vitro*, CuAAC has been slower to transition *in vivo*. This is due, in part, to the tri-component nature of the reaction and its requirement for a cytotoxic metal catalyst. To obviate the need for Cu(I), Bertozzi and colleagues exploited an alternative mechanism to drive azide-alkyne cycloaddition: ring strain [48, 49]. They initially designed a cyclooctyne scaffold (OCT) comprising C=C-C bonds that were "bent" from the preferred linear geometry by 17 degrees [50]. The free energy from such bond deformation was sufficient to promote azide-alkyne reaction under ambient conditions and without metal catalyst. This strainpromoted azide-alkyne cycloaddition (SPAAC) has been widely used to tag azido proteins and other biomolecules on live cells [51, 52] and in living organisms [53-55].

Iterative modifications to OCT have been reported over the past five years, and there are now over 10 different cyclooctynes suitable for bioorthogonal labeling [56]. Notable examples include DIBO [52] and BARAC [57] (Table 1-1). These reagents comprise cyclooctyne cores fused to benzene rings. The pendant rings provide increased strain energy and ultimately accelerate the cycloaddition reaction with azides [58]. While DIBO and BARAC provide among the fastest SPAAC rates, their increased hydrophobicity can result in non-specific "sticking" to other biomolecules and insertion into cell membranes [59].

Cyclooctynes are also reactive partners for 1,3-dipoles other than azides. Nitrones [60, 61], nitrile oxides [62, 63], and diazo groups [64, 65] have all been appended to various proteins and selectively ligated with strained alkynes. Most of these cycloadditions are quite fast, with second order rate constants ranging from 1-50  $M^{-1}$  s<sup>-1</sup> [60, 66]. However, the rapid reactivity afforded by these strong dipoles often comes at the expense of their poor stability in aqueous media. Nitrile oxides are particularly prone to hydrolysis and must be generated *in situ*—near the site of intended reactivity—for efficient ligation.

In addition to alkynes, strained *alkenes* are good candidates for bioorthogonal dipolar cycloadditions. Lin and coworkers recently reported that cyclopropene—a highly strained alkene—reacts readily with nitrile imines to form pyrazoline adducts [67]. Nitrile imines, like other strong dipoles, are prone to rapid hydrolysis and must be generated *in situ*. Fortunately, these motifs can be generated from relatively stable precursors, including tetrazoles and chlorooximes, using fairly mild conditions (short pulses of UV light and mild base, respectively) [67-69]. These conditions are compatible with a variety of biomolecules and, in some cases, live cells.

*Diels–Alder cycloadditions*. Strained molecules also play lead roles in the second major class of bioorthogonal cycloadditions: Diels–Alder ligations. In 2008, Fox and coworkers demonstrated that the strained molecule *trans*-cyclooctene (TCO) reacts efficiently with electron-deficient tetrazines in aqueous solution and in the presence of model proteins [70]. These inverse electron-demand Diels–Alder (IED-DA) reactions are the fastest bioorthogonal transformations on record, with rate constants ranging from  $10^3-10^6$  M<sup>-1</sup> s<sup>-1</sup> in some cases [71, 72]. Due to their rapid reactivity, TCO-tetrazine ligations have found immediate application in a variety of biological pursuits, most notably live animal imaging [73-76]. Covalent tagging reactions in rodents and other organisms demand ultra-fast reactions as only small amounts of reagent can typically be used. Unreacted/unbound probe (which cannot be simply rinsed away) is thus kept to a minimum, resulting in high signal-to-noise ratios [77]. A variety of sterically and electronically modified tetrazines have also been developed that exhibit different IED-DA rates, enabling relatively facile "tuning" of the reaction [71, 78, 79].

Tetrazine reactivity with other strained alkenes has also been exploited for bioorthogonal ligation [76, 80, 81]. Coinciding with the initial report on TCO, Hilderbrand and coworkers

demonstrated IED-DA reactivity with norbornene (NB) and electron-deficient tetrazines. NB reacts more sluggishly than TCO, but is far more stable in solution and upon storage. The embedded *trans*-double bond in TCO can isomerize to the *cis* configuration over time, resulting in the accumulation of a non-reactive scaffold [73]. We and others have also shown that another strained alkene—cyclopropene—is amenable to reactions with various tetrazines. Cyclopropenes possess a distinct advantage over TCO owing to their smaller size and broad compatibility with cellular enzymes [67, 81, 82]. However, the IED-DA reactions between these small microcycles and tetrazine are considerably slower than those with TCO. Further modifications to the cyclopropene core may improve these rates.

#### 1.3 Making a match

With over 20 bioorthogonal transformations now reported in the literature, and new ones being discovered at a rapid pace, selecting the "best fit" for a given application is non-trivial. The chemistries vary widely in terms of their selectivities and biocompatibilities, and many of their perceived strengths and weaknesses remain anecdotal. Below, we outline some general considerations for the end user of bioorthogonal chemistries and offer some guidelines for selecting among the options (Figure 1-2). In general, experiments with live cells or tissues demand the most selective reactions, with little tolerance for off-target labeling. Experiments with fixed cells or isolated biomolecules, by contrast, are typically less demanding in terms of reagent selectivity. Thus, they can interface with a larger number of chemistries.



**Figure 1-2. Selecting an appropriate bioorthogonal chemistry.** Considerations include the target biomolecule and mode of functional group installation, the size of the labeling agents, and the stability of the covalent adduct. Bioorthogonal reaction selectivity and speed are also important parameters.

Seeing the big picture. The selective tagging of any biomolecule requires that one of the chemical motifs (e.g., aldehyde, azide, alkyne) is directly attached to the target of interest. Several options exist for installing bioorthogonal functionality onto protein targets (Figure 1-3A). These biopolymers can be readily derivatized at their N- or C-termini using mild chemistries [83-85]. A variety of bioconjugation reactions can also be employed to affix bioorthogonal motifs to Lys and Cys residues [86], as well as to aromatic amino acids [87-90]. For example, Van Hest and colleagues reported a facile method to install azido groups onto Lys side chains via diazo transfer [91]. While efficient, these approaches are inherently non-specific and typically result in more than one modification to the protein backbone.

For *site-specific* installation of bioorthogonal motifs, enzymatic tagging platforms are available. Most of these strategies exploit ligases that have been engineered to append modified substrates (bearing ketones, cyclooctynes and other reactive motifs) to defined acceptor peptides [92-98]. In a recent example, Ting and coworkers generated a lipoic acid ligase variant (LpIA) capable of appending small molecule azides to lysine residues within a 13-residue consensus sequence [99-102]. Once installed, the azido motifs were subsequently ligated with a variety of

functionalized cyclooctynes and visualized over time. This two-step, enzyme-mediated tagging strategy can be used to tag protein targets *in vitro* and in a variety of cellular compartments. Additionally, the LpIA acceptor peptide, similar to those for other engineered enzymes, is highly modular, and can be grafted into multiple proteins.

Bioorthogonal motifs can also be introduced site-specifically into proteins using unnatural amino acid mutagenesis [103, 104]. This strategy exploits unique amino-acyl tRNA synthetase (AARS)/tRNA pairs to deliver non-natural amino acids into growing polypeptide chains in repsonse to unique codons. Keto, azido, and alkynyl versions of Phe have all been introduced into protein targets (at defined positions) via this approach [105, 106]. Amino acids outfitted with larger motifs-including TCO and various cyclooctynes-have been similarly incorporated into protein targets using newly engineered AARS/tRNA pairs [67, 107-113]. Continued advancements in this field will enable multiple bioorthogonal units to be selectively installed in protein targets both in vitro and in vivo [114, 115]. It is also possible to incorporate bioorthogonal amino acids into target proteins relying on the cell's own endogenous machinery, without the need for unique AARS/tRNA pairs [116, 117]. These residue-specific replacement strategies are inherently non-selective, but are nonetheless attractive for generating functionalized proteins owing to their high yields and relative simplicity. Since these methods rely on native biosynthetic pathways—and enzymes with stringent substrate specificities—they are only compatible with non-natural amino acids bearing small chemical appendages (e.g. ketones, azides, alkynes).



**Figure 1-3. Installing bioorthogonal functionality into target biomolecules.** (A) Several strategies exist to introduce bioorthogonal motifs (blue circles) into protein targets. These include direct chemical functionalization (top), enzymatic ligation of the requisite motifs onto defined acceptor peptides (tags, middle), and unnatural amino acid mutagenesis with functionalized amino acids and orthogonal tRNA/AARS pairs (bottom). (B) Unique chemical handles can be metabolically introduced into proteins and non-proteinaceous biomolecules alike via cellular biosynthesis. In this approach, metabolic precursors (left) outfitted with bioorthogonal functional groups (blue circles) are supplied to cells and ultimately incorporated into target biomolecules via the cell's own enzymatic machinery.

For non-proteinaceous biomolecules, fewer methods exist for installing bioorthogonal functional groups. Direct chemical modification is possible, although impractical for most applications [9, 118]. Mutant enzymes are also available to append reactive motifs to glycans, but most are not generalizable and confined to *in vitro* work [119]. For experiments in cells and tissues, the majority of non-proteinaceous biomolecules can be outfitted with bioorthogonal probes via cellular biosynthesis (Figure 1-3B). This approach relies on metabolic precursors that are supplied to cells and ultimately installed into target biomolecules using the cell's own enzymatic machinery [2]. Similar to the residue-specific tagging of proteins mentioned above, only small bioorthogonal motifs are broadly compatible with native cellular enzymes and thus good candidates for this approach. Upon installation, the bioorthogonal motifs can be covalently ligated with probes for visualization or enrichment.

Setting the limits. A primary consideration in choosing chemistries for biological use is the biocompatibility of the reagents. Comprehensive toxicity profiles have not been generated for most of the common bioorthogonal transformations. However, most can be safely used (with milli- to micromolar concentrations of reagents) without detriment to biological systems. One exception is the copper-catalyzed azide-alkyne cycloaddition (CuAAC). Copper ions are readily chelated by native amino acids and can induce the formation of reactive oxygen species, resulting in damage to cells and tissues. Concerns about copper cytotoxicity have largely relegated CuAAC to experiments with isolated biomolecules and fixed cells/tissues over the past decade. In recent years, though, Finn, Wu and others have identified ligands that sequester copper from unintended targets and offer improved cell compatability [120-124]. Ting and coworkers also devised a strategy to reduce the overall amount of copper required for efficient CuAAC [125]. Their approach features picolyl azide, a chelating scaffold that pre-organizes the copper and azido reactants. This arrangement promotes cycloaddition at exceedingly low—and biocompatible—concentrations of metal [126, 127]. The picolyl azide unit can also be appended to numerous proteins of interest using the engineered LplA ligase [100]. Collectively, these advancements will facilitate the wider adoption of CuAAC in live cell labeling applications.

A second consideration relevant to biocompatibility involves the selectivity of the reactants. For the majority of the transformations in Table 1-1, some degree of non-specific labeling has been observed. Cyclooctynes, for example, are prone to attack by cysteine and other biological nucleophiles [58, 128, 129]. This side reactivity has stymied their use in some intracellular labeling applications, but can largely be avoided in environments devoid of free thiols (e.g., extracellular spaces or where thiols have been capped with acylating agents). Non-specific reactivity has also been observed in CuAAC reactions when excess alkyne is used [130, 131]. These conditions promote the formation of reactive copper acetylides. Fortunately, such side reactivity can be mitigated by simply "reversing" the reactants—using low concentrations of alkyne and excess azide to drive the reaction. Cravatt and Speers were among the first to note improved signal-to-noise ratios with these conditions in protein profiling experiments [131].

A final point to consider with regard to reagent biocompatibility is the overall solution stability of the reactants and their covalent adducts. Azides, alkynes, and their triazole products are remarkably stable in aqueous buffers and a variety of cellular environments. Many of the most reactive bioorthogonal reagents, though, are prone to hydrolysis. For example, the most electron-deficient tetrazines used for rapid IED-DA reactions generally hydrolyze readily in water and only tolerate incubation times on the minutes-to-hours time scale (ligation reactions on the seconds-to-minutes time scale). Similarly, nitrile imines and other 1,3-dipoles (other than azides) react readily with water and must be generated *in situ* for covalent tagging experiments.

Based on toxicity and selectivity considerations, the Staudinger ligation of azides and triaryl phosphines ranks among the best reactions for biological labeling applications. Minimal-to-no background labeling has been observed with these reagents under a variety of conditions. Indeed, this reaction has been employed in proteomics studies where the analytes of interest are in low abundance and sensitive detection is required [132, 133]. It should be noted, though, that phosphine reagents are prone to non-specific oxidation over time [20]. While these reactivities do not contribute to background labeling *per se*, they do reduce the effective concentration of the probe available for labeling.

Sizing up the competition. Small bioorthogonal motifs are generally desired in any application to avoid perturbing the biological system under study. For experiments requiring the metabolic installation of chemical probes, reagent size can be the deciding factor as native cellular enzymes do not often tolerate large chemical appendages. Based on size considerations alone, azides and terminal alkynes have emerged as preferred scaffolds in bioorthogonal labeling [134]. Both of these moieties are remarkably compact, comprising a mere three atoms, and are innocuous to most (but not all) biosynthetic pathways [135]. Azido metabolites have been used to target proteins [117, 136], glycans [137-139], and lipids [140, 141], among other biomolecules [142]. In all cases, the azido species were readily detected upon covalent reaction with a complementary alkyne, cyclooctyne, or phosphine reagent. Alkynyl metabolites have been similarly employed in biological experiments [38, 143-148]. A suite of alkyne-selective reactions does not yet exist; therefore, these probes are typically detected using CuAAC. Ketones and

aldehydes rival azides and alkynes in terms of size. However, their somewhat sluggish reactivities at neutral pH have limited their broad utilization *in cellulo*.

Identifying alternatives to the azide and alkyne—that rival these motifs in terms of size and selective reactivity—is an ongoing challenge. Alkenes are options, although these small motifs are not robustly reactive with complementary probes [149]. Nitrile imines and other 1,3dipoles are also candidates, though most are not amenable to long-term storage and must be generated *in situ* [62, 69, 150-154]. Cyclopropene, a recently reported bioorthogonal reagent, appears to strike a balance between robust reactivity and shelf stability. We and others have shown that these microcycles can be appended to discrete monosaccharides and metabolically incorporated into cellular glycans and proteins [80-82, 149]. More work must be done, though, to assess the long-range biological compatibility and versatility of these motifs.

Assessing the need for speed. Reaction rate is another important parameter to assess when selecting suitable bioorthogonal chemistries. For slow reactions, a large amount of one reagent must typically be used to drive the labeling event. Large amounts of any of reagent can be prohibitively expensive or potentially toxic. Fast reactions largely avoid these issues, as only minimal quantities are required. When the need for speed is paramount, the IED-DA reaction between tetrazine and TCO is unrivaled. The rates of these reactions range from  $10^3$ - $10^6$  M<sup>-1</sup>s<sup>-1</sup>, making them appropriate for biological processes that occur on the minutes-to-seconds time scale or that involve biomolecule targets in low abundance (e.g., in vivo imaging) [71, 155]. In a recent example, Weissleder and coworkers utilized the TCO-tetrazine reaction to image tumor cells in whole animals. TCO was appended to a tumor-targeting antibody ( $\alpha$ -A33) that localized to colon cancer grafts upon injection [74]. Following clearance of unbound antibody, the cancer

cells could be readily visualized using as little as 2 mM of a tetrazine-<sup>18</sup>F conjugate to tag the tumor-bound TCOs. Similar imaging experiments with Staudinger ligation and SPAAC chemistries failed to provide adequate signal-to-noise ratios, owing to the slower kinetics of these transformations and the need for a large amount of reagent [156-158].

Activatable probes can be considered when using large amounts of labeling reagent is unavoidable. These reagents produce detectable signal only upon covalent reaction. Thus, the probe can be added in excess to drive the reaction without the need for extensive rinsing. Fluorogenic cyclooctynes have been developed for this purpose; these scaffolds "turn on" fluorescence only upon reaction with azides [159-161]. In a recent example, Boons and coworkers reported an activatable version of DIBO that exhibits a 1000-fold increase in fluorescence upon azide ligation [160]. Activatable tetrazines [159, 162] and azides [163, 164] are also available.

*Fine-tuning the selection.* Like most experiments, the application of any bioorthogonal chemistry often requires some degree of optimization. Thus, it is helpful to have access to a variety of scaffolds that operate via a similar mechanism, but differ in such parameters as rate, solubility, and lipophilicity. As mentioned above, a panel of cyclooctynes that differ in their electronic and solubility properties is now available; these reagents can be "matched" to a given application involving azide ligation. Similarly, a wide variety of tetrazine probes for IED-DA cycloadditions have been reported [78, 165]. Mehl and colleagues recently capitalized on tetrazine "tunability" to install these non-natural motifs into recombinant proteins [108]. Tetrazines exploited for rapid IED-DA reactivity comprise electron-withdrawing groups, making them susceptible to hydrolysis and reactivity with endogenous thiols. This instability is not
detrimental in most applications where short labeling times are employed. In the case of recombinant protein production, though, long incubation times are necessary to biosynthetically introduce amino acids into growing polypeptide chains. The authors identified a tetrazine with electron-*donating* groups that harbored the requisite stability and compatibility for long-term *in vivo* use and incorporation into recombinant proteins [53, 166].

The Staudinger ligation is also quite "tunable," although most methods to boost reactivity also accelerate phosphine oxidation [167, 168]. Phosphine probes can be manipulated to produce "turn-on" fluorescence in response to azide ligation, similar to their octyne counterparts [169]. Raines and others have also developed phosphine scaffolds that can be cleaved from the product post-ligation, leaving behind native amide bonds [170, 171]. These latter reagents participate in "traceless" Staudinger ligations and have been particularly useful in protein semi-synthesis [172], installing photo-crosslinking groups on cellular metabolites [173], and templating biomaterials *in vivo* [174].

*Knowing the market.* The accessibility of required reactants can also be a deciding factor when selecting a bioorthogonal chemistry. Based on reagent availability and ease of use, CuAAC ranks among the most accessible reactions to date. A variety of alkyne- and azide-modified substrates can be purchased from commercial sources, and many can be used directly in metabolic labeling experiments. Several additional azide and alkyne precursors are available that can be readily appended to biomolecules using straightforward chemistries. The availability of reagents, coupled with the relatively user-friendly features of the reaction, have enabled the rapid adoption of CuAAC in diverse disciplines. This chemistry has been used to monitor oligonucleotide production [38, 136], construct organotypic hydrogels [175, 176], and even visualize temporal changes in glycosylation relevant to development [138, 177].

Other bioorthogonal transformations have been slower to transition to the wider biological community, mostly owing to their more challenging syntheses and lack of commercial suppliers. However, a number of reagent precursors (based on BCN, TCO, tetrazine, and phosphine scaffolds) have been recently made available. We anticipate that these probes will bolster new discoveries in a wide variety of fields.

### 1.4 Moving forward

Identifying chemistries for efficient biomolecule tagging in increasingly complex environments—cells, animal models, and even humans—is an ongoing challenge [155]. The search for ever faster and more selective reactions will be aided by explorations into new realms of chemical space. Already, Rao, Chin and others have discovered that cyanobenzothiazole condensations exhibit both rapid and specific reactivity with aminothiols [178, 179]. Similar advances are being made in the realm of bioorthogonal organometallic transformations. In seminal work, the Davis group reported ruthenium-catalyzed cross-metathesis reactions for efficient protein tagging [180-183], along with palladium-catalyzed cross-couplings amenable to targeting proteins, glycans, and nucleotides [184-189].

A corollary challenge to identifying new transformations is elucidating methods to *control* bioorthogonality (i.e., turning functional groups "on" and "off"). Such "on-demand" reactivity is especially critical for reagents that are only semi-stable in biological environments. Photochemical activation is a particularly attractive mechanism for generating reactivity "on demand" [68, 69, 190-195]. Pulsed light can be controlled both spatially and temporally, and

thus offers a method to release bioorthogonal reagents and localize reactivity [196, 197] (Figure 1-4). Popik and coworkers exploited the photo-triggered release of cyclooctyne reagents to control azide-alkyne reactivity [195, 198]. In related work, Lin and colleagues utilized "photoclick" chemistry to tag alkene-modified proteins [68]. The derivatized proteins were incubated with tetrazole probes. Upon UV illumination, tetrazoles photolyze to generate nitrile imines that can ligate terminal alkenes. The spatial resolution of these and other photo-click reactions is dependent on the lifetime of the liberated reagent. For nitrile imine, the lifetime is relatively short, as the 1,3-dipole is subject to rapid water quenching [67]. This "react" or "self-destruct" scenario enables more focal labeling and thus excellent spatial resolution. Continued development of mild methods to release bioorthogonal reagents "on-demand," including two-photon absorption and selective chemical reactions, are important pursuits [192, 193, 199-201].



**Figure 1-4. "On-demand" bioorthogonal reactivity.** (A) Bioorthogonal functionality can be revealed *in situ* in live cells using pulsed light. Selective irradiation liberates the desired functionality only in the region of interest, conferring both spatial and temporal resolution on the labeling reaction. (B) Two examples of "photo-click" reactions. Irradiation of the cyclopropenone scaffold releases a functional cyclooctyne capable of reacting with azides (top). Similarly, irradiation of the tetrazole scaffold generates a nitrile imine (bottom). This 1,3-dipole can covalently label nearby alkenes.

As new bioorthogonal reagents continue to be explored and validated, another major challenge looms: identifying transformations that not only work well *in vivo*, but also work well with *existing* bioorthogonal chemistries. Many of the most common bioorthogonal reactions are incompatible with one another in live cells. For example, certain cycloalkynes have been shown to be highly reactive with tetrazine and therefore do not lend themselves to multi-component studies (Figure 1-5) [202, 203]. However, careful selection of bioorthogonal reagents can enable simultaneous and selective labeling [110, 202]. Recently, we and others demonstrated the mutual orthogonality of the alkene-tetrazine ligation with variants of SPAAC [81, 109, 149, 204, 205] In one example, Hilderbrand and coworkers utilized Herceptin-TCO and cetuximab-DBCO antibody conjugates to target A431 and SKBR3 cells, respectively [204]. Upon co-administration of the complementary azido- and tetrazine-fluorophores, both cell populations were selectively labeled and visualized.

The identification of mutually orthogonal transformations is being aided by computational studies. Houk and colleagues developed a distortion-interaction model that has proven effective at predicting reactivity of strained molecules with 1,3-dipoles and dienes [58, 206, 207]. Steric clashes between many of the large, strained molecules can be exploited to disfavor certain cycloadditions, while promoting others [203]. In recent work, we utilized this model to identify two sets of cyclopropenes—differing by the presence of a single methyl group—that exhibit unique cycloaddition preferences [208]. These unique reactivities were employed to append unique fluorophores to model proteins. We anticipate that computational algorithms will continue to have a major impact in identifying combinations of mutually orthogonal transformations or those that can be used sequentially [203, 209]. Assays to rapidly identify candidate classes of probes will also be helpful in this regard [210].



**Figure 1-5. Identifying mutually orthogonal transformations.** Strained alkenes and alkynes possess dramatically different reactivities with azido (left) and tetrazine (right) probes. The alkenes in blue react rapidly with tetrazine via IED-DA chemistries, while the alkynes in red demonstrate rapid reactivity with azides. Bicyclononyne (BCN, black) does not significantly favor tetrazines or azides in terms of reaction rate. With judicious selection, some of these reagents can be used concurrently in bioorthogonal labeling applications. \*Determined computationally to be unreactive with disubstituted tetrazines [203].

## **1.5 Conclusions**

The past decade has seen a marked expansion of the bioorthogonal toolkit, with a variety of polar reactions and cycloaddition chemistries demonstrating utility for biomolecule labeling in complex environments. As the number of bioorthogonal reactions continues to grow, selecting an appropriate chemistry for a given application is increasingly challenging. The reactions differ in a number of key attributes, including selectivities and rates, and understanding the "personalities" of each transformation is key to their successful implementation.

