Supporting Information for:

Hf4+-exchanged montmorillonite-boosted Pd-catalyzed reductive

aminolysis of aryl ethers to efficiently synthesize cyclohexylamines

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Experimental Procedures

Chemicals and materials. Unless otherwise stated, all chemicals in this work were commercially available and used without further purification. Na⁺-MMT was purchased from Zhejiang Sanding Co., Ltd. Hafnium dichloride oxide octahydrate (98%), and cyclooctylamine (>97%) were purchased from ALFA. Benzyl phenyl ether (98%), dodecylamine (97%), cyclohexylamine (99%), cycloheptylamine (99%), n-dodecane (99.5%), phenol (99.5%), cyclopentylamine (99%), and cyclohexanone (99.8%) were provided by TCI. Palladium on carbon (Pd/C, Pd wt% 10%, reduced, anhydrous), palladium (II) acetate (99%, Pd wt% 46.0-48.0%), *p*-xylene (99%), benzylamine (99%), butylamine (99%), 3-phenylpropylamine (98%), n-heptylamine (98%), and n-octylamine (98%) were obtained from INNOCHEM. Amylamine (99%), hexylamine (99%), and phenethoxybenzene (98%) were purchased from ALADDIN. 4-Phenylbutan-2-amine (>97%) was purchased from ACCELA. Ethanol (99.9%) was obtained from Sinopharm. The compounds of 1b-1k were synthesized according to the literatures.^{S1,S2}

Synthesis of Pd/Hf-MMT. The Pd/Hf-MMT catalyst was prepared based on the procedures reported previously. Typically, 1.5 g of Na⁺-MMT was dispersed in 50 mL of aqueous solution of HfOCl₂ (1.5 g) under sonication to form a stable suspension and stirred at 90 °C for 24 h. Subsequently, the treated MMT was separated via centrifugation, washed with distilled water several times to remove the unabsorbed HfOCl₂, and finally washed with ethanol. Then, this slurry was dried at 60 °C in vacuum overnight and ground to powder, which was denoted as Hf-MMT. The resultant Hf-MMT was dispersed in the Pd(OAc)₂ ethanol solution and stirred at room temperature for 12 h. The slurry was centrifuged and washed with distilled water three times, which was then dried at 60 °C in vacuum overnight, followed by reduction using hydrogen (5 °C/min) at 300 °C for 6 h, resulting in brown-yellow Pd/Hf-MMT powder. The loading content of Pd in Pd/Hf-MMT was 2 wt% as determined by ICP-AES. For comparison, Pd/MMT was prepared via dispersing MMT in the Pd(OAc)₂ ethanol solution to adsorb Pd²⁺ onto the MMT support, followed by hydrogen reduction at 300 °C for 6 h.

S2

Reductive aminolysis of aryl ethers. In a typical experiment, aryl ether (0.5 mmol), amine (1 mmol), Pd/Hf-MMT (1 mol% Pd metal based on aryl ether), and *p*-xylene (2 mL) were added into a stainless-steel reactor of 15 mL with a Teflon coating. After the air in the autoclave was replaced by hydrogen (three times), the autoclave was pressurized to the desired pressure with H₂. Then, the autoclave was placed into a constant-temperature air bath and heated to the desired temperature, and the reactions were conducted with a stirring rate of 800 rpm for the desired reaction time. After the reaction was completed, the products were analyzed quantitatively using n-dodecane as the internal standard by gas chromatography (GC) and gas chromatography coupled with mass spectroscopy (GC-MS). In addition, to ensure the reliability of the obtained results, each experiment was repeated three times under the same reaction conditions.