# 1.6 Objectives

Bioorthogonal chemistry had been largely focused on the azide. I sought to develop new ligations to both improve upon the azide ligations weaknesses, but also to be used in conjuction with the azide for multi-target detection. Objectives included the following:

- 1. Identify small, stable cyclopropene scaffolds compatible with biological functional.
- 2. Characterize selective reactions of cyclopropenes with tetrazines and 1,3-dipoles.
- 3. Establish cyclopropene as a broadly useful chemical reporter.
- Develop cyclopropene ligations to use in tandem with bioorthogonal azide ligations for probing multiple biomolecules in tandem.
- Identify new mutually orthogonal reactions with new cyclopropene scaffolds and other existing bioorthogonal reagents.

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# CHAPTER 2: Functionalized cyclopropenes as bioorthogonal chemical reporters

### **2.1 Introduction**

The bioorthogonal chemical reporter strategy is among the most popular methods to tag biomolecules in live cells and whole animals [1]. This technique relies on the metabolic introduction of a unique functional group (i.e., a chemical reporter) into a biomolecule of interest (Figure 2-1A). The reporter is detected in a second step using highly selective (i.e., bioorthogonal) chemistries [2]. Depending on the type of covalent labeling agent employed, this two-step approach can be used to visualize biomolecules in cellular environments or enrich them for further analyses.

While powerful, the bioorthogonal chemical reporter strategy has been limited to only a handful of broadly functional reporter groups. This select class includes ketones, terminal alkynes, and organic azides [3-6]. Azides, in particular, have been widely utilized in live cells and animals owing to their remarkable biocompatibility and unique reactivity [2, 7, 8]. Azides can be readily affixed to metabolic precursors that target glycans, lipids, and numerous other biomolecules [9-11]. Once installed, these motifs can be selectively reacted with soft nucleophiles (via Staudinger ligation) or activated alkynes (via copper-free "click" chemistry) without detriment to the cell or organism [12-16]. Identifying new chemical reporters remains an important, yet challenging goal, as most functional groups do not meet the stringent criteria required for use in living systems. The scaffolds must remain inert to endogenous biological functionality, yet react robustly with complementary probes in complex environments. Chemical

reporters must also traverse biosynthetic pathways and, thus, be minimally perturbing to the cell's metabolic machinery.

In recent years, strained alkenes and alkynes have been identified that meet several of the criteria for broadly applicable chemical reporters [8]. These scaffolds, including *trans*-cyclooctene (TCO), norbornene (NB), and bicyclononyne (BCN), are abiotic and relatively stable in cellular environs [17-23]. Furthermore, they react rapidly with electron-poor tetrazines via inverse-electron-demand Diels-Alder (IED-DA) reactions. The remarkable speed of these reactions is well suited for sensitive imaging applications, and a variety of TCO- and NB-conjugated nanoparticles and antibodies have been utilized for this purpose [17-23]. More recently, Chin and others have demonstrated that amino acids outfitted with BCN, TCO, or NB can be incorporated into cellular proteins utilizing engineered strains of bacteria; the functionalized proteins can be subsequently targeted with visual probes via IED-DA ligations [21, 24, 25]. While useful, strained alkenes and alkynes have been slow to transition as reporter groups for other metabolic pathways. This is due, in part, to their large size and incompatibility with many endogenous biosynthetic pathways.



**Figure 2-1**. Chemical reporters and bioorthogonal chemistries. (A) The bioorthogonal chemical reporter strategy. A biomolecule of interest (light blue rectangle) can be targeted with a chemical reporter group (red circle) appended to a metabolic precursor (dark blue rectangle). Subsequent covalent reaction enables the target biomolecule to be visualized or retrieved. (B) Cyclopropenes undergo cycloaddition reactions with tetrazine scaffolds. (C) Panel of cyclopropene analogs examined in this study.

We aimed to examine a smaller strained olefin—cyclopropene—for use as a bioorthogonal chemical reporter. Cyclopropenes are not present in most eukaryotes, and are likely compatible with a variety of metabolic pathways owing to their small size. In fact, the steric demand of a cyclopropene unit is on par with diazirine, a widely used functional group in cellular labeling and photo-crosslinking studies [26, 27]. Cyclopropenes also possess a large amount of strain energy that can drive IED-DA reactions and other cycloadditions under relatively mild conditions (Figure 2-1B) [28, 29]. These types of transformations are particularly attractive for use in biological settings, and have been the subject of recent work by Devaraj and coworkers [29, 30]. In this chapter, we describe the development and utilization of cyclopropenes as chemical reporters in living systems.



# Scheme 2-1. Synthesis of functionalized cyclopropenes.

#### 2.2 Results and Discussion

## 2.2a Design and synthesis of biocompatible cyclopropenes

While cyclopropenes possess many favorable attributes for cell-based studies, they are not without limitation. Cyclopropene itself is prone to polymerization at room temperature and susceptible to attack by thiols and other biological nucleophiles [31, 32]. However, several lines of evidence suggest that modifications to the cyclopropene core can markedly improve scaffold stability. For example, substituted cyclopropenes are found in both plant and marine natural products, indicating that C-1 and C-2-modified olefins possess some degree of metabolic stability [33-35]. Methyl-substituted cyclopropenes are also produced on the ton-scale in the agricultural industry and used in produce transport [36]. Additionally, carbonyls and other electron-withdrawing groups positioned at C-3 are known to stabilize cyclopropenes by imparting partial aromatic character to the ring [37-39].

We reasoned that a combination of steric and electronic modifications to the cyclopropene core would provide a chemical reporter suitable for metabolic labeling without compromising cycloaddition reactivity. To test this hypothesis, we designed a panel of cyclopropenes with vinyl methyl substituents and various C-3 appendages (Figure 2-1C). The C-3 groups differed in their electron-withdrawing character and, in some cases, provided handles for eventual attachment to metabolic precursors. We were particularly attracted to the amide- and carbamate-functionalized scaffolds (**2.2** and **2.11**, respectively) as these linkages mimic those found in numerous bioconjugates.

Cyclopropenes can be readily accessed from alkynes, but the synthesis of such low molecular weight compounds presents unique challenges. Many cyclopropenes are volatile and, as mentioned earlier, prone to polymerization upon concentration. To mitigate against these effects, we utilized di-substituted alkynes in the early stages of our syntheses. TMS-protected propyne and 2-butyne were first subjected to rhodium-catalyzed cyclopropenation with ethyl diazoacetate (2.5) to provide esters 2.6a-b (Scheme 2-1A). Subsequent hydrolysis of the isolated esters afforded the free acids 2.1a-b in good yield.

With **2.1** and **2.6** in hand, we were poised to access the remaining C-3 modified scaffolds. The amide-functionalized cyclopropenes **2.2a-b** were prepared by treating **2.1a-b** with pentafluorophenyl trifluoroacetate (PFP-TFA), followed by isopropylamine. The hydroxysubstituted cyclopropenes **2.3b** and **2.8** were generated via DIBAL-mediated reduction of **2.6**. Unfortunately, attempts to deprotect **2.8** to afford the mono-substituted cyclopropene **2.3a** were unsuccessful. NMR analyses suggested that **2.3a**—with a single methyl substituent and no electron-withdrawing group—polymerizes rapidly upon concentration (data not shown). Last, the carbamate scaffold **2.11** was isolated in two steps from **2.3b** (Scheme 2-1B). In contrast to **2.3a**, cyclopropenes **2.1**, **2.2**, **2.3b**, and **2.11** exhibited remarkable stability in aqueous buffer and in the presence of biologically relevant thiols. Scaffolds **2.2a** and **2.11**, in particular, were found to be stable for extended periods of time in solution and in the presence of cysteine (Figures 2-2 and 2-3).



А



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**Figure 2-2.** Cyclopropenes **2.2a** and **2.11** are stable upon storage. <sup>1</sup>H-NMR spectra of **2.2a** (100 mM in CDCl<sub>3</sub>) taken (A) immediately after isolation and (B) 2 months after sample preparation. <sup>1</sup>H-NMR spectra of **2.11** (100 mM in CDCl<sub>3</sub>) taken (C) immediately after isolation and (D) 1 week after sample preparation.





**Figure 2-3**. Cyclopropenes are stable in the presence of biological nucleophiles. Cyclopropenes (A) **2.2a** and (B) **2.11** (5 mM) were incubated with cysteine (5 mM) in 10% DMSO- $d_6$ /deuterated PBS and analyzed by <sup>1</sup>H-NMR over 24 h.
## 2.2b Analysis of cyclopropene-tetrazine reactivity

To examine whether the substituted cyclopropenes were still amenable to facile cycloaddition, we subjected **2.1**, **2.2**, **2.3b**, and **2.11** to the model dipyridyl-tetrazine reagent **2.12**. Cycloadduct formation was observed in all cases when excess cyclopropene was used (Figures 2-4A, 2-5), although the products formed between **2.1** and **2.12** degraded rapidly in solution. The reactions also exhibited distinct fuchsia-to-yellow color changes that were used to calculate second-order rate constants for the transformations (Table 2-1, Figures 2-6 and 2-7). As expected, faster reactions were observed in more polar solvents and with less sterically congested cyclopropenes [29]. Additionally, cyclopropenes with reduced electron-withdrawing character at C-3 were found to react more expediently with **2.12**, in agreement with previous studies [37]. Scaffolds **2.2a** and **2.11** also exhibited comparable reactivity with a functionalized tetrazine probe.



**Figure 2-4**. Cyclopropenes react with tetrazines to form covalent adducts. (A) HPLC analysis of the cycloaddition between **2.2b** and **2.12**. The reaction was initiated in organic solvent prior to the addition of aqueous buffer. (B) The cyclopropene-tetrazine ligation proceeds via an initial Diels-Alder reaction, followed by  $N_2$  elimination. Subsequent ring opening and closing provides a mixture of diastereomers (**2.13** and **2.14**). Intramolecular cyclization ultimately affords the tricyclic adduct **2.15**. Diagnostic NMR chemical shifts are noted.



57







2.3b

Figure 2-5. HPLC analyses (0-95% CH<sub>3</sub>CN/H<sub>2</sub>O over 10 min with detection at 214 nm) of the reactions between tetrazine 2.12 and (A) 2.2a (in excess), (B) 2.11 (in excess), (C) 2.3b in 1:1 CH<sub>3</sub>CN:PBS (2.3b and 2.12 co-elute).

2.2a 2.2a 2.2a 2.2b	R <sub>1</sub>	$R_2$ + $N$	R <sub>3</sub> _solvent	2.12 2.12 Tz-Biotin 2.12	R <sub>1</sub> R <sub>2</sub>	∠R <sub>3</sub> R <sub>3</sub> ∶	$= \begin{cases} Tz-Biotin -\frac{3}{2} \\ -\frac{3}{2} \end{cases}$	
2.12	Entry	Cyclopropene	<b>R</b> <sub>1</sub>	2.12	R <sub>2</sub>	Tetrazine	Solvent	<i>k</i> (10 <sup>-2</sup> M <sup>-1</sup> s <sup>-1</sup> )
2.12	1		-C(O)NH-	· <sup>iP</sup> 5.12	-H		CH <sub>3</sub> CN	$3.0 \pm 0.2$
2.11	2		-C(O)NH-	<sup>./P</sup> ź.12	-H		CH <sub>3</sub> CN:PBS	5.1 ± 0.7
2.11	3		-C(O)NH-	<sup>-<i>i</i>P<sub>2</sub>.12</sup>	-H		CH <sub>3</sub> CN:PBS	1.4 ± 0.2
2.11	4		-C(O)NH-	<sup>1</sup> Z-Biotin	-CH <sub>3</sub>		CH <sub>3</sub> CN	ND*
	5		-CH <sub>2</sub> OH -CH <sub>2</sub> OH -CH <sub>2</sub> OC(O)NH- <i>i</i> Pr -CH <sub>2</sub> OC(O)NH- <i>i</i> Pr		-CH <sub>3</sub>		CH₃CN	1.9 ± 0.3
_	6				$-CH_3$		CH <sub>3</sub> CN:PBS	15 ± 2
_	7				-CH <sub>3</sub>		CH <sub>3</sub> CN	0.28 ± 0.03
	8				$-CH_3$		CH <sub>3</sub> CN:PBS	$3.5 \pm 0.5$
	9		-CH <sub>2</sub> OC(O)	NH-iPr	$-CH_3$		CH <sub>3</sub> CN:PBS	$3.9 \pm 0.5$

 Table 2-1. Cycloaddition rates observed between cyclopropene and tetrazine scaffolds

 2.12
 0

\* Due to slow kinetics, rate determined by <sup>1</sup>H-NMR in CD<sub>3</sub>OD (k =  $0.037 \pm 0.006 \times 10^{-2} \text{ M}^{-1} \text{s}^{-1}$ )

Z V







G

Figure 2-6. Plots used to calculate second-order rate constants of the reaction between (A) 2.2a, (B) 2.3b, (C) 2.11 and tetrazine 2.12 in 1:1 CH<sub>3</sub>CN:PBS. Second-order rate constants were also calculated for (D) 2.2a and (E) 2.11 with Tz-Biotin in 1:1 CH<sub>3</sub>CN:PBS. Second-order rate constants in CH<sub>3</sub>CN were also calculated using the plots (F) 2.2a, (G) 2.3b, and (H) 2.11 with 2.12.



Figure 2-7. Plot used to calculate the rate constant for the cyclopropene 2.2b - tetrazine 2.12 cycloaddition in CD<sub>3</sub>OD.

While the cyclopropene reactions are markedly slower than other tetrazine-based ligations (~4-5 orders of magnitude slower than some TCO reactions) [40], they are still suitable for use in biological systems. In fact, the cycloaddition rates measured for **2.2a** and **2.11** are on par with two bioorthogonal reactions widely utilized in live cells and animals: the Staudinger ligation ( $k = 0.25 \times 10^{-2} \text{ M}^{-1}\text{s}^{-1}$  in 5% H<sub>2</sub>O/CH<sub>3</sub>CN) and the strain-promoted azide-alkyne cycloaddition with a difluorinated cyclooctyne ( $k = 7.6 \times 10^{-2} \text{ M}^{-1}\text{s}^{-1}$  in CH<sub>3</sub>CN) [14, 41]. These reactions remain popular despite their relatively slow rates, as the need for small, non-perturbing chemical reporters (e.g., azides) can often trump the need for rapid reactivity in living systems.

Our analyses of the cycloaddition reactions also revealed important mechanistic details. Cyclopropene-tetrazine ligations proceed via an initial Diels-Alder cycloaddition, followed by N<sub>2</sub> expulsion. Facial selectively in the initial cycloadduct is dictated by steric considerations, with the anti-addition product likely predominating for most cyclopropenes (Figures 2-2, 2-8-14) [42]. For di-substituted cyclopropenes, though, the strain associated with multiple suprafacial substituents can drive further electrocyclic ring opening [43, 44]. Subsequent ring closure can ultimately alter the position of the C-3 substituent (placing it over the tetrazine ring, as in 2.14). Indeed, when dimethyl cyclopropene 2.2b was treated with 2.12, resonances for both 2.13 and 2.14 were observed in the <sup>1</sup>H-NMR spectrum. We also noticed that the yellow color of this solution faded over time in aqueous buffer. NMR and HPLC analyses revealed that the initial cycloadduct undergoes further intramolecular attack at the imine carbon to yield 2.15 (Figures 2-2, 2-8–10). This internal cyclization was also observed when cyclopropene 2.3b was treated with tetrazine **2.12**, although intramolecular attack proceeded at a faster rate (Figures 2-11 and 2-12). By contrast, when 2.11 (lacking a suitable C-3 nucleophile) was treated with 2.12, no intramolecular cyclization was observed following ring opening (Figure 2-13 and 2-14). While some cyclopropene-tetrazine adducts are prone to further rearrangement, it is important to note that the starting materials remain covalently linked.

### 2.2c Protein modification via cyclopropene-tetrazine ligation

In addition to undergoing rapid and selective ligation reactions, chemical reporters must function in complex environments. To evaluate the cyclopropene scaffolds in a biologically relevant setting, we appended the reporters to a model protein (lysozyme or BSA). Standard carbonate- and NHS-ester coupling reactions were used to attach cyclopropene scaffolds **2.10** and **2.24**, respectively, to the protein surface (Figures 2-15A and Scheme 2-2). The modified protein samples were then reacted with a rhodamine-functionalized tetrazine scaffold (**Tz-Rho**, Scheme 2-3) and analyzed via mass spectrometry (Figure 2-16) or in-gel fluorescence imaging (Figures 2-15A and 2-16). As depicted in Figures 2-3B-D and 2-17, the ligations were both time-and dose-dependent, and no reaction was observed in the absence of either **Tz-Rho** or cyclopropene.



Figure 2-8. NOESY spectrum of cycloadduct 2.15 with relevant cross peaks highlighted.



**Figure 2-9**. HMBC spectrum of cycloadduct **2.15**. Cross peaks highlighting the proximity of the C-3 proton and one methyl substituent to the quaternary center are noted.



**Figure 2-10**. The initial cycloadduct **2.16** formed from **2.2a** and **2.12** exists in equilibrium with **2.17** and presumably **2.22**. Diagnostic <sup>1</sup>H-NMR chemical shifts for the italicized methyl protons are provided.



Figure 2-11. Mechanism for cycloadduct formation upon treatment of 2.3b with 2.12. The initial cycloadduct further cyclizes to provide 2.21.



Figure 2-12. NOESY spectrum of cycloadduct 2.21 with relevant cross peaks highlighted.



**Figure 2-13.** Mechanism for cycloadduct formation upon treatment of 2.11 with 2.12. The ratio of 2.23 to 2.18 is 7:100 by <sup>1</sup>H-NMR.



**Figure 2-14**. NOESY spectrum of cycloadduct **2.18:2.23** mixture with relevant cross peaks highlighted on the major product **2.18**.



**Figure 2-15**. Methylcyclopropenes can be selectively modified on protein surfaces. (A) Cyclopropenes (Cp) and azides (Az) were appended to BSA (12.5 mg/mL in PBS) via NHS ester coupling or carbonate activation (8.4 mM labeling reagent). The labeled proteins (2 mg/mL) were subsequently reacted with either a tetrazine-rhodamine (**Tz-Rho**) conjugate or a cyclooctyne-fluorescein conjugate (**DBCO-488**). (B) Gel analysis of cyclopropene-modified BSA incubated with 100  $\mu$ M **Tz-Rho** for 0-60 min or no reagent (-). (C) Gel analysis of Cp-modified BSA labeled with **Tz-Rho** (0-250  $\mu$ M) for 1 h. (D) Gel analysis of Cp-modified BSA (+) or BSA only (-) treated with **Tz-Rho** (500  $\mu$ M) or no reagent (-) at 37 °C for 1 h. (E) Gel analysis of BSA functionalized with Cp, Az, or both chemical reporters (lanes 10-13) and reacted for 1 h with either 100  $\mu$ M **Tz-Rho**, **DBCO-488**, both reagents simultaneously, or no reagent. For B-E, protein loading was assessed with Coomassie stain (lower panels).









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Lyz+Cycloadduct (Lyz+Tz)





**Figure 2-16.** Mass spec analysis of protein conjugates. Lysozyme was used as a model protein to verify the extent of cyclopropene and/or-azide modification utilizing NHS-ester or carbonate labeling methods. (A) Lysozyme was treated with carbonates **2.10**, **2.25** or NHS ester **2.24**. A portion of the conjugates was further subjected to covalent labeling with **Tz-Biotin**. (B) Spectrum of unmodified lysozyme. (C) Spectrum of lysozyme modified with **2.25**. (D) Spectrum of lysozyme modified with **2.10**. The lysozyme conjugate also appeared to be modified with an additional group (98 mass units). This could potentially arise via the side reaction shown in E, owing to the large concentration of carbonate probe used. (F) Spectrum of lysozyme modified with **2.24** (G) Spectrum of lysozyme modified with **2.24** and subsequently treated 100  $\mu$ M **Tz-Biotin** for 1 h.



**Figure 2-17.** Substituted cyclopropenes can be modified on protein surfaces. (A) Cyclopropene (Cp) scaffolds were appended to BSA via carbonate activation. The labeled proteins were subsequently reacted with **Tz-Rho**. (B) Gel analysis of cyclopropene-modified BSA incubated with 100  $\mu$ M **Tz-Rho** for 0-60 min or no reagent (-). (C) Gel analysis of cyclopropene-modified BSA labeled with **Tz-Rho** (0-500  $\mu$ M) for 1 h. (D) Gel analysis of cyclopropene-modified BSA (+) or BSA only (-) treated with **Tz-Rho** (500  $\mu$ M) or no reagent (-) at 37 °C for 2 h. For B-D, protein loading was assessed with Coomassie staining.

We also examined whether the cyclopropene-tetrazine ligation is compatible with azides and strained alkynes. The orthogonality of such reagents would enable cyclopropenes to be used in tandem with established bioorthogonal chemistries for dual labeling experiments. Cyclopropenes are known to react with organic azides and other 1,3-dipoles, but such reactions typically require strong heating [45]. Indeed, when cyclopropenes 2.2a or 2.11 were subjected to azidoethanol or phenyl azide in organic solvent, no reaction was observed under ambient conditions over 24 h (data not shown). Additionally, when cyclopropene (Cp)- and azide (Az)modified BSA conjugates were mixed together (providing Cp/Az-BSA), both functional groups could be selectively targeted with covalent probes (either Tz-Rho or a dibenzocyclooctynefluorophore conjugate, DBCO-488) [46], suggesting that Cp and Az can coexist to a certain extent (lanes 11-13, Figure 2-15E). Reduced fluorescence intensities were observed when either DBCO-488 or Tz-Rho was incubated with Cp/Az-BSA (compared to BSA samples modified with either Az or Cp alone), but this was likely due to fewer reporter groups present in the sample itself-Cp-BSA and Az-BSA were combined 1:1 to generate the mixed sample (Cp/Az-BSA), halving the number of available reporter groups (Figure 2-15E).

Cyclopropene reactivity with cyclooctynes and other strained molecules has not been extensively investigated. However, when cyclopropene-modified BSA (Cp-BSA) was treated with **DBCO-488**, no signal above background was observed under the labeling conditions employed (lane 6, Figure 2-15E). The faint fluorescence signal can be attributed to non-specific **DBCO-488** reactivity (lane 3, Figure 2-15E). The compatibility of tetrazine scaffolds with both azides and strained alkynes, by contrast, has been examined in more detail [22, 24, 46]. In a recent study, Hilderbrand and coworkers observed reactivity between a mono-substituted tetrazine and a DBCO conjugate ( $k = 6 \times 10^{-2} \text{ M}^{-1} \text{s}^{-1}$ ). However, no reaction was observed when a di-substituted, deactivated tetrazine was employed [22]. The authors further demonstrated that the kinetically slower tetrazine could be used in tandem with DBCO to label TCOs and azides in cells. In our studies, Tz-Rho was expected to react with DBCO (albeit minimally) based on cycloaddition rates measured for similar tetrazines and TCO [39]. However, when Tz-Rho was incubated with DBCO-488, no reaction was observed over 12 hours in PBS (Figure 2-18). Additionally, co-administration of **Tz-Rho** and **DBCO-488** to Cp/Az-BSA did not significantly diminish covalent protein labeling (Figure 2-15E, Figure 2-19). While a detailed analysis of tetrazine-DBCO reactivity has not been performed, our results suggest that the two reagents can be used concurrently to target cyclopropenes and azides under certain conditions.