Recyclability of Pd/Hf-MMT. To test the recyclability of Pd/Hf-MMT, the catalyst was separated from the reaction system by filtration, washed with ethanol for 5 times, and then dried under oven at 60 °C for 12 h. The sample was collected and transferred into a ceramic boat, and was reduced in a tubular furnace under H₂/Ar atmosphere (containing 90% Ar) with a flow rate of 100 mL min⁻¹. The sample was heated with a heating rate of 5 °C min⁻¹ from room temperature to 300 °C and held at this temperature for 6 h. Afterwards, the tubular furnace was cooled down to room temperature. Finally, the catalyst was reused in the next catalytic cycle.

Synthesis of the standard products. Because there were no commercial resources, we pre-synthesized the products as the standards. Taking the synthesis of *N*-dodecyl cyclohexylamine as an example, benzyl phenyl ether (0.5 mmol), dodecylamine (1 mmol), Pd/Hf-MMT (1 mol% Pd metal based on benzyl phenyl ether), and *p*-xylene (2 mL) were added into a stainless-steel reactor of 15 mL with a Teflon coating. After the air in the autoclave was replaced by hydrogen (three times), the autoclave was pressurized to the desired pressure with H₂ (0.3 MPa). Then, the autoclave was placed into a constant-temperature air bath and heated to the desired temperature (90 °C), and the reactions were conducted with a stirring rate of 800 rpm for the desired reaction time

(4 h). After the reaction, pure *N*-dodecyl cyclohexylamine was obtained by column chromatography (silica gel) using petroleum ether/EtOAc (1:1, 500 mL), and subsequently pure EtOAc as the elution solvent. Additionally, similar routes were employed to prepare other standard products.

Instruments. Conversions and yields were determined by a gas chromatography (Agilent 8890B) with the FID detector and a HP-5 column (30 m x 320 µm x 0.25µm). ¹H, and ¹³C NMR data were recorded on a Bruker ARX 400 and Bruker ARX 500 spectrometers using DMSO- d_6 or CD₃OD solvents. X-ray diffraction (XRD) patterns were collected on a Rigaku Ultima IV X-ray diffractometer using Cu Kα radiation at 35 kV and 25 mA (λ = 1.5405 Å) over a 20 ranging from 5 to 90 °C at a scanning speed of 5°/min. X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) was worked with Al k α (*hv* = 1486.36 eV) radiation with a Thermo Scientific K-Alpha spectrometer. The crystal morphology and size were determined by scanning electron microscopy (SEM) on a Hitachi S-4800 microscope and transmission electron microscopy (TEM) on a JEOL JEM-2100F microscope at an accelerating voltage of 200 kV. The scanning electron microscopy (SEM) was performed on a German ZEISS Sigma 300. The Pd and Hf contents were quantified by inductively coupled plasma emission spectrometer (ICP-OES) on an Optima 8300. Nitrogen sorption isotherms were obtained at 77 K by using a BEL-SORP-MAX instrument after degassing the samples for 8 h under vacuum at 473 K. The specific surface area was measured using the Brunauer-Emmett-Teller (BET) analysis method. Temperature programmed desorptionon was conducted on AutoChem Discovery and AutoChem 2920.



Fig. S1. TEM images of (A) MMT, (B) Pd/MMT, and (C and D) Pd/Hf-MMT.



Fig. S2. Elemental distribution mapping of Pd/Hf-MMT.



Fig. S3. Powder XRD patterns. (a) MMT, (b) Pd/MMT, and (c) Pd/Hf-MMT.



Fig. S4. TEM image of (A) the fresh Pd/Hf-MMT, and (B) the recovered Pd/Hf-MMT.



Fig. S5. Powder XRD patterns. (a) The fresh Pd/Hf-MMT, and (b) the recovered Pd/Hf-MMT.



Fig. S6. Time-yield plots for reductive amination of benzyl phenyl ether with Pd/Hf-MMT (Red line) or removing Pd/Hf-MMT after 2 h (Blue line). Reaction conditions: benzyl phenyl ether, 0.5 mmol; dodecylamine, 1 mmol; *p*-xylene, 2 mL; 90 °C; 4 h; Pd/Hf-MMT, 25 mg; H₂, 0.3 MPa.





Fig. S7. Reductive steps in the conversion process.



Fig. S8. (A) CO₂-TPD profile, (B) NH₃-TPD profile, and (C) quantity of acidic or basic sites in different catalysts. In A and B, a, b, and c represented MMT, Pd/MMT, and Pd/Hf-MMT, respectively.



Fig. S9. XPS spectra of Pd 3d in Pd/C and Pd/graphene.



Fig. S10. N₂ adsorption-desorption isotherms of different materials.



Fig. S11. TEM images and particle size distribution of (A) Pd/C, and (B) Pd/MMT.



A: acidic sites on MMT

Scheme S1. The interaction between the acidic sites on MMT and the O atom of the benzyl phenyl ether.

Entry	Catalyst	Pd (wt%)	Hf (wt%)
1	Pd/MMT	2	0
2	Pd/Hf-MMT	2	10.2
3	Pd/Hf-MMT (used)	1.9	10
4	Reaction solution	0	0

 Table S1. ICP-OES analysis of different catalysts.

Table S2. Summary of the results from N_2 adsorption-desorption.

Entry	Catalyst	BET surface area (m ² g ⁻¹)
1	Pd/MMT	35.1
2	Pd/C	112.4
3	Pd/Hf-MMT	78.1

¹H NMR and ¹³C NMR Data











170 165 160 155 150 145 140 135 130 125 120 115 110 105 100 95 90 85 80 75 70 65 60 55 50 45 40 35 30 2: f1 (ppm)













S20



S21



165 160 155 150 145 140 135 130 125 120 115 110 105 100 95 90 85 80 75 70 65 60 55 50 f1 (pm)

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HR-MS Data.

HR-MS for compound 3a

HR-MS for compound 3b

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Analysis Info								Acqui	sition Date	2/10	2023 1:43:	27 PM
Analysis Name Method Sample Name Comment	D:\Data\TJ&YF-2 new_tune_low_3 XJ-6	20230210\XJ min_pos.m	-6_47_01	1_4888.d				Operator Instrumer	and analys nt / Ser#	er ECN micr	J.CHEM. DTOF	G.D.Yang 10293
Acquisition Para	meter		lon Do	loritu		Ba	aitina		Cot Nobu	lizor		Por
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HR-MS for compound 3c

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Analysis Info Analysis Name Method Sample Name Comment	D:\Data\TJ&Y new_tune_low XJ-7	F-20230210\ /_3min_pos.r	XJ-7_48_1 n	01_4889.d				Acquis Operator a Instrument	ition Date and analys / Ser#	2/10/2 ser ECNU micrO	023 1:48:05 CHEM. C TOF	5 PM S.D.Yang 10293
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HR-MS for compound 3d

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HR-MS for compound 3e

Analysis Info							Acqui	sition Date	2/10/2	2023 2:01:52	2 PM
Analysis Name Method Sample Name	D:\Data\TJ&YF-2023 new_tune_low_3min X.I-9	0210\XJ-9_50 _pos.m	_01_4892.d				Operator	and analys	er ECNU	CHEM.	3.D.Yan
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			[ppm]								
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HR-MS for compound 3f

Analysis Name Method Sample Name	D:\Data\TJ&YF-2 new_tune_low_3 XJ-10	20230210\/ min_pos.r	XJ-10_51 n	_01_4893.0	đ			Acqui Operator Instrumer	sition Date and analys nt / Ser#	2/10/2 er ECNU micrO	2/10/2023 2:06:23 PM ECNU.CHEM. G.D.Yang micrOTOF 10293		
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HR-MS for compound 3g