**Figure 2-18**. No reaction between **DBCO-Rho** and **Tz-Rho** was observed over 12 h. Commercially available **DBCO-Rho** (sold as a mixture of isomers) and **Tz-Rho** were dissolved separately in PBS (2 mM), and 200  $\mu$ L of each solution were combined The final concentration of each reagent in the mixed sample was 1 mM (ten times the concentration used in any protein or cell labeling experiment). Aliquots were drawn from the reaction mixture over time and analyzed by HPLC (eluting with 0-50% CH<sub>3</sub>CN in water over 10 min, followed by 50% CH<sub>3</sub>CN for 10 min). The peak areas for each reagent are provided in the above plots. The starting traces for DBCO-Rho (yellow) and Tz-Rho (red) were acquired from the initial 2 mM solutions; all other traces were acquired from the mixed sample.



**Figure 2-19**. Pre-incubation of tetrazine and DBCO scaffolds has no noticeable affect on protein labeling. **DBCO-488** and **Tz-Rho** were incubated together in PBS (1 mM each) for 0-4 h prior to the addition of Az- and Cp-modified BSA. Protein labeling reactions were performed as in Figure 3, and a representative image is shown here. Top panel: **DBCO-488** fluorescence. Middle panel: **Tz-Rho** fluorescence. Lower panel: loading control with Coomassie staining.

## 2.2d Metabolic incorporation of cyclopropenes onto live cell surfaces

Beyond biomolecule modification in vitro, chemical reporters must be able to traverse metabolic pathways *in vivo*. This requires that the scaffolds are stable in living systems and small enough to be tolerated by biosynthetic enzymes [1]. To investigate whether cyclopropenes would be useful for cellular labeling studies, we constructed a methylcyclopropene-sialic acid conjugate (9-Cp-NeuAc, Scheme 2-2). Modified sialic acids of this sort are known to be metabolized by cells and incorporated into cell surface glycans [47-50]. Jurkat cells were incubated with various concentrations of 9-Cp-NeuAc for 24-48 h. The presence of cell surface cyclopropenes was subsequently probed by reaction with a tetrazine-biotin conjugate (Tz-Biotin, Scheme 2-3) and avidin staining (Figure 2-20A). The fluorescence of each cell population was measured using flow cytometry. As shown in Figure 2-4B, a dose-dependent increase in signal was observed when cells were incubated with increasing concentrations of 9-Cp-NeuAc, indicating successful metabolic incorporation of the chemical reporter. The incorporation efficiency of 9-Cp-NeuAc was lower than that of a similarly functionalized azido sugar (9-Az-NeuAc, Scheme 2-2), but on par with other unnatural sialic acids used in metabolic engineering studies (Figure 2-21) [47-50]. Importantly, the fluorescence signal also diminished when 9-Cp-NeuAc-treated cells were cultured in the presence of unlabeled sugars (sialic acid, NeuAc or peracetylated Nacetylmannosamine, Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNAc) targeting the same metabolic pathway [47].



**Figure 2-20**. Cyclopropenes can be metabolically incorporated onto live cell surfaces. (A) Jurkat cells were incubated with **9-Cp-NeuAc** (0-2 mM), a control sugar (NeuAc, 2 mM) or both **9-Cp-NeuAc** and NeuAc (or Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNAc) for 24 h. After washing, the cells were reacted with **Tz-Biotin** (100  $\mu$ M) for 1 h at 37 °C. Subsequent staining with APC-avidin and flow cytometry analysis provided the plots in (B). (C) Mean fluorescence intensities (in arbitrary units, au) for the histograms in (B). Error bars represent the standard deviation of the mean for three experiments.



**Figure 2-21.** Flow cytometry analysis of **9-Az-NeuAc** metabolism in Jurkat cells. (A) Cells incubated with **9-Az-NeuAc** (0-2 mM) were treated with 100  $\mu$ M **DBCO-Biotin** followed by APC-avidin. (B) Flow cytometry histograms revealing a dose-dependent increase in fluorescence correlating with **9-Az-NeuAc** concentration. (C) Mean fluorescence intensities (in arbitrary units, au) for the histograms in (B). Error bars represent the standard deviation of the mean for three experiments A reduction in signal was observed when cells were incubated simultaneously with **9-Az-NeuAc** and unlabeled sugars (sialic acid and Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNAc). (D) Comparison of the metabolic incorporation efficiencies of **9-Cp-NeuAc** and **9-Az-NeuAc**.

We further investigated whether cyclopropene- and azide-modified sugars could be utilized concurrently for live cell labeling. In one setup, Jurkat cells were incubated with 9-Cp-NeuAc, 9-Az-NeuAc, or no sugar. After 24 h, portions of the sugar-treated cells were combined. In a second setup, Jurkat cells were cultured with both sugars simultaneously. All samples were subsequently reacted with either **Tz-Biotin**, a water-soluble cyclooctyne-fluorophore conjugate (DBCO-Rho), or both reagents. Cells treated with Tz-Biotin were also stained with APC-avidin. The fluorescence of the resulting cell populations was analyzed via two-color flow cytometry, and the corresponding plots are depicted in Figure 2-22. For cells cultured separately with the unnatural sugars prior to mixing and covalent reaction, flow analysis revealed two distinct cell populations-one with robust APC fluorescence (corresponding to the 9-Cp-NeuAc-treated cells) and one with robust rhodamine fluorescence (corresponding to the 9-Az-NeuAc-treated cells) (Figure 2-22A). For cells cultured with the cyclopropenyl and azido sugars simultaneously, treatment with both covalent probes and flow analysis revealed a single population of cells labeled with both fluorophores (Figure 2-22B). The overall fluorescence signal attributed to the cyclopropene modification was reduced in this case, though, likely due to the lower incorporation efficiency of 9-Cp-NeuAc compared to 9-Az-NeuAc. Non-specific reactivity with **DBCO-Rho** was also observed in the cell labeling studies, but importantly, no cross-reactivity was observed when 9-Az-NeuAc-treated cells were labeled with Tz-Biotin or when 9-Cp-NeuAc-treated cells were labeled with DBCO-Rho (Figure 2-23). Collectively, these results suggest that cyclopropene- and azide-based chemical reporters can be utilized together in live cells and will be useful for multiplexed metabolic engineering strategies.



**Figure 2-22**. Methylcyclopropenes and organic azides can be utilized in tandem for cellular metabolic labeling. (A) Flow cytometry analysis of Jurkat cells treated with **9-Cp-NeuAc** (1 mM), **9-Az-NeuAc** (1 mM), or no sugar for 24 h. After washing, a portion of the **9-Cp-** and **9-Az-NeuAc** cells were mixed. Cell samples were then washed and subsequently reacted with **Tz-biotin** (100  $\mu$ M), **DBCO-Rho** (100  $\mu$ M) or both reagents for 1 h at 37 °C. Following staining with APC-avidin, cellular fluorescence was measured. Plots are shown with Rho (azide) and APC (cyclopropene) levels on the x- and y-axes, respectively. (B) Flow cytometry analysis of Jurkat cells incubated with **9-Cp-NeuAc** (1 mM) and **9-Az-NeuAc** (1 mM) simultaneously. After 24 h, the cells were washed, reacted, and analyzed as in (A). For (A) and (B), the same patterns of labeling were apparent in replicate experiments.



**Figure 2-23.** Cells incubated with **9-Cp-NeuAc** (lower panels) or **9-Az-NeuAc** (upper panels) (1 mM) were treated with DBCO-Rho (100  $\mu$ M), Tz-biotin (100  $\mu$ M), both reagents, or no reagent and analyzed as in Figure 2-22.

# **2.3 Conclusions**

In summary, functionalized cyclopropenes have been developed for use as chemical reporters in living systems. These scaffolds react with tetrazines to form covalent adducts in high yield and with rates suitable for biological labeling applications. Our data also indicate that cyclopropenes are stable in biological environs and can be used to derivatize proteins and other biomolecules. Moreover, these functional groups can be metabolically introduced into cellular glycans, suggesting they are small enough to traverse biosynthetic pathways in live cells. Methylcyclopropenes can also be used in tandem with organic azides, and we anticipate that combinations of these and other chemical reporters will be widely used for targeting multiple classes of biomolecules [51].

This work also sets the stage for continued expansion of the bioorthogonal chemistry toolkit. We envision developing a collection of cyclopropene scaffolds suitable for use as both chemical reporters and secondary labeling agents. Toward this end, we are generating cyclopropenes that react more rapidly with tetrazine probes, along with identifying scaffolds with alternative modes of reactivity. These reagents will bolster efforts to monitor multicomponent biomolecular processes in living systems.

### 2.4 Materials and methods

## 2.4a Cyclopropene stability

The relative stabilities of cyclopropenes **2.2a** and **2.11** were evaluated in two separate assays. To determine shelf stability in solution, the compounds were dissolved in  $CDCl_3$  (100 mM) and monitored over time (at 4 °C) via <sup>1</sup>H-NMR. To analyze cyclopropene stability in the presence of

biological nucleophiles, **2.2a** or **2.11** was incubated with cysteine (5 mM of each reagent in 10% DMSO-d<sub>6</sub>/deuterated PBS, pH 7.4) and the resulting solutions were monitored via <sup>1</sup>H-NMR.

### 2.4b Rate studies

### UV-Vis method

The reactions between cyclopropenes 2.2a, 2.3b, 2.11 and tetrazine 2.12 or Tz-Biotin were monitored by the change in tetrazine absorbance at 536 nm. Reactions were initiated in a 96-well plate by mixing 150  $\mu$ L of a 0.2 mM tetrazine solution (in CH<sub>3</sub>CN or 1:1 CH<sub>3</sub>CN:PBS) with 150  $\mu$ L of cyclopropene solution (2-10 mM in CH<sub>3</sub>CN or 1:1 CH<sub>3</sub>CN:PBS). The concentration of cyclopropene at the start of each reaction ranged from 1-5 mM, while the tetrazine concentration was held at 0.1 mM. For 2.1 and 2.11, larger concentrations of cyclopropene (9-15 mM in CH<sub>3</sub>CN) were used to overcome slow reaction kinetics. All rate studies were performed in triplicate under pseudo-first order conditions. Absorbance measurements were recorded every 5 min over a 90-min time interval using a BioTek Epoch plate reader equipped with Gen5 software. Pseudo-first order rate constants ( $k_{obs}$ ) were calculated by plotting the natural log of [2.12] or Tz-Biotin versus time (in s). Second-order rate constants were determined by plotting  $k_{obs}$  vs cyclopropene concentration.

# <sup>1</sup>H-NMR method

The cycloaddition reaction between cyclopropene **2.2b** and tetrazine **2.12** was not easily monitored by UV-vis spectroscopy owing to its slow rate. Therefore, <sup>1</sup>H-NMR was used to calculate the rate constant for this transformation. Cyclopropene **2.2b** and tetrazine **2.12** (5 mM

each) were combined in  $CD_3OD$ , and the ensuing reaction was monitored over 48 h. An internal standard (TMS) was used to determine peak integration values and, ultimately, the concentrations of the relevant species.

# 2.4c Reaction analyses by HPLC

To analyze cycloadduct formation and subsequent cyclizations, the reactions between cyclopropenes **2.2a-b**, and **2.11** with tetrazine **2.12** were monitored by HPLC. Cyclopropene **2.2b** (100 mM) was initially reacted with **2.12** (50 mM) in 2 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. After 24 h, the reaction mixture was concentrated and subsequently dissolved in PBS (3 mL). The reaction was monitored at 12 h intervals by HPLC (0-95% CH<sub>3</sub>CN in water over 20 min). The reaction between tetrazine **2.12** and all other cyclopropenes were performed in 1:1 CH<sub>3</sub>CN:PBS (2 mM cyclopropene, 0.5 mM tetrazine) and monitored over 10-48 h by HPLC (0-95% CH<sub>3</sub>CN in water over 10 min).

## 2.4d Protein labeling

Bovine serum albumuin (BSA) or lysozyme (Lyz) conjugates were prepared by treating the proteins with carbonates **2.10** or **2.17** as described by Sletten, *et al.* [51], or with cyclopropenyl NHS ester **2.16** using standard coupling conditions [52]. In the former case, BSA or Lys (0.5 mL, 20 mg/mL in PBS) was treated with 100  $\mu$ L carbonate **2.10** or the corresponding azide **2.17** (67 mM in DMSO) and an additional 200  $\mu$ L DMSO. The final protein solution (12.5 mg/mL protein, 8.4 mM carbonate) was allowed to stand at rt for 3 h. The same procedure was used to label with the NHS ester **2.16**.

# In-gel fluorescence analysis of BSA conjugates

The labeled BSA samples were subsequently isolated using P-10 BioGel® (BioRad), eluting with 2 mL PBS (pH 7.4). The derivatized BSA eluents (180 µL, 2 mg/mL) were treated with Tz-**Rho** (1.0 - 20 µL of a 5 mM solution in DMSO) or a dibenzocyclooctyne-fluorescein conjugate (DBCO-488, Click Chemistry Tools, Scotsdale, AZ; 2 µL of a 10 mM solution in DMSO), or both reagents. The samples were diluted with additional PBS to total 200 µL. For multicomponent labeling, cyclopropene- and azide-derivatized BSA samples were combined 1:1 prior to labeling with fluorophores. After 1-60 min of fluorophore labeling, the modified BSA samples were purified by passage over P-10 BioGel® and eluting with PBS. The concentrations of the isolated protein samples were measured using a DC Protein Assay kit (BioRad). Protein isolates (2-5 µg) were analyzed by gel electrophoresis using 10% or 12% polyacrylamide gels. Gels were rinsed in destain buffer (50% D.I. H<sub>2</sub>O, 40% CH<sub>3</sub>OH, 10% acetic acid) and analyzed by in-gel fluorescence measurements on a GE Typhoon TRIO+ Variable Mode Imager. Tz-Rho fluorescence was measured with a 532 nm excitation wavelength and 580 nm emission. **DBCO-**488 was measured with a 488 nm excitation wavelength and 520 nm emission. Total protein loading was confirmed by subsequent staining with Coomassie Brilliant Blue.

Mass spectrometry analysis of lysozyme conjugates

Owing to the heterogeneity of BSA, mass spectrometry analysis was performed on lysozyme. Lysozyme samples modified with **2.10**, **2.16**, and **2.17** (see above) were dialyzed into D.I. water and subsequently analyzed by ESI-MS via direct infusion onto a QTOF2 instrument. A 200  $\mu$ L sample of **2.16**-modified lysozyme (1-2 mg/mL) was further reacted with 100  $\mu$ M Tz-Biotin for 1 h, dialyzed with D.I. water, concentrated and analyzed by ESI-MS.

### 2.4e Cross-reactivity analysis

The reactivity between DBCO reagents and **Tz-Rho** was assessed by HPLC and protein labeling assays. For the HPLC analyses, **DBCO-Rho** (Click Chemistry Tools, Scotsdale, AZ) and **Tz-Rho** were dissolved separately in PBS (2 mM) and subsequently combined in a 1:1 ratio. The resulting mixture was monitored over time by HPLC (eluting with 0-50% CH<sub>3</sub>CN in water over 10 min, followed by 50% CH<sub>3</sub>CN for 10 min). For the protein labeling assays, a combined solution of **Tz-Rho** and **DBCO-488** (1 mM each in PBS) was incubated at room temperature for 0-4 h prior to reaction with Az- and Cp-modified BSA. The protein labeling reactions were performed as above (using 1.5 µg/mL BSA solution and 100 µM of the Tz-Rho/DBCO-488 solution). Purification and in-gel fluorescence assays were performed as described above.

## 2.4f Metabolic labeling studies

Jurkat cells were plated at a density of  $\sim 1 \times 10^6$  cells/mL in RPMI media (Gibco) supplemented with 10 % fetal bovine serum (FBS), penicillin/streptomycin, and either **9-Cp-NeuAc** (0-2 mM), **9-Az-NeuAc** (0-2 mM), both sugars in tandem (1 mM each) no sugar, or a control sugar (NeuAc, 1-2 mM or peracetylated ManNAc, 25 mM). All cell cultures were incubated for 24-48 h in a 5%

CO<sub>2</sub>, water-saturated incubator at 37 °C. The presence of cyclopropenes or azides in cell-surface glycoconjugates was determined by reaction with **Tz-Biotin**, sulfo-dibenzocyclooctyne-biotin (**DBCO-Biotin**; Click Chemistry Tools, Scotsdale, AZ), or dibenzocyclooctyne-PEG-carboxyrhodamine (**DBCO-Rho**, Click Chemistry Tools, Scotsdale, AZ). Briefly, the cells were rinsed with PBS containing 1% bovine serum albumin (FACS buffer), and then reacted with **Tz-Biotin** (100  $\mu$ M, 1 h, 37 °C), **DBCO-Biotin** (100  $\mu$ M, 1 h, 37 °C) or **DBCO-Rho** (100  $\mu$ M, 1 h, 37 °C). The cells were subsequently washed with FACS buffer and, when necessary, stained with APC-avidin (Invitrogen, 1:100 dilution in FACS buffer) for 30 min on ice. The fluorescence of the labeled cells was analyzed by flow cytometry on an LSR-II flow cytometer (BD Biosciences). For each cell population, 10,000 live cells were analyzed for each replicate experiment. Data were analyzed using FloJo software (Tree Star, Inc.).

# 2.4g General synthetic procedures

Compounds 2.1 [53, 54], 2.6 [53, 54], 2.25 [55], 9-Az-NeuAc [50], 2.26 [40], 2.27 [56], and 2.28 [57] were synthesized as previously reported. All other reagents were purchased from commercial sources and used as received without further purification. Reactions were carried out under an inert atmosphere of nitrogen or argon in oven- or flame-dried glassware. Dichloromethane  $(CH_2Cl_2),$ tetrahydrofuran (THF). diethyl ether (Et<sub>2</sub>O), N.Ndimethylformamide (DMF), methanol (CH<sub>3</sub>OH) and triethylamine (NEt<sub>3</sub>) were degassed with argon and passed through two 4 x 36 inch columns of anhydrous neutral A-2 (8 x 14 mesh; LaRoche Chemicals; activated under a flow of argon at 350 °C for 12 h). The remaining solvents were of analytical grade and purchased from commercial suppliers. Thin-layer chromatography

was performed using Silica Gel 60 F<sub>254</sub> plates. Plates were visualized using UV radiation and/or staining with KMnO<sub>4</sub>. Flash column chromatography was performed with 60 Å (240-400 mesh) silica gel from Sorbent Technologies. In some cases, the silica was first deactivated with 1% NEt<sub>3</sub> in the eluting solvent. <sup>1</sup>H, <sup>13</sup>C, and <sup>19</sup>F NMR spectra were recorded on Bruker GN-500 (500 MHz <sup>1</sup>H, 125.7 MHz <sup>13</sup>C), CRYO-500 (500 MHz <sup>1</sup>H, 125.7 MHz <sup>13</sup>C) or DRX-400 (400 MHz <sup>1</sup>H, 100 MHz <sup>13</sup>C, 376.5 MHz <sup>19</sup>F) spectrometers. All spectra were collected at 298 K unless otherwise noted. NOESY experiments were performed exclusively with the CRYO-500 instrument with mixing times ranging from 0.8-1.0 s. Chemical shifts are reported in ppm values relative to tetramethylsilane or residual non-deuterated NMR solvent, and coupling constants (J)are reported in Hertz (Hz). High-resolution mass spectrometry was performed by the University of California, Irvine Mass Spectrometry Center. HPLC runs were conducted on a Varian ProStar equipped with 325 Dual Wavelength UV-Vis Detector. Analytical runs were performed using an Agilent Polaris 5 C18-A column (4.6 x 150 mm, 5 µm) with a 1 mL/min flow rate. Semipreparative runs were performed using an Agilent Prep-C18 Scalar column (9.4 x 150 mm, 5  $\mu$ m) with a 5 mL/min flow rate. The elution gradients for the relevant separations are specified below.

### 2.4h Synthetic procedures

**Pentafluorophenyl 2-methylcycloprop-2-enecarboxylate (2.7a).** Compound **2.1a** (100 mg, 1.02 mmol) was dissolved in 8 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. *N*,*N*-Diisopropylethylamine (0.42 mL, 2.4 mmol) was added and the solution was cooled to 4 °C. Pentafluorophenyltrifluoracetate (0.35 mL, 2.0 mmol) was then added dropwise over 1 min via syringe. After 1 h, the reaction mixture was
concentrated *in vacuo* to afford a yellow oil. The crude product was purified by flash column chromatography (eluting with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>) to yield **2.7a** as a white solid (0.259 g, 0.979 mmol, 89%): TLC R<sub>f</sub> = 0.5 (10% Et<sub>2</sub>O in hexanes, KMnO<sub>4</sub> stain); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  6.45 (app quint, J = 1.4 Hz, 1H), 2.41 (d, J = 1.6 Hz, 1H), 2.25 (d, J = 1.2 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125.7 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  172.1, 111.1, 93.9, 19.5, 10.4; <sup>19</sup>F NMR (376.5 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  -153.4 (dd, J = 22.3, 5.0 Hz, 2F), -159.2 (t, J = 21.7 Hz, 1F), -163.1 (dt, J = 22.0, 5.0 Hz, 2F) HRMS (GC-CI) *m/z* calcd for C<sub>11</sub>H<sub>9</sub>O<sub>2</sub>F<sub>5</sub>N [M+NH<sub>4</sub>]<sup>+</sup> 282.0554, found 282.0555.

**Pentafluorophenyl 2,3-dimethylcycloprop-2-enecarboxylate (2.7b).** Compound **2.1b** (0.050 g, 0.45 mmol) was dissolved in 5 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. *N*,*N*-Diisopropylethylamine (0.260 mL, 1.49 mmol) was added and the solution was cooled to 4 °C. Pentafluorophenyltrifluoracetate (0.215 mL, 1.25 mmol) was then added dropwise over 1 min via syringe. After 1 h, the reaction mixture was concentrated *in vacuo* to afford a yellow oil. The crude product was purified by flash column chromatography (eluting with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>) to yield **2.7b** as a white solid (0.102 g, 0.364 mmol, 81%); TLC R<sub>f</sub> = 0.5 (10% Et<sub>2</sub>O in hexanes, KMnO<sub>4</sub> stain); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  2.29 (s, 1H), 2.13 (s, 6H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125.7 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  172.4, 101.8, 22.5, 9.6; <sup>19</sup>F NMR (376.5 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  -153.6 (d, *J* = 22.9, 4.6 Hz, 2F), -159.5 (t, *J* = 22.0 Hz, 1F), -163.3 (dt, *J* = 21.2, 4.5 Hz, 2F); HRMS (GC-CI) *m/z* calcd for C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>8</sub>O<sub>2</sub>F<sub>5</sub> [M+H]<sup>+</sup> 279.0444, found 279.0445.

*N*-Isopropyl-2-methylcycloprop-2-enecarboxamide (2.2a). Cyclopropene 2.7a (0.170 g, 0.644 mmol) was dissolved in 4 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. Isopropylamine (0.153 mL, 1.92 mmol) was added to the solution via syringe. After a few minutes, a white precipitate formed. The reaction mixture was

allowed to stir at rt for an additional hour before the white precipitate was removed by filtration. The remaining filtrate was concentrated *in vacuo* to yield **2.2a** as a white powder (75.3 mg, 0.56 mmol, 87%). TLC  $R_f = 0.2$  (5% CH<sub>3</sub>OH in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, KMnO<sub>4</sub> stain); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  6.41 (app quin, J = 1.3 Hz, 1H), 5.18 (br s, 1H), 4.12-4.07 (m, 1H), 2.15 (d, J = 1.2 Hz, 3H), 1.95 (d, J = 1.6 Hz, 1H), 1.13 (d, J = 3.0, 3H), 1.11 (d, J = 3.0 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  175.1, 114.1, 96.2, 41.2, 23.10, 23.08, 22.6, 10.7; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>8</sub>H<sub>13</sub>NONa [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 162.0895, found 162.0889.

*N*-Isopropyl-2,3-dimethylcycloprop-2-enecarboxamide (2.2b). Cyclopropene 2.7b (0.202 g, 0.726 mmol) was dissolved in 4 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. Isopropylamine (179 mg, 3.03 mmol) was added to the solution via syringe. After a few minutes, a white precipitate formed. The reaction mixture was allowed to stir at rt for an additional hour before the white precipitate was removed by filtration. The remaining filtrate was concentrated *in vacuo* to yield 2.2b as a white powder (0.100 g, 0.653 mmol, 90% yield): TLC R<sub>f</sub> = 0.3 (5% CH<sub>3</sub>OH in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, KMnO<sub>4</sub> stain); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  5.07 (br s, 1H), 4.12–4.08 (m, 1H), 2.03 (s, 6H), 1.83 (s, 1H), 1.11 (d, *J* = 6.5 Hz, 6H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125.7 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  175.6, 104.3, 40.9, 25.5, 23.2, 9.7; HRMS (ESI) *m/z* calcd for C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>15</sub>NONa [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 176.1051, found 176.1057.

**3-Hydroxymethyl-1,2-dimethylcyclopropene (2.3b).** Diisobutylaluminum hydride (0.213 g, 1.50 mmol) was dissolved in 5 mL Et<sub>2</sub>O, and the resulting solution was cooled to 4 °C. Cyclopropene **2.6b** (0.142 g, 1.01 mmol) was added dropwise to the vessel via syringe over 1 min. The resulting solution was stirred for 30 min before the reaction mixture was quenched with

saturated Rochelle's salt and allowed to stir until a white gel formed. The organic layer was separated and the aqueous gel was extracted with Et<sub>2</sub>O (2 x 5 mL). The combined organic layers were dried with MgSO<sub>4</sub> and concentrated *in vacuo* to afford the crude product mixture as faint yellow oil. The crude product was purified by flash column chromatography (eluting with 50% Et<sub>2</sub>O in hexanes) to yield **2.3b** as a clear oil (0.091 g, 0.92 mmol, 70% two steps): TLC R<sub>f</sub> = 0.2 (25% ethyl acetate in hexanes, KMnO<sub>4</sub> stain); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  3.53 (d, *J* = 4.3 Hz, 2H), 2.03 (s, 6H), 1.53 (t, *J* = 4.3 Hz, 1H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  110.3, 68.6, 22.8, 10.6; HRMS (GC-CI) calcd for C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>11</sub>O [M+H]<sup>+</sup> 99.0810, found 99.0807.

**3-Hydroxymethyl-2-methyl-trimethylsilylcyclopropene (2.8)**. Diisobutylaluminum hydride (0.213 g, 1.50 mmol) was dissolved in 5 mL Et<sub>2</sub>O, and the resulting solution was cooled to 4 °C. Cyclopropene **2.6a** (0.200 g, 1.00 mmol) was added dropwise to the vessel via syringe over 1 min. The resulting solution was stirred for 30 min before the reaction mixture was quenched with saturated Rochelle's salt and allowed to stir until a white gel formed. The organic layer was separated and the aqueous gel was extracted with Et<sub>2</sub>O (2 x 10 mL). The combined organic layers were dried with MgSO<sub>4</sub> and concentrated *in vacuo* to afford the crude product mixture as faint yellow oil. The crude product was purified by flash column chromatography (eluting with 20% Et<sub>2</sub>O in hexanes) to yield **2.8** as a faint yellow oil (0.138 g, 0.883 mmol, 71% two steps): TLC R<sub>f</sub> = 0.2 (10% EtOAc in hexanes, KMnO<sub>4</sub> stain); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  3.48 (d, *J* = 4.6 Hz, 2H), 2.21 (s, 3H), 1.56 (t, *J* = 4.6 Hz, 1H), 0.17 (s, 9H). This material was subjected to deprotection conditions (2.0 mL of 1 M tetrabutylammonium fluoride in THF) without further purification.

*p*-Nitrophenyl carbonate dimethyl cyclopropene (2.10). Cyclopropene 2.3b (59 mg, 0.60 mmol) and dry pyridine (0.30 mL, 3.7 mmol) were dissolved in 5 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The resulting solution was stirred and cooled to 4 °C before adding *p*-nitrophenyl chloroformate (0.266 g, 1.32 mmol). The solution was allowed to warm to rt and stir for 2 h before quenching the reaction with D.I. H<sub>2</sub>O. The organic layer was separated and the aqueous layer was extracted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (2 x 15 mL). The organic layers were combined, dried with MgSO<sub>4</sub>, and concentrated. The crude mixture was purified via flash column chromatography (eluting with 10-20% Et<sub>2</sub>O in hexanes) to afford **2.10** as a white solid (0.123 g, 0.467 mmol, 78% yield): TLC R<sub>f</sub> = 0.7 (25% ethyl acetate in hexanes); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  8.27 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 2H), 7.38 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 2H), 4.18 (d, *J* = 5.3 Hz, 2H), 2.04 (s, 6H), 1.64 (t, *J* = 5.3 Hz, 1H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  155.9, 152.8, 145.3, 125.3, 121.9, 109.5, 77.9, 19.0, 10.5; HRMS (GC-CI) calcd for C<sub>13</sub>H<sub>13</sub>NO<sub>5</sub> [M]<sup>+</sup> 263.0794, found 263.0796.

(2,3-Dimethylcyclopropenyl)methyl isopropylcarbamate (2.11). Carbonate cyclopropene 2.10 (163 mg, 0.619 mmol) was added to a solution of isopropylamine (230  $\mu$ L, 2.8 mmol) in 5 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The solution turns yellow and is allowed to stir overnight. The reaction mixture was rinsed with water (3 x 20 mL). The organic layer was dried with MgSO<sub>4</sub> and concentrated. The crude mixture was purified via flash column chromatography (eluting with 20% Et<sub>2</sub>O in hexanes) to afford **11** as a pale yellow oil (82.7 mg, 0.451 mmol, 73% yield): TLC R<sub>f</sub> = 0.4 (20% ethyl acetate in hexanes); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  4.42 (br s, 1H), 3.92 (d, *J* = 4.9 Hz, 2H), 3.79 (app octet, *J* = 6.7 Hz, 1H), 1.99 (s, 6H), 1.50 (t, *J* = 5.0 Hz, 1H), 1.14 (d, *J* = 6.7 Hz, 6H);

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 156.3, 109.9, 72.0, 43.0, 23.1, 19.6, 10.3; HRMS (GC-CI) calcd for C<sub>10</sub>H<sub>17</sub>NO<sub>2</sub>Na [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 206.1157, found 206.1157.

Mixture of cycloadducts 2.13 and 2.14. Cyclopropene 2.2b (18.0 mg, 0.117 mmol) was added to a solution of 3,6-dipyridyl-1,2,4,5-tetrazine 2.12 (28.2 mg, 0.119 mmol) in 3 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The solution was allowed to stir for 2 d at 37 °C, and the color changed from pink to pale purple. The reaction mixture was concentrated in vacuo and purified by flash column chromatography with deactivated silica (eluting with 0-5% CH<sub>3</sub>OH in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>) to afford a 5.5:1 (2.14 : 2.13) mixture of diastereomers as a yellow solid (17.4 mg, 0.0481 mmol, 41% yield): TLC  $R_f = 0.3$  (10% CH<sub>3</sub>OH in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, UV); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>, **2.13**) δ 8.69 (app d, J = 4.7 Hz, 2H), 7.94 (app d, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H), 7.83 (dt, J = 7.7, 1.6 Hz, 2H), 7.38 (ddd, J = 7.5, 4.9, 1.0 Hz, 2H), 6.96 (ddd, J = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 4.15 (m, 1H), 1.74 (s, 1H), 1.47 (s, 6H), 1.26 (d, J = 6.5 Hz, 6H); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>, **2.14**)  $\delta$  8.73 (app d, J = 4.8 Hz, 2H), 8.04 (app d, J = 7.8, 2H), 7.83 (dt, J =7.7, 1.6 Hz, 2H), 7.56 (d, J = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 7.38 (ddd, J = 7.5, 4.9, 1.0 Hz, 2H), 3.75 (m, 1H), 2.70 (s, 1H), 1.43 (s, 6H), 0.80 (d, J = 6.6 Hz, 6H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>, mixture)  $\delta$ 165.3, 165.1, 163.8, 163.0, 156.2, 155.6, 148.8, 148.7, 137.1, 137.0, 124.6, 124.4, 124.3, 123.6, 41.6, 41.4, 35.0, 31.0, 28.8, 27.9, 23.0, 22.1, 18.0, 13.5; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>21</sub>H<sub>23</sub>N<sub>5</sub>ONa [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 384.1800, found 384.1810.

**Cycloadduct 2.15**. The cycloadduct mixture of **2.13** and **2.14** (12.0 mg, 0.0326 mmol) was dissolved in water and the reaction progress was monitored by HPLC. After 1 d, the resulting cycloadduct was purified by HPLC (0-95% CH<sub>3</sub>CN in water over 20 min) and concentrated *in* 

*vacuo* to yield **2.15** (6.0 mg, 0.017 mmol, 52% yield) as a white solid: <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, 318 K, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  8.68 (m, 2H), 7.82 (dt, *J* = 8.0, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 7.81 (app d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 1H), 7.68 (dt, *J* = 7.8, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 7.59 (app d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.34 (ddd, *J* = 7.5, 5.0, 0.9 Hz, 1H), 7.31 (br s, 1H), 7.19 (ddd, *J* = 7.4, 4.9, 1.1 Hz, 1H), 2.66 (sept, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 1H), 1.90 (s, 1H), 1.29 (s, 3H), 1.12 (s, 3H), 1.04 (d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 3H), 0.91 (d, *J* = 6.8Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  174.0, 156.2, 154.9, 152.1, 149.4, 148.9, 136.5, 136.2, 123.8, 122.7, 120.7, 80.9, 45.2, 34.9, 29.0, 25.6, 20.4, 18.7, 17.0, 12.4; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>21</sub>H<sub>23</sub>N<sub>5</sub>ONa [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 384.1800, found 384.1798.

**Mixture of cycloadducts 2.16 and 2.17**. Cyclopropene **2.2a** (11.8 mg, 0.0847 mmol) was added to a solution of 3,6-dipyridyl-1,2,4,5-tetrazine **2.12** (10.0 mg, 0.0423 mmol) in 4 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The solution was allowed to stir for 3 h at 37 °C, and the color changed from pink to yellow. The reaction mixture was concentrated *in vacuo* and purified by flash column chromatography with deactivated silica (eluting with 0-5% CH<sub>3</sub>OH in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>) to afford a mixture of isomers as a yellow solid (10.0 mg, 0.0288 mmol, 68% yield): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>, **2.16**)  $\delta$  8.76 (app d, *J* = 4.2 Hz, 1H), 8.68 (app d, *J* = 4.6 Hz, 1H), 8.43 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 1H), 8.01 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 1H), 7.81 (m, 2H), 7.39 (m, 2H), 6.21 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 4.21 (m, 1H), 3.94 (d, *J* = 5.1 Hz, 1H), 1.48 (s, 3H), 1.43 (d, *J* = 5.1 Hz, 1H), 1.28 (d, *J* = 6.5 Hz, 3H), 1.22 (d, *J* = 6.5 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>, **2.16**)  $\delta$  166.1, 164.3, 161.0, 155.1, 153.9, 149.5, 148.8, 137.1, 136.5, 125.2, 124.8, 123.7, 122.0; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>20</sub>H<sub>22</sub>N<sub>5</sub>O [M+H]<sup>+</sup> 348.1824, found 348.1815.

**Cycloadduct 2.21**. Cyclopropene **2.3b** (8.3 mg, 0.085 mmol) was added to a solution of 3,6dipyridyl-1,2,4,5-tetrazine **2.12** (10.0 mg, 0.0423 mmol) in 5 mL CH<sub>3</sub>OH at rt. After 8 h, the resulting yellow solution was concentrated *in vacuo*. The crude mixture was purified by flash column chromatography with deactivated silica (eluting with 0-5% CH<sub>3</sub>OH in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>) to afford **2.21** as a white solid (10.0 mg, 0.0326 mmol, 77% yield): TLC  $R_f = 0.4$  (5% CH<sub>3</sub>OH in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, UV); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  8.69-8.67 (m, 1H), 8.65-8.64 (m, 1H), 7.85 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.77 (dt, *J* = 8.0, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 7.69 (dt, *J* = 7.7, 1.7 Hz, 1H), 7.61 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 1H), 7.29 (ddd, *J* = 7.5, 4.9, 1.1 Hz, 1H), 7.20 (ddd, *J* = 7.5, 5.0, 0.9 Hz, 1H), 6.82 (s, 1H), 4.39 (dd, *J* = 8.4, 4.2 Hz, 1H), 4.25 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 1.91 (d, *J* = 4.0 Hz, 1H), 1.28 (s, 3H), 1.03 (s, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  159.6, 156.7, 152.9, 149.1, 148.7, 136.7, 136.3, 123.4, 122.5, 122.3, 121.2, 97.6, 71.0, 37.2, 31.9, 22.9, 16.8, 13.0; HRMS (ESI) *m/z* calcd for C<sub>18</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>4</sub>O [M+H]<sup>+</sup> 307.1559, found 307.1557.

**Cycloadduct 2.18**. Cyclopropene **2.11** (46.1 mg, 0.252 mmol) was added to a solution of 3,6dipyridyl-1,2,4,5-tetrazine **2.12** (29.5 mg, 0.125 mmol) in 3 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The solution was allowed to stir for 8 h at 37 °C, and the color changed from pink to yellow. The reaction mixture was concentrated *in vacuo* and purified by flash column chromatography with deactivated silica (eluting with 0-5% CH<sub>3</sub>OH in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>) to afford product in a 100:7 ratio as a yellow solid (42.9 mg, 0.110 mmol, 88% yield): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  8.67 (d, *J* = 4.0 Hz, 2H), 7.99 (app d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 2H), 7.78 (dt, *J* = 7.6, 1.4 Hz, 2H), 7.34 (m, 2H), 4.69 (br s, 1H), 3.73 (m, 1H), 3.68 (d, *J* = 7.4 Hz, 2H), 2.35 (t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 1.48 (s, 6H), 1.08 (d, *J* = 6.6 Hz, 6H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  163.5, 156.2, 155.7, 148.7, 136.7, 124.4, 124.0, 60.4, 53.5, 42.8, 32.5, 27.0, 23.1, 18.1; HRMS (ESI) m/z calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>25</sub>N<sub>5</sub>O<sub>2</sub>Na [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 414.1906, found 414.1923.

**4-(6-(Pyridin-2-yl)-1,2,4,5-tetrazin-3-yl)benzoic acid (2.26)**. (Procedure adapted from Karver *et al.*) [40] To a dried round bottom flask was added 2-cyanonitrile (1.071 g, 10.28 mmol) and 4-cyanobenzoic acid (0.3134 g, 2.130 mmol) followed by addition of anhydrous hydrazine (1.2 ml, 25 mmol). The reaction was stirred at 80 °C for 90 min under N<sub>2</sub>. After cooling to rt, the reaction mixture was diluted with acetic acid (7 mL) a cooled to 4 °C in an ice bath. Aqueous NaNO<sub>2</sub> (1.40 g in 3 mL D.I. H<sub>2</sub>O) was added dropwise to the reaction mixture turning resulting in a purple solution. Once the evolution of gas subsided, the purple solid was isolated by centrifugation (3000g x 1 min) followed by rinsing with copious amounts of acetone until the filtrate was colorless. The resulting solid was dried *in vacuo* yielding the product **2.27** as a purple solid (147 mg, 0.527 mmol, 25% yield): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO d<sub>6</sub>)  $\delta$  8.95 (d, *J* = 4.0 Hz, 1H), 8.69 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 8.61 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 1H), 8.25 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 1H), 8.17 (td, 1, *J* = 7.7, 1.7), 7.74 (t, 1, *J* = 6.2).

**Tetrazine-biotin conjugate (Tz-Biotin)**. To a dried round bottom flask was added anhydrous DMF (4 ml), tetrazine **2.26** (60.0 mg, 0.215 mmol), triethylamine (100  $\mu$ L, 0.722 mmol), 1-ethyl-3-(3-dimethylaminopropyl) carbodiimide hydrochloride salt (56.0 mg, 0.361 mmol), and hydroxybenzotriazole (24.0 mg, 0.178 mmol). The solution was allowed to stir for 20 min. To this solution was added biotin-PEG-NH<sub>2</sub> **2.27** (80.0 mg, 0.179 mmol). The solution was stirred for 5 h at 50 °C. The product isolated by HPLC (30% CH<sub>3</sub>CN in water over 20 min) and

concentrated *in vacuo* to yield a purple solid (39.6 mg, 0.508 mmol, 31%): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CD<sub>3</sub>OD)  $\delta$  8.88 (d, *J* = 4.5 Hz, 1H), 8.76 (d, *J* = 8.23 Hz, 3H), 8.16 (t, *J* = 7.62 Hz, 1H), 8.09 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 2H), 7.88 (s, 1H), 7.72 (app t, *J* = 5.8 Hz, 1H), 4.49-4.45 (m, 1H), 4.30-4.25 (m, 1H), 3.65-3.45 (m, 17H), 3.20-3.10 (m, 3H), 2.89 (dd, *J* = 12.9, 4.6 Hz, 1H), 2.68 (d, *J* = 12.8 Hz, 1H), 2.16 (t, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 2H), 1.95-1.52 (m, 10H), 1.44-1.38 (m, 2H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CD<sub>3</sub>OD)  $\delta$  174.5, 167.6, 163.2, 150.1, 138.1, 138.1, 134.6, 128.0, 128.0, 126.7, 124.1, 70.2, 70.2, 69.9, 69.9, 68.9, 68.5, 62, 60.2, 55.6, 39.7, 37.6, 36.4, 35.5, 29.0, 29.0, 28.4, 28.1, 25.5. HRMS (ESI) *m/z* calcd for C<sub>34</sub>H<sub>45</sub>N<sub>9</sub>O<sub>6</sub>SNa [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 730.3111, found 730.3116.

**Tetrazine-rhodamine conjugate (Tz-Rho)**. Tetrazine **2.26** (15.0 mg, 0.0537 mmol) was dissolved in DMF (5 ml) with triethylamine (30.0  $\mu$ L, 0.215 mmol), 1-ethyl-3-(3-dimethylaminopropyl)carbodiimide hydrochloride salt (20.7 mg, 0.108 mmol), and *N*-hydroxysuccinimide (8.4 mg, 0.055 mmol). The solution was allowed to stir for 5 min under N<sub>2</sub>. Rhodamine-piperazine **2.28** (27.6 mg, 0.0539 mmol) was then added, and the reaction mixture was stirred overnight at rt. The reaction mixture was concentrated *in vacuo* and the product was isolated by HPLC (0-100% CH<sub>3</sub>CN in water over 20 min) as a red solid (7.2 mg, 0.0093 mmol, 17%): HRMS (ESI) *m/z* calcd for C<sub>46</sub>H<sub>46</sub>N<sub>9</sub>O<sub>3</sub> [M]<sup>+</sup> 772.3724, found 772.3723.

**NHS-cyclopropenyl ester (2.16)**. Cyclopropene **2.1a** (100 mg, 1.02 mmol) was dissolved in 1 mL of CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. *N*-Hydroxysuccinimide (121 mg, 1.05 mmol) was added, followed by 1-ethyl-3-(3-dimethylaminopropyl)carbodiimide hydrochloride salt (128 mg, 1.07 mmol) and NEt<sub>3</sub> (0.3 mL, 2 mmol). The reaction mixture was allowed to stir at rt overnight, then diluted with 50 mL

of ethyl acetate and washed with saturated NH<sub>4</sub>Cl (2x20 mL) followed by brine (1x20 mL). The organic layers were combined, dried with MgSO<sub>4</sub>, and concentrated *in vacuo* to afford **2.16** (90.0 mg, 0.461 mmol, 45%) as pale yellow oil. The product was used without further purification; TLC R<sub>f</sub> = 0.6 (50% ethyl acetate in hexanes); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  6.38 (t, *J* = 1.2 Hz, 1H), 2.78 (br s, 4H), 2.32 (d, *J* = 1.6 Hz, 1H), 2.20 (d, *J* = 1.2 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  171.1, 169.5, 110.5, 93.3, 25.6, 17.5, 10.3; HRMS (ESI) *m/z* calcd for C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>9</sub>O<sub>4</sub>NNa [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 218.0429, found 218.0427.

Sialic Acid-cyclopropene conjugate (9-Cp-NeuAc). 9-Az-NeuAc (0.34 g, 1.0 mmol) was dissolved in 11.0 mL water and the pH of the reaction mixture was adjusted to 1-2 with acetic acid. After the addition of Pd/C (33 mg), the reaction mixture was stirred under H<sub>2</sub> at rt overnight. The reaction mixture was then filtered through Celite and concentrated *in vacuo*. The residue was dissolved in 28 mL dioxane:water (3:2) and the pH of the reaction mixture was adjusted to 8-9 with saturated NaHCO<sub>3</sub>. NHS-cyclopropenyl ester **2.16** (0.250 g, 1.26 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture stirred at rt overnight. The resulting reaction mixture was concentrated *in vacuo* and purified via HPLC (0-30% CH<sub>3</sub>CN in water over 20 min). Fractions containing product were combined and lyophilized to yield a white solid (44.7 mg, 9% yield,  $\alpha$ : $\beta$  = 1:5); TLC R<sub>f</sub> = 0.5 (50% CH<sub>3</sub>OH in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CD<sub>3</sub>OD,  $\beta$ -anomer)  $\delta$  6.56 – 6.57 (m, 1H), 4.01 – 4.03 (m, 2H), 3.94 – 3.98 (m, 1H), 3.71 – 3.74 (m, 1H), 3.66 (dt, *J* = 5.0, 14.0 Hz, 1H), 3.32 (app d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 3.26 (ddd, *J* = 5.5, 14.0 Hz, 1H), 2.17 – 2.18 (m, 3H), 2.14 (d, *J* = 4.5 Hz, 1H), 2.10 (d, *J* = 1.5 Hz, 1H), 2.04 (s, 3H), 1.90 (app t, *J* = 12.5 Hz, 1H); <sup>13</sup>C

NMR (125 MHz, CD<sub>3</sub>OD): δ 178.6, 176.1, 172.9, 112.7, 96.3, 95.0, 70.4, 70.2, 69.6, 67.4, 52.6, 43.2, 40.5, 21.5, 21.3, 9.1; HRMS (ESI) *m/z* calcd C<sub>9</sub>H<sub>9</sub>O<sub>4</sub>N [M-H]<sup>-</sup> 387.1404, found 387.1412.

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## Chapter 3: Improved cyclopropene reporters for probing protein glycosylation

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The chemical reporter strategy is a popular method to tag biomolecules with probes in live cells and animals [1, 2]. This strategy relies on the metabolic introduction of unique functional groups (i.e., chemical reporters) into target biomolecules [3]. The reporters can be selectively modified in a second step using highly specific (i.e., bioorthogonal) chemistries. This two-step approach has been widely employed to visualize and profile cellular biopolymers, including glycoconjugates [3-8]. For example, sialylated glycans have been targeted with various N-acetyl mannosamine (ManNAc) and sialic acid precursors [9-12]. Similarly, mucin-type O-linked glycans and O-GlcNAc-modified proteins have been targeted with *N*-acetyl galactosamine (GalNAc) and *N*-acetyl glucosamine (GlcNAc) analogs, respectively [5, 13]. In most cases, the sugars were equipped with azide or alkyne reporter groups and ultimately detected via Staudinger ligation [14, 15], copper (I)-catalyzed azide-alkyne cycloaddition (CuAAC), or strain-promoted cycloaddition [16].