Analysis Info								Acquis	ition Date	2/10/2023	3 2:11:00 PI	N
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Acquisition Para Source Type Focus Scan Begin Scan End	ESI Active 50 m/z 3000 m/z		Ion Pol Set Caj Set End	arity pillary d Plate Offs	et	Posit 4500 -500	ive V V		Set Nebulizer Set Dry Heat Set Dry Gas Set Divert Va	er Ive	1.5 Bar 180 °C 6.0 I/mir Waste	1
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HR-MS for compound 3h

HR-MS for compound 3i

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Analysis Info Analysis Name Method Sample Name Comment	D:\Data\TJ&YF-202 new_tune_low_3mir XJ-13	30210\XJ-13_54 n_pos.m	_01_4898.d		Acquisition Date Operator and analyser Instrument / Ser#	2/10/2023 2:29: ECNU.CHEM. micrOTOF	:17 PM G.D.Yang 10293
Acquisition Paran Source Type Focus Scan Begin Scan End	Neter ESI Active 50 m/z 3000 m/z	lon Set Set	Polarity Capillary End Plate Offset	Positive 4500 V -500 V	Set Nebulizer Set Dry Heat Set Dry Gas Set Divert Va	r 1. er 18 6. Ive W	.5 Bar 80 °C .0 I/min /aste
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HR-MS for compound 3j

Analysis Info Analysis Name	D:\Data\TJ&YF-202302	10\XJ-14_55_01_4899.d		Acquisition Date	2/10/2023 2:33:51 PM
Sample Name Comment	new_tune_low_3min_p XJ-14	os.m		Instrument / Ser#	micrOTOF 10293
Acquisition Para Source Type	meter ESI	Ion Polarity	Positive	Set Nebulizer	1.5 Bar
Focus Scan Begin Scan End	Active 50 m/z 3000 m/z	Set Capillary Set End Plate Offset	4500 V -500 V	Set Dry Heater Set Dry Gas Set Divert Valve	180 °C 6.0 I/min Waste
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HR-MS for compound 3k

Analysis Info Analysis Name Method Sample Name Comment	D:\Data\TJ&YF- new_tune_low_ XJ-15	20230210\) 3min_pos.n	KJ-15_56 n	_01_4900.d				Acqui Operator Instrumer	sition Date and analys nt / Ser#	2/10/2 er ECNU micrO	023 2:38:27 I CHEM. G. TOF	PM D.Yang 10293	
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HR-MS for compound 3I

HR-MS for compound 3m

HR-MS for compound 3n

Analysis Name	D:\Data\TJ&YF-202	30210\XJ-2_42_01_4883.d		Acquisition Date	2/10/2023 1:20:36 PM
Method Sample Name Comment	new_tune_low_3mir XJ-2	i_pos.m		Operator and analyser Instrument / Ser#	ECNU.CHEM. G.D.Yang micrOTOF 10293
Acquisition Para	neter ESI	Ion Polarity	Positive	Set Nebulizer	1.5 Bar
Focus Scan Begin Scan End	Active 50 m/z 3000 m/z	Set Capillary Set End Plate Offset	4500 V -500 V	Set Dry Heater Set Dry Gas Set Divert Valve	180 °C 6.0 l/min Waste
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HR-MS for compound 3o

HR-MS for compound 3p

HR-MS for compound 3q

Analysis Info				Acquisition Date	2/10/2023 1:57:14 PM	
Method Sample Name Comment	new_tune_low_3min_p XJ-5	os.m		Operator and analyser Instrument / Ser#	ECNU.CHEM. G.D.Yang micrOTOF 10293	
Acquisition Para Source Type Focus Scan Begin Scan End	meter ESI Active 50 m/z 3000 m/z	Ion Polarity Set Capillary Set End Plate Offset	Positive 4500 V -500 V	Set Nebulizer Set Dry Heate Set Dry Gas Set Divert Va	1.5 Bar ar 180 °C 6.0 //min We Waste	
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Chromatograms for GC-measurements

Reaction 2

Reaction 6

Reaction 8

Reaction 14

Reaction 16

Reaction 18

Reaction 20

Reaction 24

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