In recent years, cyclopropenes have gained traction as broadly useful chemical reporters for biomolecule visualization and retrieval [17-21]. Cyclopropenes are small in size and likely compatible with a variety of endogenous biosynthetic pathways. These motifs can also be readily ligated with tetrazine probes via inverse electron-demand Diels-Alder (IED-DA) reactions or nitrile imines via 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition. Importantly, cyclopropenes can be used concurrently with organic azides and alkynes—the most established chemical

reporters to date [17, 19, 22, 23]. Thus, cyclopropenes are well suited for multi-component imaging studies.

We and others have recently utilized cyclopropene-modified sugars (including the ManNAc analog, **Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNCyc**, Figure 3-1A) to target sialic acid residues on live cell surfaces [17, 19]. In these previous studies, cells were first incubated with **Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNCyc**, and then treated with various tetrazine probes. Cyclopropene-specific signal was observed in all cases, but the intensities were quite low, likely due to poor metabolic conversion of the unnatural sugar, inefficient tetrazine ligation, or both of these issues. Indeed, the N-acyl unit in **Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNCyc** is branched at the beta carbon; beta-substituted N-acyl chains are not well tolerated in the sialic acid biosynthetic pathway [24, 25]. Additionally, cyclopropenes with amides or other electron-withdrawing groups at C-3 (see Figure 3-1A) are sluggish IED-DA reactants [17, 21].

Here we report three cyclopropene-modified sugars that enable more facile tagging of mammalian cell glycoconjugates in a variety of assays. These monosaccharides comprise carbamate linkages between the requisite cyclopropene and sugar core (Figure 3-1A). The N-cyclopropenyl carbamate derivative **Ac**<sub>4</sub>**ManCCp** was designed to intercept the sialic acid biosynthetic pathway and target sialylated glycoconjugates [26]. The analogous GalNAc and GlcNAc analogs (**Ac**<sub>4</sub>GalCCp and **Ac**<sub>4</sub>GlcCCp) were designed to target mucin-type O-linked structures and O-GlcNAcylated proteins, respectively. Carbamates are relatively stable moieties, making them attractive for use in cells and live organisms. Indeed, Pratt and coworkers recently synthesized a set of N-propargyloxycarbamate sugars that can be readily detected via CuAAC for proteomics applications [27]. For the cyclopropene probes, the carbamate linkage also alleviates steric congestion at the beta-position, improving the

likelihood that cellular enzymes will efficiently process the sugars. Moreover, we and others have shown that cyclopropenes outfitted with carbamates (versus amides) at C-3 react ~100 times faster with electron-poor tetrazines [17, 18, 21, 26].

#### **3.2 Results and Discussion**

We prepared the desired probes (Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp, Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp, Ac<sub>4</sub>GlcCCp, Scheme 3-1) via direct conjugation of amino sugars 3.4-3.6 with an activated cyclopropene unit (3.3). Carbonate 3.3 was prepared by treating alcohol 3.1 with anhydrous cesium fluoride (to remove the silyl group), followed by nitrophenyl chloroformate (Scheme 3-1A). These transformations were performed sequentially as intermediate 3.2 was not stable upon concentration. Direct activation of 3.1 also resulted in product decomposition. Ultimately, carbonate 3.3 was used to acylate the hydrochloride salts of mannosamine (3.4), galactosamine (3.5), and glucosamine (3.6, Scheme 3-1B). The resulting carbamate sugars were then globally acetylated to provide the desired probes Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp, Ac<sub>4</sub>GlcCCp, and Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp. Acylation of sugar hydroxyl groups has been previously shown to facilitate probe uptake into mammalian cells [28].



**Figure 3-1.** Cyclopropene-modified ManNAc derivatives can be metabolically incorporated onto cell surfaces and covalently detected with tetrazine probes. (A) Structures of the ManNAc analogs ( $Ac_4ManNCyc$  and  $Ac_4ManCCp$ ) and tetrazine reagent (Tz-biotin) used in this study. (B) Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp is robustly incorporated onto live cell surfaces. Jurkat cells were incubated with Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp (0-50 µM), Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNCyc (0-50 µM) Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp (50 μM) plus Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNAc (10 μM, +Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNAc) or no sugar (-sugar). Samples were then treated with Tz-biotin (10 µM) for 30 min at 37 °C. One Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp-treated sample (10  $\mu$ M) was not labeled with **Tz-biotin** (-Tz). All cells were then stained with APC-avidin and analyzed by flow cytometry. Representative histograms are shown. (C) and (D) Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp enables more robust cell surface labeling than Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNCyc. (C) The mean fluorescence intensities (MFI, in arbitrary units) for the histograms in (B) are plotted. MFI values for cells treated with Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNCyc (10-50  $\mu$ M) are also shown. (D) Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp can be rapidly detected with Tz-biotin. Jurkat cells were incubated with Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp (25  $\mu$ M) or Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNCyc (25 µM), then treated with Tz-biotin (10 µM) for 0-60 min at 37 °C. The cells were stained with APC-avidin and analyzed by flow cytometry. The mean fluorescence intensities of the cell populations are plotted. In (C) and (D), error bars represent the standard deviation of the mean for three labeling reactions.



Scheme 3-1. (A) Synthesis of carbonate 3.3 via sequential deprotection and activation of 3.1. (B) Synthesis of carbamate-linked cyclopropene sugars. i) CsF (1.05 equiv), 18-crown-6 (1.10 equiv), THF, rt, 3 h; ii) 4-nitrochloroformate (2 equiv), pyridine (6 equiv), CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, rt, overnight; iii) mannosamine, galactosamine, or glucosamine hydrochloride (0.25 equiv), *N*,*N*-diisopropylethylamine (4 equiv), DMF, rt, 4-12 h, followed by Ac<sub>2</sub>O, pyridine.

Once in hand, the modified sugars were used to metabolically target glycoconjugates in live cells. Jurkat T cells were first incubated with Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp (0-50 µM) for 24 h, then reacted with a tetrazine-biotin probe (Tz-biotin, 10 µM, 30 min at 37 °C). Cell surface cycloadducts were detected upon staining with a fluorescent streptavidin conjugate and flow cytometry analysis. As shown in Figures 3-1 B-C, Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp-dependent fluorescence was observed, indicating successful metabolism and cell surface incorporation of the unnatural sugar. Notably, Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp provided enhanced cellular fluorescence compared to the Nacyl variant Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNCyc at all reagent concentrations and labeling times investigated, with nearly a 130-fold improvement in signal at the maximal doses and times. This was likely due to the improved incorporation efficiency of the carbamate probe, along with its faster rate of reaction. Similar trends were observed in other cell lines cultured with Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp (Figure 3-2) [26]. The fluorescence signal from Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp-treated cells was also diminished in the presence of Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNAc, the native substrate, suggesting that the carbamate probe enters the sialic acid biosynthetic pathway. Furthermore, Western blot analysis of proteins harvested from Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp-treated cells (and reacted with Tz-biotin) revealed a similar banding pattern-or "fingerprint"-compared to proteins isolated from cells treated with a previously validated report of sialylation, the azido-ManNAc analog Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNAz (Figure 3-3 and 3-4) [29]. In this experiment, Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNAz-labeled glycoproteins were detected via CuAAC with an alkyne probe.



**Figure 3-2**. Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp is metabolically incorporated into 4T1 and HEK293 cell surface glycans. Cells were incubated with Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp (0-50  $\mu$ M), Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp plus a control sugar (+ Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNAc, 10  $\mu$ M), or no sugar (- sugar) for 24 h. After washing, the cells were treated with Tz-biotin (10  $\mu$ M) for 30 min or no secondary reagent (-Tz) at 37 °C, stained with streptavadin-APC, and analyzed by flow cytometry. The mean fluorescence intensity (MFI) values for the cell populations are plotted. Error bars represent the standard deviation of the mean for three experiments.



**Figure 3-3**. Carbamate-linked cyclopropene sugars label cellular glycoproteins. Jurkat cells were incubated with cyclopropene (Cp) or azido (Az) analogs of ManNAc (Man), GalNAc (Gal), or GlcNAc (Glc) (75  $\mu$ M) for 36 h, then lysed. Soluble protein isolates were treated with either 100  $\mu$ M **Tz-biotin** to tag Cp-modified proteins or an alkyne-modified biotin (structure shown in Figure 3-4, 100  $\mu$ M) to tag Az-modified proteins via CuAAC. All samples were separated by gel electrophoresis and analyzed via Western blot. Equivalent protein loading was confirmed using Ponceau S stain (Figure 3-4).



**Figure 3-4**. Equivalent protein loading was observed via Ponceau S staining. Jurkat cells were incubated with cyclopropene (Cp) or azido (Az) analogs of ManNAc (Man), GalNAc (Gal), or GlcNAc (Glc) (75  $\mu$ M) for 36 h, then lysed. Protein isolates were treated with either 100  $\mu$ M **Tz-biotin** to tag Cp-modified proteins or **alkyne-biotin** (100  $\mu$ M) to tag Az-modified proteins via CuAAC. The labeled proteins were separated by gel electrophoresis and transferred to nitrocellulose prior to Ponceau S staining.

Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp and Ac<sub>4</sub>GlcCCp, the putative metabolic reporters for GalNAc and GlcNAc, respectively, were similarly evaluated in cultured cells. Jurkat or HEK293 cells were incubated with the unnatural sugars (0-50  $\mu$ M) for 24 h prior to tetrazine ligation and flow cytometry analysis. Cell surface cyclopropenes were detected in all cases (Figure 3-5). The glycoprotein targets of these sugars were also analyzed. Soluble protein isolates from Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp- or Ac<sub>4</sub>GlcCCp-treated Jurkat cells were reacted with Tz-biotin, then separated by gel electrophoresis and analyzed by Western blot. As shown in Figure 3-3, both Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp and Ac<sub>4</sub>GlcCCp produced "fingerprints" similar to their azido counterparts [30-32]. It should be noted, though, that some N-acyl analogs of GalNAc, GlcNAc, and ManNAc have been observed to target multiple classes of biomolecules due to N-deacetylation and/or enzymatic scrambling [30-32]. The extent to which the carbamate sugars are interconverted remains to be determined, and further biochemical studies will ultimately elucidate their metabolic fates. Based on our work to date, though, the cyclopropene sugars appear to function similarly to the analogous azido probes (Figures 3-3 and 3-6).



**Figure 3-5.** Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp and Ac<sub>4</sub>GlcCCp are metabolically incorporated into cell surface glycans. Jurkat (A) and HEK293 (B) cells were incubated in the presence of Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp (0-50  $\mu$ M), Ac<sub>4</sub>GlcCCp (0-50  $\mu$ M), or no sugar (-sugar) for 24 h. After washing, the cells were treated with Tz-biotin (10  $\mu$ M) or no reagent (-Tz) for 30 min at 37 °C, stained with streptavadin-APC, and analyzed by flow cytometry. The mean fluorescence intensity (MFI) values for the cell populations are plotted. Error bars represent the standard deviation of the mean for three experiments.



**Figure 3-6**. Carbamate-linked cyclopropene sugars label cellular glycoproteins. (A) HEK293 and (B) 4T1 cells were incubated with cyclopropene (Cp) or azido (Az) analogs of ManNAc (Man), GalNAc (Gal), or GlcNAc (Glc) (75  $\mu$ M) for 36 h, then lysed. Soluble protein isolates were treated with either 100  $\mu$ M **Tz-biotin** to tag Cp-modified proteins or 100  $\mu$ M **alkyne-biotin** (structure shown in Figure 3-4) to tag Az-modified proteins via CuAAC. All samples were separated by gel electrophoresis and analyzed via Western blot. Protein loading was confirmed using Ponceau S stain.

Azide-alkyne cycloadditions and cyclopropene-tetrazine ligations can be used simultaneously to visualize distinct biomolecules in live cells. However, in most examples to date, the cyclopropene-tagging reactions required either extensive labeling times (>1 h with 100  $\mu$ M tetrazine) or large probe concentrations (>100  $\mu$ M Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNCyc or >100  $\mu$ M tetrazine). Such conditions resulted in cellular toxicity and higher levels of background labeling. With the carbamate-functionalized sugars, lower concentrations of reagents and shorter reaction times can be employed, facilitating glycan visualization in live cells. Indeed, when 4T1 cells were treated with Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp or Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp (25  $\mu$ M), the targeted glycoconjugates could be readily detected with functionalized tetrazines in just 15 min (Figures 3-7 and 3-8). By contrast, no detectable fluorescence was observed in Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNCyc-treated cells even after extended tetrazine labeling times (1 h, Figure 3-10).

# Α Ac₄ManCCp + . Tz-biotin + DIC AF594 DAPI merge В Ac₄ManCCp Tz-biotin + DIC AF594 DAPI merge

**Figure 3-7**. Carbamate cyclopropene sugars can be metabolically introduced and visualized in 4T1 mammalian cells. Cells were incubated in the presence of Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp (25  $\mu$ M, +) or no sugar (–) for 36 h. After washing, the cells were treated with Tz-biotin (25  $\mu$ M, +) or no reagent (–) for (A) 1 h or (B) 15 min at 37 °C, stained with streptavadin-APC and DAPI, and analyzed by flourescence microscopy. Cell surface fluorescence (red) was only observed in samples treated with both Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp and Tz-biotin). Representative bright-field (DIC) images AF594 images, and merged images are shown. Scale bar = 10  $\mu$ m.



**Figure 3-8**. Cyclopropene-GalNAc reporters can be metabolically incorporated and visualized in 4T1 cells. Cells were incubated in the presence of Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp ( $25 \mu$ M, +) or no sugar (–) for 36 h. After washing, the cells were treated with Tz-biotin ( $25 \mu$ M, +) or no reagent (–) for 1 h at 37 °C, stained with streptavadin-APC and DAPI, and analyzed by flourescence microscopy. Representative bright-field (DIC) images, AF594 images, and merged images are shown. Scale bar = 10  $\mu$ m.



**Figure 3-9**. **Ac**<sub>4</sub>**GlcCCp** is incorporated into cellular glycoconjugates (as shown in Figures 3-3, 3-5, and 3-6), but minimal cell surface labeling is observed. Cells were incubated in the presence of **Ac**<sub>4</sub>**GlcCCp** (25  $\mu$ M, +) or no sugar (–) for 36 h. After washing, the cells were treated with **Tz-biotin** (25  $\mu$ M, +) or no reagent (–) for 1 h at 37 °C, stained with streptavadin-APC and DAPI, and analyzed by flourescence microscopy. Representative bright-field (DIC) images, AF594 images, and merged images are shown. Scale bar = 10  $\mu$ m.



**Figure 3-10**. No cell surface labeling observed with Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNCyc. Cells were incubated with Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNCyc (25  $\mu$ M, +) or no sugar (-) for 36 h. After washing, the cells were treated with Tz-biotin (25  $\mu$ M, +) or no reagent (-) for 1 h at 37 °C, stained with streptavadin-APC and DAPI, and analyzed by flourescence microscopy. Representative bright-field (DIC) images, AF594 images, and merged images are shown. Scale bar = 10  $\mu$ m. (Note: the exposure times used for the AF954 panels in this experiment were ~3X greater than those used to generate the images in Figure 3-7).

We used the optimized carbamate cyclopropenes in tandem with azido reporters to target unique subsets of cellular glycans (Figures 3-11 and 3-12). In brief, cells were treated with either Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp (to target sialylated structures), the azido GalNAc analog (Ac<sub>4</sub>GalNAz), both unnatural sugars, or no sugar. All cell samples were reacted concurrently with Tz-biotin (to tag cell surface cyclopropenes) and a strained alkyne (DBCO-FLAG, Scheme 3-2) to tag cell surface azides. Selective labeling of each unnatural sugar was observed with no cross-reactivity. Unique sites of biomolecule co-localization were also observed near cellular junctions. Further insights into these and other multi-component processes will be aided by the cyclopropene chemical reporters described in this work.



**Figure 3-11**. Distinct metabolic targets can be simultaneously imaged using cyclopropene and azido reporters. 4T1 cells were cultured in the presence of both Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp (25  $\mu$ M) and Ac<sub>4</sub>GalNAz (25  $\mu$ M) for 24 h, followed by concurrent treatment with Tz-biotin (25  $\mu$ M, 1 h at 37 °C) and DBCO-FLAG (100  $\mu$ M, 1 h at 37 °C) to covalently tag cell surface cyclopropenes and azides, respectively. Cells were then stained with streptavidin-AF594 and FITC-a-FLAG and imaged via confocal microscopy. Representative images are shown. Red: AF594, Green: FITC, Blue: DAPI. Scale bar: 10  $\mu$ m.



**Figure 3-12.** Control images for the dual labeling experiment in Figure 3-11. 4T1 cells were cultured in the presence of **Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp** (25  $\mu$ M, +), **Ac<sub>4</sub>GalNAz** (25  $\mu$ M, +), both sugars (25  $\mu$ M each), or no sugar (–) for 36 hours. The cells were then treated with **Tz-biotin** (25  $\mu$ M, +), **DBCO-FLAG** (100  $\mu$ M, +), both reagents (+) or no reagent (–) for 1 h at 37 °C. Cells were then stained (streptavidin-AF594, FITC- $\alpha$ -FLAG, and DAPI) and imaged by fluorescence microscopy. Representative bright-field (DIC), AF594, FITC, and merged images are shown. Scale bar = 10  $\mu$ m.

Scheme 3-2. Synthesis of DBCO-FLAG.


# **3.3 Conclusions**

Cyclopropenes are versatile chemical reporters for biomolecule tagging in live cells. Despite their remarkable cellular compatibilities and unique chemistries, they have been inefficient reports of glycosylation to date. We developed a set of carbamate-functionalized cyclopropenes with improved utility for glycan imaging and profiling. These tools were readily processed in cultured cells and rapidly ligated with tetrazine probes. The carbamatecyclopropene sugars can also be used in tandem with other chemical reporters including azides and alkynes, and we utilized combinations of these tools to tag two different subsets of glycans in live cells. Future multi-component imaging studies of glycans and related biomolecules will benefit from the versatility of the cyclopropene probes presented here.

#### **3.4 Materials and methods**

#### **3.4a Metabolic labeling studies with cultured cells**

Jurkat cells were plated at a density of ~500,000 cells/mL in RPMI media (Corning) supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS, Life Technologies), penicillin (100 U/mL), and streptomycin (100 mg/mL). HEK293 and 4T1 cells were plated at ~500,000 cells/well in 2 mL DMEM media (Corning) supplemented with 10% FBS, penicillin (100 U/mL), and streptomycin (100 mg/mL). Cells were incubated with Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNCyc, Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp, Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp, or Ac<sub>4</sub>GlcCCp (0-50  $\mu$ M) for 24 h in a 5% CO<sub>2</sub>, water-saturated incubator at 37 °C. The cells were rinsed with PBS containing 1% bovine serum albumin (FACS buffer, 3 x 200 mL), then reacted with Tz-biotin (10  $\mu$ M, 30 min, 37 °C). The cells were subsequently pelleted (1500 rpm), washed with FACS buffer (3 x 200 mL), and stained with streptavidin-APC (eBioscence, 1:500 dilution in FACS buffer) for 20 min on ice. The cells were pelleted

and washed with additional FACS buffer (3 x 200 mL), then analyzed by flow cytometry on an LSR-II flow cytometer (BD Biosciences). For each sample, data were acquired for 10,000 live cells. Cells were analyzed in triplicate, and three replicate experiments were performed for each study. Cellular fluorescence data were analyzed using FloJo software (Tree Star, Inc.).

#### **3.4b Western blot analyses**

Jurkat cells were plated at a density of ~500,000 cells/mL in RPMI media (Corning) supplemented with 10% FBS along with penicillin (100 U/mL) and streptomycin (100 mg/mL). Cells were incubated with azido sugars Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNAz, Ac<sub>4</sub>GalNAz, or Ac<sub>4</sub>GlcNAz (75 µM) or cyclopropene sugars Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp, Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp, or Ac<sub>4</sub>GlcCCp (75 µM) for 36 h in a 5% CO<sub>2</sub>, water-saturated incubator at 37 °C. The cells were pelleted (1500 rpm), rinsed with PBS (3 x 0.5 mL), and then lysed with 100 mL lysis buffer (1% Igepal<sup>™</sup> CA-630, 150 mM NaCl, 50 mM triethanolamine, pH 7.4) on ice for 30 min. The lysates were pelleted (13,000 rpm for 10 min at 4 °C) and protein concentrations were measured using a BCA protein assay kit (Pierce). Lysates (~1 mg/mL, 50 mL) were treated with either freshly prepared "click" chemistry cocktail containing alkyne-biotin (100 µM); sodium ascorbate (1 mM); tris[(1-benzyl-1-H-1,2,3-triazol-4-yl)methyl]amine (TBTA) (100 µM); CuSO<sub>4</sub>•5H<sub>2</sub>O (1 mM)] or **Tz-biotin** (100 µM, 1 h, 37 °C). To precipitate the labeled proteins, ice-cold methanol (1 mL) was added and the samples were stored at -80 °C overnight. Protein precipitates were pelleted via centrifugation (13,000 rpm for 10 min at 4 °C), aspirated and dried for 1 h at rt. The protein isolates were then re-suspended in 10 mL buffer (4% SDS, 150 mM NaCl, 50 mM triethanolamine, pH 7.4), then treated with SDS-PAGE loading buffer (10

 $\mu$ L of a 2X stock containing 20% glycerol, 0.2% bromophenol blue, 1.4%  $\beta$ mercaptoethanol). The samples were heated at 90 °C for 5–10 min, separated by gel electrophoresis using 12% polyacrylamide gels, and then electroblotted to nitrocellulose membranes (0.2  $\mu$ m; Bio-Rad). Transfer efficiency was analyzed with Ponceau S staining. The membranes were rinsed with water and incubated with blocking buffer (7% bovine serum albumin in PBS containing 1% Tween® 20, PBS-T) for 1 h at rt, followed by IRDye® 800CW streptavadin (LI-COR Biosciences; 1:10,000 dilution in blocking buffer) for at least 1 h. The membranes were subsequently washed with PBS-T (5 x 10 min) and imaged using an Odyssey infared imaging system (Li-Cor, Odyssey version 3.0).

## **3.4c Microscopy**

4T1Luc2 cells were grown on glass cover slips submerged in 0.5 mL DMEM media (Corning) supplemented with 10% FBS, penicillin (100 U/mL), and streptomycin (100 mg/mL) (in 24-well culture dishes). The media also contained Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp (25  $\mu$ M), Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp (25  $\mu$ M), Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp (25  $\mu$ M), Ac<sub>4</sub>GlcCCp (25  $\mu$ M), or no sugar. After 36 h, the cells were washed with FACS buffer (3 x 0.25 mL). Cells were then treated with Tz-biotin (25  $\mu$ M) in media for 15 min at 37 °C. The cells were washed with FACS buffer (3 x 0.25 mL). Cells were then treated with PBS (3 x 0.25 mL) and fixed with 4% paraformaldehyde in PBS for 15 min at rt. After washing with PBS (3 x 0.25 mL), the cells were blocked for 1 h at rt with PBS + 5% BSA (0.5 mL). The cells were treated with streptavidin-AlexaFluor594 (Jackson Labs; 1:1000 in FACS buffer) for 30 min at rt, then washed with FACS buffer (3 x 0.25 mL). The cover slips were mounted on glass slides with Vectashield® mounting media (Vector Laboratories) for imaging. Images were acquired on a

Nikon Eclipse Ti inverted microscope with NIS-Elements Microscope Imaging Software and analyzed with ImageJ.

For dual labeling experiments, 4T1Luc2 cells were grown on glass cover slips submerged in 0.5 DMEM media (Corning) supplemented with 10% FBS, penicillin (100 U/mL), and streptomycin (100 mg/mL) (in 24-well culture dishes). The media also contained Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp (25 µM), Ac<sub>4</sub>GalNAz (25 µM), both sugars (25 µM each), or no sugar. After 36 h, the cells were washed with PBS + 1% BSA (3 x 0.25 mL). Cells were then treated with **Tz-Biotin** (25 µM), **DBCO-FLAG** (100 mM), both reagents, or no reagent in media for 1 h at 37 °C. The cells were then washed with FACS buffer (3 x 0.25 mL) and blocked for 1 h at rt with PBS + 5% BSA (0.5 mL). The cells were treated with streptavidin-AlexaFluor594 (Jackson Labs; 1:1000 in FACS buffer) and FITC-a-FLAG (Sigma-Aldrich; 10 µg/mL in FACS buffer) for 1 h at rt. The cover slips were washed with FACS buffer (3 x 0.25 mL), then fixed with 4% paraformaldehyde in PBS for 15 min at rt. The cover slips were washed with FACS buffer (3 x 0.25 mL) and mounted on glass slides with Vectashield® mounting media (Vector Laboratories) for imaging. Images were acquired on a Nikon Eclipse Ti inverted microscope with NIS-Elements Microscope Imaging Software and analyzed with ImageJ.

#### **3.4d General synthetic procedures**

Compounds Ac<sub>4</sub>ManNCyc [19], Tz-biotin [17], alkyne-biotin [33], 3.7 [34], and 3.8 [35] were synthesized as previously reported. All other reagents were purchased from commercial sources and used as received without further purification. Reactions were carried out under an inert atmosphere of nitrogen in oven- or flame-dried glassware. Dichloromethane (CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>), tetrahydrofuran (THF), N,N-dimethylformamide (DMF), and triethylamine (NEt<sub>3</sub>) were degassed with argon and passed through two 4 x 36 inch columns of anhydrous neutral A-2 (8 x 14 mesh; LaRoche Chemicals; activated under a flow of argon at 350 °C for 12 h). The remaining solvents were of analytical grade and purchased from commercial suppliers. Thin-layer chromatography was performed using Silica Gel 60 F<sub>254</sub> plates. Plates were visualized with UV radiation or staining with 10% sulfuric acid in ethanol or KMnO<sub>4</sub>. Flash column chromatography was performed with SiliaFlash® F60 40-63 mM (230-400 mesh) silica gel from Silicycle. <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectra were recorded on CRYO-500 (500 MHz<sup>1</sup>H, 125.7 MHz<sup>13</sup>C) or DRX-400 (400 MHz<sup>1</sup>H) spectrometers. All spectra were collected at 298 K. Chemical shifts are reported in ppm values relative to residual nondeuterated NMR solvent and coupling constants (J) are reported in Hertz (Hz). Highresolution mass spectrometry was performed by the University of California, Irvine Mass Spectrometry Center. HPLC runs were conducted on a Varian ProStar equipped with 325 Dual Wavelength UV-Vis Detector. Semi-preparative runs were performed using an Agilent Prep-C18 Scalar column (9.4 x 150 mm, 5 µm) with a 5 mL/min flow rate. The elution gradients for the relevant separations are specified below.

#### **3.4e Synthetic Procedures**

3-Hydroxymethyl-2-methyl-trimethylsilylcyclopropene (3.1). To a stirring mixture of TMS-propyne (4.0 mL, 27 mmol) and rhodium acetate dimer (15 mg, 0.034 mmol) was slowly added ethyl diazoacetate (1.0 mL, 8.6 mmol) dissolved in 15 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> at a rate of 0.5-1.0 mL/min. Once the addition was complete, the reaction was stirred for an additional 30 min. The mixture was then partially concentrated under reduced pressure and eluted through a plug of silica gel (eluting with  $CH_2Cl_2$ ) to remove the rhodium catalyst. The eluant was gently concentrated under reduced pressure and added dropwise (over 1 min) to a solution of DIBAL-H (14.0 mL of a 25% wt/wt solution in hexanes, 17.2 mmol) in 15 mL Et<sub>2</sub>O at 4 °C. The reaction was stirred until the cyclopropene ester was consumed (30–60 min). Saturated Rochelle's salt was then added and the mixture was stirred until a white gel formed. The organic layer was isolated and the aqueous layer was further extracted with Et<sub>2</sub>O (2 x 20 mL). The combined organic layers were dried with MgSO<sub>4</sub>, filtered, and concentrated in vacuo to afford the crude product as a faint yellow oil. The product was purified by flash column chromatography (eluting with 30% Et<sub>2</sub>O in hexanes) to yield **3.1** as a faint yellow oil (714 mg, 53% two steps): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  3.48 (d, J = 4.6 Hz, 2H), 2.21 (s, 3H), 1.56 (t, J = 4.6 Hz, 1H), 0.17 (s, 9H). Data is in agreement with previously reported spectrum [17].

(2-Methylcycloprop-2-enyl)methyl (4-nitrophenyl) carbonate (3.3). Cyclopropene 3.1 (392 mg, 2.51 mmol) was dissolved in 10 mL THF. Anhydrous 18-crown-6 (729 mg, 2.76 mmol) and anhydrous cesium fluoride (400 mg, 2.63 mmol) were added, and the solution was stirred until 3.1 was fully consumed (2.5 h). The reaction was then diluted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (25

mL). Pyridine (1.2 mL, 15 mmol) was added, followed by 4-nitrophenyl chloroformate (1.01 g, 5.01 mmol), and the reaction was stirred overnight. The reaction mixture was then concentrated *in vacuo*, dissolved in Et<sub>2</sub>O (30 mL), rinsed with concentrated NaHCO<sub>3</sub> (3 x 30 mL), and dried with MgSO<sub>4</sub>. The crude product was filtered, then gently concentrated and purified by flash column chromatography (eluting with 5% Et<sub>2</sub>O in petroleum ether) to afford carbonate **3.3** as a clear oil (459 mg, 73%): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  8.27 (m, 2H), 7.38 (m, 2H), 6.61 (s, 1H), 4.20 (dd, *J* = 10.9, 5.2 Hz, 1H), 4.13 (dd, *J* = 10.9, 5.5 Hz, 1Hz), 2.17 (d, *J* = 1.2 Hz, 3H), 1.78 (m, 1H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR 125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  155.8, 152.7, 145.3, 125.3, 121.9, 120.2, 101.7, 77.5, 16.7, 11.7; LRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>11</sub>O<sub>5</sub>NNa [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 272.0535, found 272.0460.

#### General procedure for the synthesis of carbamate sugars

The hydrochloride salt of mannosamine (**3.4**), galactosamine (**3.5**), or glucosamine (**3.6**) (20.1 mg, 0.0932 mmol) was added to a solution of DMF (2 mL) and *N*,*N*-diisopropylethylamine (65 mL, 0.37 mmol) and heated to 60 °C. The solution was cooled to ambient temperature and treated with a solution of carbonate **3.3** (91.0 mg, 0.365 mmol) dissolved in 0.5 mL DMF. The solution quickly turned yellow, indicating the release of 4-nitrophenol. The reaction was stirred for 4-12 h. The solvent was removed *in vacuo* onto silica gel and was run through a plug of silica gel (flushed with 5% and eluted with 10% MeOH in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>). The isolated sugar was dissolved in 1 mL pyridine and treated with acetic anhydride (0.5 mL, 4 mmol). The reactions were stirred overnight and concentrated *in vacuo*. The crude acetylated sugar was diluted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> and rinsed with NaHSO<sub>4</sub> (3 x 10 mL) and washed with brine (10 mL). The product was purified by flash column chromagraphy

(eluting with 3:2 hexanes:ethyl acetate) or HPLC (eluting with 30–70% CH<sub>3</sub>CN in H<sub>2</sub>O over 20 min). The desired fractions were combined and dried to yield Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp, Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp, or Ac<sub>4</sub>GlcCCp.

Ac<sub>4</sub>ManCCp. Mixture of anomers isolated (16.1 mg, 0.0352, 38%) as a white solid: <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 2:1  $\alpha$ : $\beta$ )  $\delta$  ( $\alpha$  anomer) 6.58 (d, J = 4.8 Hz, 1H), 6.09 (s, 1H), 5.31 (dd, J = 10.2, 4.2 Hz, 1H), 5.20 (app t, J = 9.8 Hz, 1H), 5.02 (m, 1H), 4.34 (dd, J = 8.6, 2.9)Hz, 1H), 4.25 (dd, J = 12.2, 4.2 Hz, 1H), 4.02 (m, 1H), 3.95 (app t, J = 5.2 Hz, 2H), 2.17 (s, 3H), 2.14 (s, 3H), 2.10 (s 3H), 2.05 (s, 3H), 2.02 (s, 3H), 1.65 (m, 1H); (β anomer) 6.58 (d, J = 4.8 Hz, 1H), 5.85 (s, 1H), 5.16 (app t, J = 9.7 Hz, 1H), 5.09 (d, J = 9.2 Hz, 1H), 5.02 (m, 1H), 4.47 (m, 1H), 4.25 (dd, J = 12.2, 4.2 Hz, 1H), 4.13-4.04 (m, 2H), 3.78 (ddd, J = 9.5, 4.8, 1) 2.6 Hz, 1H), 2.14 (s, 3H), 2.12 (s, 3H), 2.10 (s, 3H), 2.05 (s, 3H), 2.03 (s, 3H), 1.65 (m, 1H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 298 K) δ 170.7, 170.6, 170.2, 170.2, 169.7, 169.7, 168.5, 168.2, 156.9, 156.3, 120.7, 120.5, 102.3, 102.2, 102.1, 92.0, 90.8, 73.4, 73.2, 73.2, 73.0, 71.6, 70.2, 69.2, 65.4, 65.3, 62.0, 61.9, 51.3, 51.1, 21.0, 20.9, 20.8, 20.8, 20.8, 20.8, 20.7, 20.7, 17.1, 17.1, 11.7, 11.7; <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 318 K) δ 170.4, 170.4, 169.9, 169.9, 169.4, 169.4, 168.3, 168.0, 156.2, 120.5, 120.5, 102.2, 102.1, 92.1, 90.9, 73.5, 73.2, 72.9, 71.5, 70.3, 69.2, 65.6, 65.6, 62.1, 62.0, 51.3, 51.3, 20.7, 20.7, 20.6, 20.6, 20.6, 20.6, 20.5, 20.5, 17.2, 17.1, 11.5, 11.5; HRMS (ESI) calcd for  $C_{20}H_{27}O_{11}NNa [M+Na]^+ 480.1482$ , found 480.1460.

Ac<sub>4</sub>GalCCp. Mixture of anomers isolated (14.3 mg, 0.0313 mmol, 17%) as a white solid: <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO- $d_6$ , 3:1  $\alpha$ : $\beta$ )  $\delta$  ( $\alpha$  anomer) 7.53 (m, 1H), 6.86 (d, J = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 6.08 (dd, J = 5.1, 3.6 Hz, 1H), 5.41 (d, J = 2.3 Hz, 1H), 5.09 (dd, J = 11.7, 3.0 Hz, 1H), 4.34

(app t, J = 6.2 Hz, 1H), 4.15-3.97 (m, 3H), 3.92-3.74 (m, 2H), 2.16 (s, 3H), 2.14 (s, 3H), 2.11 (s, 3H), 2.00 (s, 3H), 1.95 (s, 3H), 1.53 (m, 1H); (β anomer) 7.23 (m, 1H), 6.86 (d, J = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 5.66 (d, J = 8.7 Hz, 1H), 5.29 (d, J = 3.0 Hz, 1H), 5.09 (dd, J = 11.7, 3.0 Hz, 1H), 4.17 (app t, J = 6.1 Hz, 1H), 4.15-3.97 (m, 3H), 3.92-3.74 (m, 2H), 2.14 (s, 3H), 2.11 (s, 3H), 2.07 (s, 3H), 2.01 (s, 3H), 1.94 (s, 3H), 1.53 (m, 1H);<sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, DMSO- $d_6$ , α anomer) δ 170.5, 170.4, 170.1, 169.7, 156.9, 120.5, 102.7, 90.7, 71.8, 68.7, 67.9, 67.1, 61.8, 48.7, 21.3, 21.0, 21.0, 20.9, 17.1, 11.8; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>20</sub>H<sub>27</sub>O<sub>11</sub>NNa [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 480.1482, found 480.1466.

Ac<sub>4</sub>GlcCCp. Single isomer isolated (57.9 mg, 0.127, 51%) as a white solid: <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>, α anomer only) δ 7.51 (d, J = 8.6 Hz, 1H), 6.86 (s, 1H), 6.00 (s, 1H), 5.17 (app t, J = 10.2 Hz, 1H), 5.01 (app t, J = 9.8, 1H) 4.19 (dd, J = 12.4, 3.8 Hz, 1H), 4.11 (ddd, J = 10.3, 3.5, 2.2 Hz, 1H), 4.01 (dd, J = 12.0, 1.5 Hz, 2H), 3.93-3.75 (m, 2H), 2.18 (s, 3H), 2.11 (s, 3H), 2.03 (s, 3H), 2.00 (s, 3H), 1.96 (s, 3H), 1.53 (m, 1H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>) δ 170.5, 170.1, 169.7, 169.7, 156.9, 120.6, 102.6, 90.3, 71.8, 70.9, 69.5, 68.5, 61.8, 52.6, 21.3, 21.0, 20.9, 20.9, 17.1, 11.8; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>20</sub>H<sub>27</sub>O<sub>11</sub>NNa [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 480.1482, found 480.1464.

**Dibenzocyclooctyne-FLAG peptide conjugate (DBCO-FLAG)**. The peptide conjugate was prepared as previously described [35]. Briefly, DYKDDDDKC (20 mg, 0.018 mmol) was dissolved in 0.25 mL H<sub>2</sub>O and added to a solution of DBCO-maleimide (Click Chemistry Tools; 5.0 mg, 0.012 mmol) in 0.2 mL DMF. The reaction was stirred overnight. The product was isolated via HPLC (eluting with 20–80% MeCN in H<sub>2</sub>O over 20 min). The desired

fractions were combined and lyophilized to yield **DBCO-FLAG** (7.5 mg, 41%) as a white solid; LRMS (ESI) calcd for  $C_{69}H_{88}N_{14}O_{25}S [M+2H]^{2+}$  772.27, found 772.26.

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# **CHAPTER 4: Orthogonal bioorthogonal chemistries**

# 4.1 Introduction

Bioorthogonal reactions provide a versatile platform to probe and manipulate biomolecules. These reactions employ unique functional groups that are relatively inert to life's diverse chemical functionality, but react expediently with one another in complex environments. Bioorthogonal chemistries have been used extensively to image proteins and other biomolecules in living systems [1], retrieve active enzymes from tissues [2], identify drug targets *in vivo* [3], and even build designer antibody conjugates [4]. Additional creative applications are anticipated as new reactions are developed.

While the bioorthogonal toolbox is rapidly expanding, notable voids have emerged. For example, many of the most well known bioorthogonal reagents—including organic azides and strained reagents—are incompatible with one another and cannot be used in tandem to probe biological systems. Thus, it has been historically difficult to image multiple biomolecules in live cells and craft multi-functional proteins using distinct bioorthogonal chemistries. Multi-component studies require not only reliable transformations, but also *combinations* of transformations that are compatible with one another –i.e., *mutually orthogonal* bioorthogonal chemistries (Figure 4-1).

Identifying "orthogonal bioorthogonal" transformations is a formidable challenge. The barrier to developing a single biocompatible reaction remains high: the reactants must remain inert to biological functionality while maintaining robust reactivity with their complementary reagent [5]. Applications *in vivo* typically impose further restrictions on reagent size, reactivity rates, and product stability [6]. Mutually orthogonal reactions must meet these same demands and also remain inert to each other. This chapter highlights recent efforts to identify such

orthogonal bioorthogonal transformations via mechanistic insights and synthetic tuning. We also showcase examples of how pairs of compatible reactions have been used to construct antibody conjugates and bifunctional proteins, in addition to image multiple biomolecules simultaneously.



**Figure 4-1.** Targeting multiple components requires 'orthogonal bioorthogonal' reactions. (A) Mutually orthogonal reactions can be utilized in tandem to label distinct targets in a biological setting. The targets (green and brown rectangles) are outfitted with unique, bioorthogonal functional groupa (blue and magenta circles) that reacts selectively with complementary reagents (blue and magenta arcs). (B) Mutually orthogonal reactions have been applied in several contexts, including antibody conjugate assembly, heterobifunctional protein construction, metabolic labeling, and enzyme tagging experiments.

# 4.2 Mutually orthogonal bioorthogonal reactions

## 4.2a Unique reaction mechanisms

One straightforward method to identify compatible reactions is to search for transformations with unique mechanisms. Two of the earliest reported bioorthogonal reactionsketo/aldehyde condensations and the Staudinger ligation-are orthogonal in this regard [7]. Keto/aldehyde condensations are polar reactions involving a hard electrophile (ketone or aldehyde) and hard nucleophile (hydrazide or aminooxy group). By contrast, the Staudinger ligation exploits a soft electrophile (azide) and a soft nucleophile (phosphine) to form an amide linkage. These mechanistic features mitigate cross-reactivities among the reagents and enable the ligations to be performed in concert in biological settings [7]. Keto/aldehyde condensations can also be performed in tandem with other azide-specific chemistries, including the venerable copper-catalyzed azide-alkyne cycloaddition (CuAAC). CuAAC is among the most rapid (10<sup>5</sup> M<sup>-</sup> <sup>1</sup>s<sup>-1</sup> per mole of catalyst) and most accessible bioorthogonal transformations [8], making it attractive for numerous applications. Distefano and coworkers recently utilized CuAAC in combination with the oxime ligation to craft bifunctional proteins for imaging and therapeutic applications [9]. These researchers used farnesyl transferase to append alkyne- and aldehdyemodified farnesyl groups to proteins bearing a C-terminal CaaX recognition sequence. The alkyne and aldehyde motifs were subsequently modified with a variety of imaging and targeting agents via simultaneous bioorthogonal ligation.

Another class of azide-specific ligations - strain-promoted azide-alkyne cycloadditions (SPAAC) - is also compatible with ketone/aldehyde condensations. SPAAC reactions exploit strained cycloalkynes; these molecules react with organic azides under mild conditions (and in the absence of copper) in a variety of biological environments. SPAAC has been used

extensively in combination with keto/aldehdye ligations to assemble defined antibody conjugates (Figure 4-2A and B) [10-12]. In one recent example, Schultz and coworkers exploited these reactions to assemble bispecific antigen-binding fragments (biFabs). BiFabs are capable of binding two distinct targets and can control immune cell recruitment to cancer cells [11]. In this study, antibody fragments targeting either human C-type lectin-like molecule-1 (CCL1) or CD3 were modified with keto groups installed via non-canconical amino acid (ncAA) mutagenesis. The keto groups were then reacted with aminooxy linkers bearing an azide or strained cyclooctyne. SPAAC ligation between the two fragments provided the desired biFab. This conjugate exhibited potent antitumor activity in mice via T cell recruitment (via CD3 binding) to cancer cell grafts (via CCL1 binding). BiFabs and other protein conjugates have numerous biomedical applications, and further developments in bifunctional synthesis are expected with improved ligation chemistries [13-15].

Strained *alkenes*, similar to their alkyne counterparts, are also widely used in bioorthogonal reaction development. Recent examples include *trans*-cyclooctene (TCO), norbornene, and cyclopropene [16]. These motifs react efficiently with electron-poor dienes (e.g., 1,2,4,5-tetrazines) via strain-promoted inverse-electron-demand Diels-Alder cycloaddition (SPIEDAC) [17]. Importantly, most strained alkenes and tetrazines are unreactive with organic azides and terminal alkynes; thus, SPIEDAC ligations can often be used in tandem with CuAAC (Figure 4-2C) [18-20]. The TCO-tetrazine ligation and CuAAC are especially well suited for dual and quantitative protein labeling owing to their fast rates. The Chin group recently capitalized on these features to append FRET fluorophores to calmodulin (Figure 4-2D) [18]. Alkynyl and cyclopropenyl ncAA's were site-specifically into the protein and subsequently

tagged with azide and tetrazine fluorophores simultaneously. Quantitative, dual labeling of calmodulin was achieved in only 30 min.



**Figure 4-2.** Orthogonal bioorthogonal ligations with distinct reaction mechanisms. (A) Keto/aldehyde condensations and strain-promoted azide-alkyne cycloadditions (SPAAC) can be used simultaneously. (B) Keto-functionalized Fabs ( $\alpha$ CLL1 and  $\alpha$ CD3) were modified via oxime ligation to install azide or bicyclononyne linkers, respectively. These modified Fabs were mixed, to form a covalently linked bispecific Fab via SPAAC. (Reprinted in part with permission from Ref [11]. Copyright 2014 Wiley) (C) The cyclopropene-tetrazine ligation is mutually orthogonal to CuAAC. (D) Alkynyl and cyclopropenyl ncAAs were installed in calmodulin. These residues were covalently targeted with matched fluorophores (via CuAAC and SPIEDAC) for FRET studies. Efficient labeling was observed when the reactions were performed sequentially (with or without purification, lanes 4 and 5, respectively) or simultaneously (lane 6). Reprinted in part with permission from Ref [18]. Copyright 2014 ACS Publications

## 4.2b Tuning reactions for orthogonality

While strained-promoted cycloadditions are ubiquitous in chemical biology, many of the reagents cross-react with one another. For example, several tetrazines react robustly with strained alkynes, precluding many tandem applications of SPIEDAC and SPAAC [21, 22]. This is detrimental for many live cell imaging applications, where the two reaction classes have traditionally excelled. Fortunately, most SPAAC and SPIEDAC reagents can be "tuned" to access desired reactivities. For example, tetrazines can be outfitted with electron-withdrawing or donating groups to modulate reactivity [23]. Bulky appendages to the tetrazine core can similarly influence reactivity [24]. Cyclooctyne reactivities can also be tuned via steric or electronic modification [25, 26]. For example, bicyclononyne reacts readily with both azides and tetrazines [21, 22, 27]. By contrast, dibenzylcyclooctyne (DBCO) and other bulky cycloalkynes are reactive with azides, but inert to di-substituted tetrazines due to predicted steric clashes (Figure 4-3D) [24]. This sterically-driven orthogonality has been exploited by many groups for biological applications [27-36]. In one example, the Weissleder group used DBCO and a bisalkyl tetrazine in tandem to label multiple cell lines with visual probes via SPAAC and SPIEDAC [28].

Cycloalkynes, while suitable for some dual labeling applications, are relatively large in size and can perturb native biomolecule function. Lemke and coworkers recently attempted to study viral particle assembly, where small tags are necessary to preserve critical protein interactions. Toward this end, the group developed a smaller, "minimal" cyclooctyne scaffold (SCO) that reacts efficiently with mono-substituted tetrazines and can be used in combination with some TCO ligations [27]. TCO reacts readily with nearly all tetrazines (Figure 4-3C), but SCO remains inert to di-substituted tetrazines. This is likely due to steric clashes between the

tetrazine substituents and SCO's propargylic linker. The researchers exploited this differential by labeling viral proteins with TCO, followed by SCO, in a pulse-chase type experiment. The motifs were ultimately visualized via reaction with a di-substituted tetrazine (to tag TCO), followed by a mono-substituted tetrazine (to label SCO). These orthogonal reactions enabled the dynamics of virus-like protein assemblies to be examined via super-resolution microscopy.

Strained alkenes can also be tuned to elicit specific reactivities. While TCO exhibits remarkably fast reaction rates with tetrazines in SPIEDAC (> $10^5 \text{ M}^{-1}\text{s}^{-1}$ ), its large size and modest stability can be limiting in some applications [37]. TCO can also react with organic azides, making certain applications with these two popular reagents inaccessible [28]. To address some of these limitations, our group turned to a smaller strained alkene for bioorthogonal reaction development: cyclopropene. The small size of the cyclopropene has proven useful for metabolic targeting of biomolecules *in vitro* and *in vivo* [29-31, 33, 38, 39]. Additionally, cyclopropene is completely unreactive to azides and alkynes under ambient conditions, and thus orthogonal to SPAAC reagents (Figure 4-3A). We capitalized on this selective reactivity by targeting unique glycans with cyclopropene- and azide-bearing sialic acid derivatives. The biomolecules were ultimately visualized with DBCO and bis-aryl tetrazine, simultaneously, on live cells (Figure 4-3B) [29, 30].

Cyclopropene itself offers unique opportunities for orthogonal bioorthogonal reaction development. The motif can be tuned both sterically and electronically to access collections of mutually orthogonal transformations. In one example, we collaborated with the Houk lab to design a cyclopropene that remains inert to tetrazines, but exhibits rapid reactivity with 1,3dipoles [40]. This cyclopropene differs from others by the position of a single methyl group: tetrazine-reactive cyclopropenes harbor a single substituent at C3. Installing a second methyl group at this position thwarts cyclopropene-tetrazine reactivity by preventing effective orbital overlap between the diene and dienophile (Figure 4-4). While recalcitrant to tetrazine reactions, 3,3-disubstituted cyclopropenes, undergo rapid cycloadditions with nitrile imines [41, 42]. We exploited this reaction differential to label proteins bearing both 1,3- and 3,3-cyclopropenes [40].



Figure 4-3. Tetrazines and cyclooctynes can be tuned to generate mutually orthogonal reaction pairs. (A) Cyclopropene-tetrazine and azide-DBCO cycloadditions can be performed simultaneously. (B) Orthogonal reactions were used to visualize distinct classes of glycoconjugates. Cells were incubated with a cyclopropenyl-ManNAc analog (ManCCp), an azido-GalNAc analog (GalNAz), or both sugars. The distinct biomolecules targeted with these probes were subsequently visualized via simultaneous treatment with tetrazine and DBCO probes. Scale bar: 10 µm. [30] – Reproduced by permission of the Royal Society of Chemistry. (C) Sequential ligations can be used to detect *trans*-cyclooctene (TCO) and a cyclooctyne variant (SCO). TCO reacts with both mono- and di-substituted tetrazines, while SCO reacts only with mono-substituted tetrazines. In a pulse-chase experiment, TCO- and SCO-bearing amino acids were incorporated into viral hemagglutinin. The protein conjugates were co-expressed with matrix protein 1 in mammalian cells, and ulimately visualized via reaction with a fluorescent disubstituted tetrazine (cvan, to tag TCO), followed by a mono-substituted tetrazine probe (magenta, to tag SCO). (D) Steric clashes preclude reactions between di-substituted tetrazines and cyclooctynes with propargylic substituents. Reprinted in part with permission from Ref [27]. Copyright 2014 Wiley.

#### 4.3 Orthogonal reactivity via controlled reagent activation

Several bioorthogonal reactions rely on strained or otherwise highly reactive molecules that are often incompatible with one another. In such cases, masking one reagent in an inactive form and liberating it on demand can render the motif orthogonal. Thus, after an initial ligation proceeds to completion, liberation of the masked functional group provides a second competent bioorthogonal reagent for reaction. Such "activation' methods exploited in recent years include metal-catalysis, photolysis, and chemical transformation. Examples are provided below.

## 4.3a Metal-catalyzed reactions

The most well-known bioorthogonal reaction, CuAAC, serves as an example of a metalactivated reaction. In the absence of copper (I), terminal alkynes and azides do not react under ambient conditions. When copper ions are present, the dipolar cycloaddition ensues [43]. The activatable nature of this reaction enables azides and alkynes to be used concurrently–targeting different species–and covalently detected via control over copper addition. For example, azidelabeled biomolecules can be reacted via Staudinger ligation or SPAAC; the alkyne can be subsequently detected via CuAAC [44-47]. An early demonstration of SPAAC/CuAAC compatibility was reported by Wolfbeis and coworkers to craft protease sensors. This group designed an MMP II substrate bearing cyclooctyne or terminal alkyne handles. The peptide was appened to an azido-lableld nanoparticle (via SPAAC) and then modfied with an azidofluorophore (via CuAAC). This sensor was used to report on protease activity [47].

Note that reverse sequential labeling approach – reacting the alkyne first via CuAAC, followed by SPAAC or Staudinger ligation to target azides – is problematic. Azides will cross-react with alkynes during the initial CuAAC reaction. This side-reactivity can be circumvented

using alternative 1,3-dipoles in place of azides. The Raines group reported an elegant example of this approach with diazo units [48]. Diazos are small, remarkably bioinert functional groups that do not react with terminal alkynes under CuAAC conditions. These groups can be efficiently ligated with strained alkynes, though. This unique reactivity enabled the researchers to perform sequential CuAAC and strain-promoted diazo-alkyne cycloadditions to detect alkynyl and diazo-labeled glycans. Excitingly, the labeling reactions could be performed in either order with no cross-reactivities observed. Sequential azide-alkyne cycloadditions are also possible using unique alkyne protecting groups [49, 50] or asymmetric azides with differential reactivity [51]. Futher advances in metal-activated orthogonal bioorthogonal chemistries are anticipated with several recent reports on transition metal-mediated reactions that are biocompatible [52, 53]. In particular, advances in bioorthogonal palladium-catalyzed reactions have enabled cross-couplings on proteins *in vitro* and in live cells [54-58].

#### 4.3b Light-activated reactions

Similar to metal catalysis, light can be used to liberate bioorthogonal functional groups and thus control reagent activation for dual labeling experiments. In one example, Popik and colleagues utilized cyclopropenone as a photolabile protecting group for cyclooctyne in constructing protein-nanoparticle conjugates [59]. The researchers synthesized a bifunctional linker comprising azadibenzocyclooctyne (ADIBO) and a masked dibenzocyclooctyne (photo-DIBO). ADIBO was reacted with azide-functionalized nanoparticles to append the linker to the surface. The nanoparticles were subsequently photolyzed to unveil a cyclooctyne for reaction with azide-modified bovine serum albumin (as a model protein). Similarly, the Lin group pioneered the use of tetrazoles as photolabile masks for nitrile imines. Nitrile imines are 1,3dipoles that react readily with 3,3-disubstituted cyclopropenes and other alkenes [60]. However, these dipoles must be liberated on demand owing to their aqueous instabilities and short lifetimes. Our group employed tetrazole photolysis and nitrile imine generation for cyclopropene detection discussed above (Figure 4-4) [40]. While they have differential tetrazine reactivity (vide supra), both 1,3- and 3,3-disubstituted cyclopropenes undergo rapid dipolar cycloaddition with nitrile imines. Thus, dual labeling of proteins with 1,3- and 3,3-disubstituted cyclopropenes requires that the tetrazine ligation be performed first to target the 1,3-disubstituted variants, followed by nitrile imine liberation via tetrazole photolysis to tag proteins bearing 3,3-disubstituted cyclopropenes. Ongoing work to develop new photoactivatible reactions and masking groups responsive to unique wavelengths of light [61, 62] will offer new paths to mutually orthogonal reactions.



**Figure 4-4.** Isomeric cyclopropenes exhibit unique bioorthogonal reactivities. (A) 1,3-Disubstituted cyclopropenes react readily with tetrazines. 3,3-Disubstituted cyclopropenes, by contrast, do not react with tetrazines, but react efficiently with nitrile imines (available from tetrazole photolysis). These differential reactivities can be exploited for dual labeling applications. (B) Predicted transition state geometries for the tetrazine-cyclopropene ligations account for the observed reactivity differences. The C3 methyl substituent (in the 3,3disubstituted cyclopropene) blocks the approach of tetrazine. In the 1,3-disubstituted regioisomer, this position is occupied by a smaller H atom. (C) Both 1,3- and 3,3-disubstituted cyclopropene (5 mM in 15% MeCN/PBS) were treated with dipyridyl tetrazine (10 mM) and monitored by HPLC. Dipyridyl tetrazine reacted exclusively with the 1,3-disubstituted cyclopropene. Reprinted in part with permission from Ref [40]. Copyright 2014 ACS Publications

## 4.3c Chemical activation

Controlled reactivity can also be achieved through *in situ* formation of bioorthogonal functional groups. Boons, Pezacki and others have established that nitrones and nitrile oxides react rapidly with strained alkynes in 1,3-dipolar cycloadditions [63-67]. Both nitrones and nitrile oxides have limited stability under biological conditions, though, and they cross-react with multiple strained reagents. Fortunately, both can be formed *in situ* from aldehydes and oximes, respectively, under relatively mild conditions. Using these conditions, Boons and coworkers were able to assemble a bifunctional glycan dendrimer utilizing a bifunctional azide-oxime linker [63]. The azide reacts selectively with DIBO modified with biotin or a fluorophore. Subsequently, the oxime group was activated through mild oxidation with hypervalent iodide, to

a nitrile oxide, which reacts rapidly with a second DIBO reagent modified with a glycan dendrimer. The on-demand generation of nitrile oxides and nitrones enables sequential strain-promoted cycloadditions.

## 4.4 Identifying new mutually orthogonal reactions

A comprehensive understanding of biological systems requires studying many biomolecules and pathways simultaneously. While impressive strides have been made in developing mutually orthogonal reactions for this purpose, additional groups of compatible reagents are necessary. To date, only one example using three bioorthogonal reactions on a single biological system has been described [20]. Analyses of multiple enzyme activities and signaling pathways require more mutually orthogonal bioorthogonal ligations. Fortunately, many recently reported bioorthogonal reagents and reactions are potentially useful for multicomponent applications. These include those based on sydnone [68-70], quinone methide [71, 72], isonitrile [36, 73], acyltrifluoroborate [74], azetine [75], and 1,2-quinones [76]. Additionally, several new metal-catalyzed bioorthogonal reactions based on palladium, ruthenium, and nickel may offer compatible reactivity based on selective metal activation [53].

Identifying reaction combinations for mutual orthogonality has typically been through empirical testing of established bioorthogonal reactions or by developing clever activating/uncaging strategies. Such efforts could be greatly accelerated using computational modeling to compare established bioorthogonal reagents for reactivity. Computation is extensively used for identifying and improving bioorthogonal reactions and is quickly becoming invaluable for developing compatible reactions. In a recent paper, the Houk group predicted an orthogonal pair of di-substituted tetrazines and 1,3-cyclopropene with azide and tetramethylthiocycloheptyne [32]. Our group independently confirmed a similar orthogonal pair and applied them to live cell glycan imaging (described in chapters 2 and 3).

In an effort to identify new orthogonal pairs, we collaborated with the Houk group to develop a computational model capable of predicting reactivity between known bioorthogonal reagents. They identified potential reaction pairs using their distortion-interaction model to predict transition state energies. These transition state energies can be used to calculate a relative rate constant (Figure 4-5). Our group then synthesized several of these reagents to experimentally verify predicted orthogonal pairs. This led to identification of potential mutually orthogonal pairs, including a new pair based on cyclooctyne-nitrone and norbornene-tetrazine ligations. To date, orthogonality between cyclooctyne and tetrazine reactions has been driven through steric repulsions that prevent orbital overlap between the alkyne and tetrazine  $\pi$ -electrons (Figure 4-3D) [24, 32]. The Houk group predicted that an electron-deficient cyclooctyne, difluorocyclooctyne (DIFO), would be unreactive towards electron-poor tetrazines, likely resulting from the electronic "mismatch" between the reagents.

A popular cyclooctyne for use in living systems, DIFO was predicted to react readily with two commonly used nitrone scaffolds, a cyclic nitrone (cyc-nitrone) and glyoxylate-derived nitrone (gly-nitrone). Nitrones, as noted above, are 1,3-dipoles that react with cyclooctynes and typically display faster kinetics than azides. Both were experimentally determined to have rate constants of  $\sim 3 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$  with DIFO via <sup>1</sup>H NMR (Figure 4-5, 4-6A, and 4-6B). While this closely matched the computationally predicted rate constant for the DIFO–gly-nitrone, the DIFO–cyc-nitrone rate constant was smaller by roughly two orders of magnitude. The Houk group is investigating the source of this discrepancy.

Importantly, both nitrones are largely unreactive towards norbornene, which is a commonly used strained alkene in SPIEDAC with tetrazines. Expectedly, norbornene was shown to react readily with dipyridyl tetrazine ( $k_2 = 3.3 \text{ M}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1}$ ). This was slightly larger than the predicted rate contant of 0.1 M<sup>-1</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>. Finally, DIFO was tested for reactivity with tetrazine. Interestingly, the expected rate constant between DIFO and mono-substituted tetrazines is 1 M<sup>-1</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>, but only 10<sup>-4</sup> M<sup>-1</sup> s<sup>-1</sup> with di-substituted tetrazines (Figure 4-5, 4-6C and 4-6D). This suggests the differential might also be sterically driven in addition to the assumption that DIFO would be electronically "mismatched" with tetrazine in an IED-DA cycloaddition. The experimental data matched the rate predictions very closely in both cases, verifying the computational analysis.



**Figure 4-5.** Difluorinated cyclooctyne and norbornene react preferentially with nitrones and disubstituted tetrazines, respectively. M06-2X/6-311+G(d,p)//6-31G(d)-computed relative rate constants were obtained by the Houk group and rate constants were determined experimentally by <sup>1</sup>H NMR in CD<sub>3</sub>CN. All rate constants are reported in M<sup>-1</sup> s<sup>-1</sup>. Standart deviation is reported for 2–3 experiments. \*No reaction seen over ~ 2 days.



**Figure 4-6.** Plots used to calculate second-order rate constants of the reaction between DIFO and (A) gly-nitrone, (B) cyc-nitrone, (C) dipyridyl tetrazine, and (D) phenyl tetrazine in CD<sub>3</sub>CN.

Scheme 4-1. Reactions between DIFO and (A) gly-nitrone, (B) cyc-nitrone, (C) dipyridyl tetrazine, and (D) phenyl tetrazine in  $CD_3CN$ . Structures of adducts are shown along with calculated and observed HRMS data (ESI).



# 4.5 Conclusions

Finding the right bioorthogonal chemistry for a given task has become increasingly easier as the bioorthogonal toolbox grows. However, cross-reactivity between reagents of many of the most popular chemistries has limited their utility for multi-component applications. Imaging multiple biomolecules and forming complex biomolecular assemblies, for example, will require identifying compatible combinations of these chemistries. Recently, several orthogonal bioorthogonal reactions have been developed through mechanistic insight, synthetic tuning and caged reagents. Moving forward, new and better mutually orthogonal bioorthogonal reactions are necessary as some of the approaches outlined here suffer from slow kinetics, multiple steps, or poor specificity. A combination of empirical and computational methods, as well as the continued discovery of novel bioorthogonal reactions, will aid in the hunt for mutually orthogonal reactions.

We successfully identified a novel mutually orthogonal bioorthogonal pair in DIFOnitrone and norbornene-diaryl tetrazine. The Houk group is continuing to refine their model as we provide additional experimental data to guide their calculations. This should prove to be a useful tool to evaluate the expanding bioorthogonal reaction toolkit for new mutually orthogonal pairs.

#### 4.6 Materials and methods

# 4.6a Rate studies [77]

#### UV-Vis method

The reactions between cyclopropenes and dipyridyl tetrazine were conducted in 96-well plates and monitored by the change in tetrazine absorbance at 536 nm. All runs were conducted in triplicate under pseudo-first order conditions and repeated at least two times. For each measurement, 150  $\mu$ L of a 0.2 mM tetrazine solution (in 15% DMSO/PBS) was added to a well containing 150  $\mu$ L of cyclopropene solution (2-10 mM in 15% DMSO/PBS). The cyclopropene concentration at the start of each reaction ranged from 1.0-5.0 mM, while the tetrazine concentration was held at 0.1 mM. Absorbance values were recorded every 5 min over a 90 min interval or every 4 seconds over a 30 min interval for faster reactions (using a BioTek Epoch plate reader).

# <sup>1</sup>*H*-*NMR* method

All DIFO reactions were monitored by <sup>1</sup>H-NMR spectroscopy. Each reagent was dissolved in  $CD_3CN$  at 10 mM and combined in a 1:1 ratio immediately prior to the first acquisition (~5 mM final concentrations of each reagent). The reaction of DIFO with nitrones and phenyl tetrazine was monitored continuously with an acquisition every minute for 15 min. The reaction between DIFO and dipyridyl tetrazine was monitored over 24 or 48 h with acquisition times every few hours. An internal standard (1,3-benzodioxole) was used to determine peak integration values and, ultimately, the concentrations of relevant species. Second-order rate plots were made by plotting  $ln(([A_o]*[B])/([B_o]*[A]))$  versus time. The slope was converted to a second-order rate

constant using the following equation:  $k = |\text{slope}/([B_0 - A_0)|)$ . Adducts were confirmed by HRMS (ESI).

## 4.6b HPLC analysis

The 1,3- and 3,3-disubstituted cyclopropenes (5 mM in 15% MeCN/PBS) were treated with commercially available dipyridyl tetrazine (10 mM) and monitored by HPLC over 3 h. A gradient of 100%  $H_2O$  with 0.1% TFA to 100% MeCN with 0.1% TFA over 15 min was used.

## 4.6c Synthetic procedures

Compounds DIFO [78], gly-nitrone [79], cyc-nitrone [80], 1,3-disubstituted cyclopropene [29,40], and 3,3-disubstituted cyclopropene [40] were synthesized as previously reported, and spectroscopic data were consistent with literature values. All other reagents were obtained from commercial sources and used without further purification. Reactions were run under an inert atmosphere of nitrogen, unless otherwise indicated. Tetrahydrofuran (THF), diethyl ether (Et<sub>2</sub>O), triethylamine (NEt<sub>3</sub>), dichloromethane (CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>), N,N-dimethylformamide (DMF), and methanol (CH<sub>3</sub>OH) were degassed with argon and run through two 4 x 36 inch columns of anhydrous neutral A-2 (8 x 14 mesh; LaRoche Chemicals; activated under a flow of argon at 350 °C for 12 h). Thin-layer chromatography was performed using Silica Gel 60 F254-coated glass plates (0.25 mm thickness), and visualization was realized with KMnO<sub>4</sub> stain, CAM stain, and/or UV irradiation. Chromatography was accomplished with 60 Å (240-400 mesh) silica gel, commercially available from Sorbent Technologies. HPLC purifications were performed on a Varian ProStar equipped with 325 Dual Wavelength UV-Vis Detector. Analytical runs were performed using an Agilent C18 Scalar column (4.6 x 150 mm, 5  $\mu$ m) with a 1 mL/min flow

rate. Semi-preparative runs were performed using an Agilent Prep-C18 Scalar column (9.4 x 150 mm, 5μm) with a 5 mL/min flow rate. NMR spectra were collected on a Bruker DRX-400 (400 MHz <sup>1</sup>H, 100 MHz <sup>13</sup>C, 376.5 MHz <sup>19</sup>F) or CRYO-500 (500 MHz <sup>1</sup>H, 125.7 MHz <sup>13</sup>C) instrument. All spectra were collected at 298 K. Chemical shifts are reported in ppm values relative to tetramethylsilane or residual non-deuterated NMR solvent, and coupling constants (J) are reported in Hertz (Hz). High-resolution mass spectrometry was performed by the University of California, Irvine Mass Spectrometry Center.

*N*-(4-(1,2,4,5-tetrazin-3-yl)benzyl)acetamide (phenyl tetrazine): (4-(1,2,4,5-Tetrazin-3yl)phenyl)methanamine hydrochloride was synthesized as previously reported.[23] The hydrochloride salt (10.1 mg, 0.0335 mmol) was dissolved in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (2 mL) containing pyridine (0.5 mL). To this solution was added acetic anhydride (0.25 mL) followed by stirring for 1 h. The reaction mixture was diluted with 10 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> and rinsed with 1 M NaHSO<sub>4</sub> (3 x 20 mL). The organic layer was dried over MgSO<sub>4</sub> and concentrated under reduced pressure to afford 10.1 mg (95% yield) of pure phenyl tetrazine: <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  10.28 (s, 1H), 8.66 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 2H), 7.58 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 2H), 5.95 (br s, 1H), 4.63 (d, *J* = 5.8 Hz, 2H), 2.15 (s, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  170.2, 166.3, 157.9, 143.9, 130.8, 128.8, 128.7, 43.4, 23.4; HRMS (ESI) *m/z* calcd for C<sub>11</sub>H<sub>12</sub>N<sub>5</sub>O [M+H]<sup>+</sup> 230.1042, found.

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# Chapter 5: Progress towards an "off-the-shelf" luciferase for imaging implanted cells

## **5.1 Introduction**

Cell-based therapies, such as immunotherapies and regenerative stem-cell treatments, hold great promise for the treatment of injuries, degenerative diseases and cancer [1-3]. Successful implementation of these therapies requires a complete understanding of the fates of transplanted cells. Imaging technologies are well suited to non-invasively track cell proliferation and migration through a whole organism [4, 5]. In many labs, access to expensive equipment and short-lived reagents make methods such as MRI or PET imaging infeasible. More user-friendly fluorescent strategies are not ideal for *in vivo* imaging owing to high background absorbance from tissue and requisite knowledge of cell location within the organism [6, 7].

Bioluminescence imaging is better suited to noninvasively imaging whole organisms. This technique relies on enzymes (luciferases) that generate light via oxidation of small molecule substrates (luciferins) [8]. Cells expressing luciferase (and incubated with luciferin) generate light that can be detected using sensitive cameras. Bioluminescence techniques are, comparatively, easy to use, offer high signal-to-noise, and provide a snapshot of the entire organism [8, 9].

In addition to enabling sensitive imaging, bioluminescence is suitable for serial imaging. Typically, luciferases are genetically encoded into a desired cell line or expressed as a "reporter gene" to identify changes in gene-expression. Such applications require transfection of the requisite luciferase gene into cells, which can be time-consuming and incompatible with certain cell types [10, 11]. To circumvent these issues, we aimed to develop an "off-the-shelf" luciferase reporter than can be rapidly appended to a cell of interest immediately prior to implantation (Figure 5-1A). Similar strategies are used to incorporate small molecule fluorophores onto live cell surfaces. These typically rely on membrane fusion or non-specific NHS-coupling to cell surface proteins to append the fluorophores [10, 12, 13]. Once attached, they can be used to track cells in the hours post-implantation.

We chose to use a similar approach to chemically append the luciferase from *Gaussia princeps* (Gluc) to model cell surfaces. Gluc emits a photon of light through oxidation of the small molecule coelenterazine to coelenteramide (Figure 5-1B) [8]. Unlike other luciferases, Gluc requires only molecular oxygen to catalyze the oxidation of coelenterazine, thus, it can function in extracellular environments [14, 15]. Gluc is also one of the brightest and most stable luciferases — maximizing the signal given a limited cell surface area. However, there are no general methods to append this protein to cells in a facile manner. Moreover, Gluc is not compatible with intracellular delivery strategies due its five disulfide bonds [16]. Thus, we sought mild chemical methods to append Gluc to the cell surface. Several strategies could be envisioned, but we initially focused on a bioorthogonal chemistry attachment strategy. Herein, we report progress towards a membrane-bound Gluc for noninvasive cell tracking *in vivo*.



**Figure 5-1.** Design for "off-the-shelf" bioluminescent cell tracking. (A) Cells are first outfitted with a bioorthogonal functional group. The cells are then treated with a functionalized luciferase (Gluc) bearing the complementary bioorthogonal probe to outfit them with the bioluminescent probe. Cells are then implanted into a live animal for immediate monitoring. (B) Gluc oxidizes coelenterazine to coelenteramide, releasing a photon of light.

## 5.2 Results and Discussion

We envisioned using bioorthogonal chemistry to selectively attach Gluc to the cell surface (Figure 5-1A). In this approach, one functional group must be installed onto Gluc, while the complementary probe is attached to the cell surface. The functionalized cells and Gluc are then mixed to install the bioluminescent probe. Several attachment strategies were explored and herein we discuss two promising methods.

# 5.2a Aldehyde-tagged Gluc

In one method, we utilized the formylglycine generating enzyme (FGE) to enzymatically install an aldehyde onto Gluc [17]. FGE is a sulfatase that recognizes the sequence LCTPSR and converts the thiol side chain of cysteine into an aldehyde [18]. The aldehyde is a small non-

perturbing functional group that can be modified bioorthogonally via the oxime ligation, as well as other selective ligation chemistries [19, 20]. Additionally, aldehydes can be installed on cell surfaces by mild oxidation of sialic acid with sodium periodate [21]. We envisioned linking the aldehyde-tagged Gluc to cell surface aldehydes with a bis(aminooxy) linker. This linker could first be attached to the protein and then to the cell surface (Figure 5-2A-B).

We generated an LCTPSR-Gluc fusion and co-expressed it with FGE in *E. coli*, but encountered several issues. First, we were unable to successfully identify the incorporation of the aldehyde tag via mass spectrometry. Moreover, Gluc expression in *E. coli* can lead to misfolded and inactive enzyme (Joanna Laird, *pers. comm.*). Thus, we decided to express LCTPSR-Gluc and FGE in mammalian cells [17]. Others have shown improved Gluc expression through mammalian cell culture [14, 16]. We inserted the gene encoding LCTPSR-Gluc into a pBMN destination vector downstream of the CD8 leader sequence. The fusion protein would ultimately be destined for secretion and isolable from the media for further conjugation. Toward this end, HEK293 cells stably expressing LCTPSR-Gluc were transiently transfected with FGE in pcDNA. After several days, the media—containing the putative aldehyde-modified Gluc—was collected. Cells stably expressing both LCTPSR-Gluc and FGE are currently being prepared and efforts are currently underway to purify, quantify and characterize the resulting protein.

With the aldehyde-tagged Gluc in hand, we aimed to append the enzyme to cell surfaces via oxime ligation. The sample was treated with 1 mM of the bis(aminooxy) linker and dialyzed to remove excess linker. Cells treated with periodate were then incubated with media containing the aminooxy-Gluc (AO-Gluc) sample for 90 min [21]. As shown in Figure 5-2C, the Jurkat and HEK293 cells treated with the LCTPSR-Gluc demonstrate a 5-7-fold signal above Gluc lacking

formylglycine. These results are encouraging and the signal-to-noise should improve with optimized labeling conditions, including the use of cells stably expressing FGE.



**Figure 2**. Gluc attachment strategy utilizing the oxime ligation. (A) An aldehyde is incorporated into Gluc using FGE, which is subsequently modified with a bis(aminooxy) linker to generate AO-Gluc. (B) Cells are treated with sodium periodate to generate cell surface aldehydes. Cells are then treated with AO-Gluc to covalently append Gluc to the cell surface. (C) After modification, cells were plated and compared to cells treated with unmodified Gluc. Both HEK293 and Jurkat cells were plated (50,000 cells/well) in a black 96-well plate followed by addition of coelenterazine. The total flux was then recorded. Cells treated with AO-Gluc showed a 5- to 7-fold increase in total flux compared to cells treated with unmodified Gluc.

## 5.2b Sortagging of Gluc

In an alternative approach, we aimed to incorporate bioorthogonal functional groups into Gluc utilizing the sortagging method (Figure 5-3). Sortagging employs a bacterial transpeptidase enzyme, sortase A, to append peptide probes to proteins bearing the consensus sequence LPETG [22-24]. Sortase A cleaves the amide bond between the threonine and glycine residues and creates a new linkage between the now sortase-bound threonine and exogenous N-terminal glycine motifs [24]. Based on strong literature precedent, we surmised that sortagging would be a viable strategy to append bioorthogonal functional groups to Gluc for cell surface attachment. Sortagging has been exploited by the Ploegh group to append a broad array of substrates to proteins, including bioorthogonal functional groups [25-27]. Toward this end, we generated a Gluc-LPETG construct and expressed the fusion protein in E. coli. The isolated protein demonstrated bioluminescent activity, although we have evidence that only a portion is properly folded (Joanna Laird, *pers. comm.*).

The Gluc-LPETG protein allows us to use sortagging to readily insert our bioorthogonal functional group of choice. We chose to install tetrazine, owing to its synthetic accessibility, rapid kinetics with strained alkenes, and suitable stability [19]. By appending tetrazine motifs to the C-terminus of a triglycine peptide ( $G_3Tz$ ), we could use sortagging to functionalize Gluc-LPETG (Figure 5-3A, and Scheme 5-1A) [25]. The resulting conjugate (Gluc-Tz) could then be attached to cyclopropene-labeled cell surfaces. Toward this end, Gluc-LPETG was converted to Gluc-Tz by treatment with sortase A and  $G_3Tz$  for 24 h at 4 °C. (Figure 5-3D). We were able to detect the ~2 kDa mass change via SDS-PAGE (Figure 5-3E). Gluc-Tz was then purified and dialyzed to remove sortase and excess  $G_3Tz$ . After modification, the luciferase conjugate also maintained its bioluminescent activity (Figure 5-3E).

Purified Gluc-Tz was then ready for live cell attachment. We investigated two methods to achieve cell surface cyclopropene incorporation using either a lipid-cyclopropene conjugate (**DPPE-Cp**) or an amine reactive cyclopropene (**NHS-Cp**). Lipid derivatives have previously been utilized to insert many chemical moieties into cell membranes, such as DNA [28], fluorophores [10], and bioorthogonal functional groups [29, 30]. Amine reactive NHS esters are also commonly used to install fluorophores non-specifically to cell surface proteins for cell tracking [12, 13]. Both derivatives were synthesized using standard bioconjugation chemistries (Scheme 5-1B).

Unfortunately, initial attempts with both NHS-Cp and DPPE-Cp proved intractable for labeling. For example, treatment of cells with varying concentrations (1-20  $\mu$ M) of NHS-Cp led to significant cell death. This is likely due to either excessive labeling or the need to perform the labeling in protein-free media. The former could be minimized by using a more polar reagent to prevent intracellular labeling [31]. DPPE-Cp was minimally soluble in DMSO or aqueous buffers, hampering initial labeling attempts. After sonication to partially solubilize the lipid, cell labeling was performed on Jurkat cells, which saw a very slight signal over background (Figure 5-3F), but further characterization and optimization is required before this approach can be fully realized. Aside from optimizing conditions, a switch from cyclopropene to bicyclononyne could offer a significant increase in labeling. Bicyclononyne exhibits >100 fold faster reaction kinetics with tetrazine compared to cyclopropene and is commercially available [32]. It has recently been utilized in a similar sortagging approach recently reported by Ploegh and Weissleder [25].



**Figure 3**. Gluc cell surface attachment method via sortagging. (A) Tetrazine is incorporated via sortase-mediated transpeptidation of  $G_3Tz$  onto the Gluc-LPETG protein. (B) Cell surfaces are modified with cyclopropene groups through lipid insertion (**DPPE-Cp**) or non-specific amine attachment (**NHS-Cp**). The cells are then treated with Gluc-Tz to functionalize the cells with the bioluminescent protein for *in vivo* tracking. (C) Structure of the two cyclopropene probes. (D) Expressed Gluc (100  $\mu$ M) was treated with sortase A (20-40  $\mu$ M) and  $G_3Tz$  (750  $\mu$ M) for 24 h at 4 °C. Lane 1 and 2 are the sortase A and Gluc-LPETG controls. Lane 3 and 4 are sortagging with 20  $\mu$ M and 40  $\mu$ M sortase A, respectively. (E) Gluc-Tz (lane 3) shows comparable bioluminescence activity when compared to the parent Gluc-LPETG (lane 2). Lane 1 contains no Gluc. (F) Jurkat cells were briefly incubated with Gluc-Tz (20  $\mu$ M) for 60 min at 37 °C. Upon treatment with coelenterazine, cells treated with Gluc-Tz only.

Scheme 1. Synthesis of reagents for sortase-mediated cell surface attachment. (A) Synthesis of  $G_3Tz$  for Gluc functionalization. (B) Synthesis of reagents for attachment of cyclopropene moieties to cell surfaces.



## 5.3 Conclusions and future directions

Selective, cell surface attachment of luciferases onto live cell surfaces offer obvious advantages for tracking applications. The approaches outlines in this chapter show promise in terms of their modularity, but significant improvements are necessary. For example, current cyclopropene incorporation strategies are currently insufficient due to solubility issues (**DPPE-Cp**) and toxicity (**NHS-Cp**). Alternate probes, such as alternate lipids or more polar NHS probes could improve labeling. Additionally, bicyclononyne offers faster kinetics and could further reduce labeling time.

In addition to optimizing current strategies, alternative approaches for Gluc attachment can be explored. For example, enzymatic attachment methods such as the SpyCatcher:SpyTag system [33] or SNAP tags [34] have recently been utilized for cell surface modification. Upon optimization of the attachment chemistry *in vitro*, the bioluminescence signal strength and lifetime will have to be evaluated *in vivo*. We are also exploring bioorthogonal ligation strategies to attach Gluc to antibodies for *in vivo* imaging of cell contacts. Recent work by our lab has demonstrated the utility of genetically-encoded split *Gaussia* luciferase for imaging cell proximity [35]. We hope to utilize bioorthogonal chemistry to attach these splits to cells and antibodies to image cell contacts *in vivo* using our "off-the-shelf" bioluminescent probes.

## 5.4 Materials and methods

## 5.4a Plasmids

*Construction of Gaussia luciferase vectors containing N-term formylglycine generating enzyme recognition (LCTPSR) motif (LCTPSR).* PCR was used to generate the gene containing LCTPSR from a previously described Gaussia luciferase gene (courtesy of Grant Walkup). The LCTPSR-Gluc gene was then inserted into pET28a(+) using the following primers:

5' - TATACATATGCTGTGTACCCCGTCTCGTAAACCGACCGAAAACAACG - 3' 5' - TATAGAATTCCTAGTCACCACCCGCAC - 3'

The gene was then moved into pBMN using the following primers:

5' - ATAGAATTCCATCACCATCACCATCACCTGTGTACCCCATCAAGACTCGAGATA - 3' 5' - ATACTCGAGTCTTGATGGGGTACACAGGTGATGGTGATGGTGATGGAATTCATA - 3'

Construction of Gaussia luciferase vectors containing C-term sortase recognition (Srt<sub>rs</sub>) motif (LPETG). Overlap PCR was used to generate the gene containing  $G_4S$  linked Srt<sub>rs</sub> from a previously cloned Gaussia luciferase gene. The Gluc-LPETG gene was then inserted into pET28a(+) using the following primers:

5' - TATACCATGGATAAACCGACCGAAAACAACGAAGACTTCAACATCGTTGCG - 3' 5' - TATAGAATTCCCGCCGGTTTCCGGCAGGCTACCGCCGCCACCGCTACC - 3' *Formylglycine generating enzyme*. Formylglycine generating enzyme (FGE) gene (courtesy of David Rabuka - Redwood Biosciences) was inserted into pcDNA using the following primers:

5' - TATAGCTAGCATGCTGACCGAGTTGGTTGACCTGC - 3'

5' - TATACTCGAGCTACCCGGACACCGGGTCG - 3'

#### 5.4b Expression of Guassia luciferase [36]

Both GLuc fusion proteins were expressed in *E. coli* BL21 cells. The cells were cultured in 10 mL Luria-Bertani (LB) medium containing ampicillin (50 µg/ml) at 37 °C for 8-12 h. The starter culture was then transferred into 1 L LB and incubated at 37 °C with shaking (225 rpm) until the O.D. (590 nm) reached 0.7–0.9. Protein expression was induced with 1 mM isopropyl- $\beta$ -D-1-thiogalactopyranoside (IPTG). After addition of IPTG, *E. coli* cells were cultured for 24 h at 18 °C and harvested by centrifugation. All GLuc variants were purified exclusively from the supernatant (soluble fraction) by using Ni<sup>2+</sup>-NTA affinity chromatography.

#### 5.4c Cell culture

HEK293 cells (American Type Cell Culture) were cultured in DMEM (Corning) supplemented with 10% (vol/vol) fetal bovine serum (FBS, Life Technologies), penicillin (100 U/mL), and streptomycin (100 μg/mL). Jurkat cells were cultured in RPMI media (Corning) supplemented with 10% (v/v) FBS, penicillin (100 U/mL), and streptomycin (100 μg/mL). Cells were maintained in a 5% CO<sub>2</sub>, water-saturated incubator at 37 °C. Transient transfections of the LCTPSR-Gluc construct were performed with cationic lipids (Lipofectamine 2000; Invitrogen). HEK293 cells stably expressing the LCTPSR-Gluc were selected with puromycin (10 μg/mL; Corning). HEK293 cells stably expressing LCTPSR-Gluc were transfected with FGE contruct

using cationic lipids. Cells stably expressing both constructs were selected with G418 (250  $\mu$ g/mL; Corning).

## 5.4d Sortase mediated Gaussia luciferase modification

The heptamutant sortase A with enhanced catalytic activity and Ca<sup>2+</sup>-independent activity was used [26]. The reaction mixture contained expressed Gluc-LPETG (100  $\mu$ M) in Trisbuffered saline (50 mM Trisbase, 150 mM NaCl, pH 8.0) with G<sub>3</sub>Tz (750  $\mu$ M) and sortase A (20-40  $\mu$ M). The reaction was rocked for 24 hours at 4 °C before analysis by SDS-PAGE. Gluc-Tz was purified via Ni<sup>2+</sup>-NTA affinity chromatography as previously described [23] followed by dialysis to remove excess G<sub>3</sub>-Tz.

## 5.4e Cell surface attachment of Gaussia luciferase

## Oxime ligation method

Media was collected (4 mL at pH 6.5) from ~6 x  $10^6$  HEK293 cells stably expressing LCTPSR-Gluc and transiently expressing FGE. The media was rocked gently overnight with 1 mM bis(aminooxy) linker at 4 °C. The samples were dialyzed into PBS (4 L, pH 6.5) to remove excess linker. HEK293 and Jurkat cells ( $1.5 \times 10^6$  cells) were each treated with 1 mM NaIO<sub>4</sub> for 30 min at 4 °C followed by quenching with 1 mM glycerol and rinsing with PBS ( $2 \times 1$  mL, pH 6.5) [21]. Cells were then incubated at 37 °C with media only, media containing unmodified LCTPSR-Gluc, or media containing AO-Gluc and 100 mM aniline (at 4 °C or 37 °C) for 90 min. Cells were rinsed extensively with 1% BSA in PBS (7.4) and transferred to a 96-well black-well plate (50,000 cells/well). A stock solution of coelenterazine (Nanolight Technology, 5 mg/mL in ethanol) was diluted 1:500 in water and 20 μL was added to each well. Bioluminescence images were acquired using an IVIS Lumina II (Xenogen).

## Tetrazine ligation method

Jurkat cells (~2 x  $10^6$  cells) were pelleted and rinsed (3 x 4 mL) with PBS (pH 7.4) containing 1% bovine serum albumin (BSA). Cells were resuspended in 200 µL PBS and divided into three 50 µL aliquots (0.5 x  $10^6$  cells/reaction). To one aliquot was added 0.2 µL **DPPE-Cp** (500 µM). Each sample was agitated with gentle vortexing for 5 min followed by washing with 1% BSA in PBS. Cells were resuspended in 50 µL of Gluc-Tz (0-20 µM) in DMEM media. Samples were incubated at 37 °C for 1 h before rinsing with 5% BSA in PBS. Cells were then suspended in DMEM media (80 µL) transferred to a 96-well clear-bottom black-well plate (50,000 cells/well). A stock solution of coelenterazine (Nanolight Technology, 5 mg/mL in ethanol) was diluted 1:500 in water and 20 µL was added to each well. Bioluminescence images were acquired using an IVIS Lumina II (Xenogen).

## 5.4f General synthetic procedures

Compounds bis(aminooxy) linker [37], **5.2** [38], and **5.3** [39] were synthesized as previously reported. All other reagents were purchased from commercial sources and used as received without further purification. Reactions were carried out under an inert atmosphere of nitrogen or argon in oven- or flame-dried glassware. Dichloromethane (CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>), tetrahydrofuran (THF), diethyl ether (Et<sub>2</sub>O), *N*,*N*-dimethylformamide (DMF), methanol (CH<sub>3</sub>OH) and triethylamine (NEt<sub>3</sub>) were degassed with argon and passed through two 4 x 36 inch columns of anhydrous neutral A-2 (8 x 14 mesh; LaRoche Chemicals; activated under a flow of argon at 350 °C for 12

h). The remaining solvents were of analytical grade and purchased from commercial suppliers. Thin-layer chromatography was performed using Silica Gel 60 F<sub>254</sub> plates. Plates were visualized using UV radiation and/or staining with KMnO<sub>4</sub>. Flash column chromatography was performed with 60 Å (240-400 mesh) silica gel from Sorbent Technologies. In some cases, the silica was first deactivated with 1% NEt<sub>3</sub> in the eluting solvent. <sup>1</sup>H, <sup>13</sup>C, and <sup>19</sup>F NMR spectra were recorded on Bruker GN-500 (500 MHz <sup>1</sup>H, 125.7 MHz <sup>13</sup>C), CRYO-500 (500 MHz <sup>1</sup>H, 125.7 MHz<sup>13</sup>C) or DRX-400 (400 MHz<sup>1</sup>H, 100 MHz<sup>13</sup>C, 376.5 MHz<sup>19</sup>F) spectrometers. All spectra were collected at 298 K unless otherwise noted. NOESY experiments were performed exclusively with the CRYO-500 instrument with mixing times ranging from 0.8-1.0 s. Chemical shifts are reported in ppm values relative to tetramethylsilane or residual non-deuterated NMR solvent, and coupling constants (J) are reported in Hertz (Hz). High-resolution mass spectrometry was performed by the University of California, Irvine Mass Spectrometry Center. HPLC runs were conducted on a Varian ProStar equipped with 325 Dual Wavelength UV-Vis Detector. Analytical runs were performed using an Agilent Polaris 5 C18-A column (4.6 x 150 mm, 5  $\mu$ m) with a 1 mL/min flow rate. Semi-preparative runs were performed using an Agilent Prep-C18 Scalar column (9.4 x 150 mm, 5 µm) with a 5 mL/min flow rate. The elution gradients for the relevant separations are specified below.

## 2.4g Synthetic procedures

**Triglycine tetrazine conjugate (G<sub>3</sub>Tz)**. To a solution of Boc-Gly-Gly-OH (**5.1**) (100 mg, 0.35 mmol) in DMF (0.5 mL) was added *N*,*N*-diisopropylethylamine (300  $\mu$ L, 1.7 mmol) and hydroxybenzotriazole (53 mg, 0.35 mmol). The solution was cooled to 4 °C on ice followed by addition of *N*-(3-dimethylaminopropyl)-*N*-ethylcarbodiimide hydrochloride (133 mg, 0.692

mmol). The solution was removed from ice and allowed to stir for 15 min. Tetrazine (5.2) (104 mg, 0.347 mmol) in DMF (0.5 mL) was then added to the reaction, and the solution was allowed to stir overnight. The reaction mixture was diluted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (10 mL) and rinsed with 1 M NaHSO<sub>4</sub> (2 x 20 mL). The organic layer was dried with MgSO<sub>4</sub> and filtered. The organic layer was cooled on ice before addition of triisopropylsilane (0.5 mL) and trifluoroacetic acid (10 mL). The reaction was stirred at rt for 1 h, then concentrated under reduced pressure. The crude mixture was purified via HPLC (5-20% CH<sub>3</sub>CN in water with 0.1% TFA over 4 min and 20% over 6 min) to afford G<sub>3</sub>Tz as a red solid (45.4 mg, 0.122 mmol, 35% yield): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  8.59 (br s, 1H), 8.49 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 7.53 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 2H), 4.52 (d, *J* = 6.0 Hz, 1H), 4.00 (s, 2H), 3.95 (s, 2H), 3.74 (s, 2H), 3.02 (s, 2H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  170.4, 170.3, 167.4, 166.7, 163.8, 143.4, 131.0, 127.8, 127.5, 42.3, 42.1, 41.9, 40.1, 19.6; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>16</sub>H<sub>20</sub>N<sub>8</sub>O<sub>3</sub>Na [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 395.1556, found 395.1542.

**Dipalmitoyl-cyclopropene** conjugate (DPPE-Cp). 1,2-Dipalmitoyl-*sn*-glycero-3-phosphoethanolamine (DPPE) (100 mg, 0.14 mmol) was dissolved in 9:1 CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>:CH<sub>3</sub>OH (20 mL) at 30 °C. To this solution was added triethylamine (100  $\mu$ L, 0.72 mmol) followed by carbonate **5.3** (45.6 mg, 0.183 mmol). The reaction mixture was allowed to stir at 30 °C for 30 h before being concentrated onto silica gel under reduced pressure. The product was purified by flash column chromatography (eluting with 5-10% CH<sub>3</sub>OH in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>) to afford product DPPE-Cp (41 mg) in ~70% purity with unknown DPPE byproduct: HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>43</sub>H<sub>80</sub>NO<sub>10</sub>Na [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 824.5417, found 824.5398.

**4-((((2-Methylcycloprop-2-en-1-yl)methoxy)carbonyl)amino)butanoic** acid (5.5). To a solution of 4-aminobutyric acid (5.4) (41 mg, 0.40 mmol) and potassium carbonate (166 mg, 1.20 mmol) in 1 mL of water was added **5.3** (150 mg, 0.60 mmol) in 1 mL CH<sub>3</sub>CN. The solution turned yellow immediately and the reaction was allowed to stir overnight. The reaction mixture was diluted with 10 mL water and rinsed with ethyl acetate (2 x 20 mL). The organic layer was discarded, the aqueous layer was acidified with 1 M NaHSO<sub>4</sub> to pH ~2, and extracted with ethyl acetate (3 x 20 mL). The organic layer was dried with MgSO<sub>4</sub>, filtered, and purified via flash column chromatography (eluting with 30% ethyl acetate in hexanes) to afford **5.4** as a clear oil (41 mg, 32% yield): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  6.56 (s, 1H), 4.86 (br s, 1H), 3.93 (d, *J* = 3.9 Hz, 2H), 3.25 (q, *J* = 12.7, 6.3 Hz, 2H), 2.42 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 2.13 (s, 3H), 1.85 (m, 2H), 1.64 (s, 1H); HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>10</sub>H<sub>15</sub>NO<sub>4</sub>Na [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 236.0899, found 236.0891.

**NHS-cyclopropenyl ester (NHS-Cp)**. To a solution of **5.5** (40 mg, 0.19 mmol) in 1 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> was added N-hydroxysuccinimide (43 mg, 0.37 mmol) and pyridine (60  $\mu$ L, 0.75 mmol). The solution was cooled to 4 °C on ice before dropwise addition of trifluoroacetic anhydride (52  $\mu$ L, 0.37 mmol) with stirring. The reaction mixture was allowed to warm to rt and stir for 1.5 h. The reaction mixture was diluted with 10 mL CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> and rinsed with 1 M NaHSO<sub>4</sub> (3 x 10 mL) and saturated NaHCO<sub>3</sub> (2 x 10 mL). The organic layer was dried with MgSO<sub>4</sub> and concentrated under reduced pressure. The product was purified by flash column chromatography (eluting with 30-60% ethyl acetate in hexanes) to afford the **NHS-Cp** as a clear oil (20 mg, 35% yield): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  6.57 (s, 1H), 4.89 (br s, 1H), 3.93 (m, 2H), 3.29 (q, *J* = 13.0, 6.5 Hz, 2H), 2.84 (s, 4H), 2.68 (t, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 2H), 2.14 (s, 3H), 1.98 (m, 2H), 1.64 (s, 1H); HRMS (ESI) calcd for C<sub>14</sub>H<sub>18</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>6</sub>Na [M+Na]<sup>+</sup> 333.1063, found 333.1066.

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