Electronic Supplementary Information for:

Structures of nickel chloride and thiolate complexes supported by PCN and POCOP pincer ligands and catalytic reactivity of the chloride complexes

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Synthesis of 2-(3-((di-tert-butylphosphino)oxy)phenyl)pyridine



Under nitrogen atmosphere, 2-bromopyridine (1.58 g, 10 mmol), 3-methoxyphenylboronic acid (1.79 g, 11.8 mmol), K_2CO_3 (3.38 g, 24.5 mmol), $Pd(PPh_3)_4$ (0.46 g, 0.4 mmol), DME (17 mL) and distilled water (11 mL) were added to a 100 mL Schlenk flask. The reaction mixture was refluxed for 12 h and cooled to room temperature. The solution was then filtered. The filtrate was extracted with ethyl acetate (30 mL × 3). The combined organic layer was washed with brine and dried over anhydrous Na₂SO₄. After the removal of the solvent, the crude product was purified with silica gel column chromatography (ethyl acetate/petroleum ether, v/v = 1/10) affording 1.65 g of colorless oil, which was used directly in the next step.

The colorless oil obtained in the above step (1.65 g) was added to a 100 mL Schlenk flask. Then, an aqueous solution of HBr (40%, 32 mL) was added. The reaction mixture was heated at 120 $^{\circ}$ C for 12 h. Then, water was removed under vacuum at 80 $^{\circ}$ C. The resulting crude product was recrystallized in ethanol to afford a beige white solid (1.94 g), which was used directly in the next step.

0.5 g of the beige white solid prepared in the above step was charged to a 50 mL Schlenk flask. Then NaH (0.11 mg, 4.4 mmol) and THF (25 mL) were added. The reaction mixture was heated to reflux for 1 h. Di-*tert*-butylchlorophosphine (0.42 mL, 2.2 mmol) was then added to a solution and the resulting solution was heated to reflux for 3 h. After evaporation of the solvent under vacuum, the residue was extracted with 30 mL of hexane, and the extract was cannula transferred and filtered through a pad of Celite. After removal of hexane under vacuum, the flask was heated at 70 °C for 1 h under vacuum to remove the remaining di-*tert*-butylchlorophosphine. 2-(3-((di-tert-butylphosphino)oxy)phenyl)pyridine was obtained as colorless viscous oil (0.55g). NMR characterization of the obtained product is in good agreement with the literature report.^{S1}

Synthesis of 2-(3-((di-tert-butylphosphino)oxy)phenyl)-4-methylpyridine



2-(3-((di-*tert*-butylphosphino)oxy)phenyl)-4-methylpyridine was prepared similarly in 84% yield from 2-bromo-4-methylpyridine by following the same procedure as described above. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, C₆D₆, δ): 8.51 (d, 1H, $J_{\text{H-H}} = 5.1$ Hz), 8.43–8.44 (m, 1H), 7.79 (d, 1H, $J_{\text{H-H}} = 8.0$ Hz), 7.38–7.40 (m, 1H), 7.32 (s, 1H), 7.22–7.25 (m, 1H), 6.52 (d, 1H, $J_{\text{H-H}} = 5.1$ Hz), 1.82 (s, 3H, CH₃), 1.15 (d, 18H, $J_{\text{H-P}} = 11.7$ Hz, C(CH₃)₃). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, C₆D₆, δ): 160.81 (d, $J_{\text{C-P}} = 9.7$ Hz), 157.01 (s), 149.71 (s), 147.37 (s), 141.56 (s), 129.85 (s), 123.36 (s), 121.24 (s), 120.40 (s), 118.92 (d, $J_{\text{C-P}} = 11.6$ Hz), 117.45 (d, $J_{\text{C-P}} = 10.7$ Hz), 35.78 (d, $J_{\text{C-P}} = 25.9$ Hz, C(CH₃)₃), 27.60 (d,

 $J_{\text{C-P}} = 15.8 \text{ Hz}, \text{ C}(C\text{H}_3)_3), 20.91 \text{ (s, } C\text{H}_3). {}^{31}\text{P}\{{}^{1}\text{H}\} \text{ NMR} (243 \text{ MHz}, \text{ C}_6\text{D}_6, \delta): 152.20 \text{ (s). HRMS} (ESI): m/z \text{ calculated for C}_{20}\text{H}_{28}\text{NOP} [\text{M} + \text{H}]^+ 330.1981; \text{Found } 330.1982.$

Synthesis of 2-(3-((di-tert-butylphosphino)oxy)phenyl)-4-trifluoromethylpyridine



2-(3-((di-tert-butylphosphino)oxy)phenyl)-4-trifluoromethylpyridine was prepared similarly in 71% yield from 2-bromo-4-(trifluoromethyl)pyridine by following the same procedure as described above. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, C₆D₆, δ): 8.36 (s, br, 2H), 7.66 (s, 1H), 7.38–7.39 (m, 2H), 7.12–7.15 (m, 1H), 6.73 (s, br, 1H), 1.13 (d, 18H, $J_{H-P} = 11.7$ Hz, C(CH₃)₃). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, C₆D₆, δ): 161.07 (d, $J_{C-P} = 9.7$ Hz), 158.56 (s), 150.86 (s), 139.97 (s), 138.68 (q, $J_{C-F} = 33.8$ Hz), 130.15 (s), 123.66 (q, $J_{C-F} = 273.9$ Hz, CF₃), 120.36 (s), 119.97 (d, $J_{C-P} = 11.8$ Hz), 117.62 (d, $J_{C-P} = 10.7$ Hz), 117.52 (q, $J_{C-F} = 3.5$ Hz), 115.71 (q, $J_{C-F} = 3.8$ Hz), 35.78 (d, $J_{C-P} = 25.9$ Hz, C(CH₃)₃), 27.50 (d, $J_{C-P} = 15.8$ Hz, C(CH₃)₃). ³¹P{¹H} NMR (243 MHz, C₆D₆, δ): 153.29 (s). ¹⁹F{¹H} NMR (565 MHz, C₆D₆, δ): -64.69 (s). HRMS (ESI): m/z calculated for C₂₀H₂₅F₃NOP [M + H]⁺ 384.1699; Found 384.1696.







Fig. S2 $^{13}C{^1H}$ NMR spectrum of complex 1 (151 MHz, C₆D₆)



Fig. S4 ¹H NMR spectrum of complex **2** (600 MHz, C_6D_6)



Fig. S5 ${}^{13}C{}^{1}H$ NMR spectrum of complex 2 (151 MHz, C₆D₆)



Fig. S6 ${}^{31}P{}^{1}H$ NMR spectrum of complex 2 (243 MHz, C₆D₆)

9.22 9.21 9.21 9.21 9.21 9.21 15 7.73 7.73 7.73 7.73 7.73 6.70 6.69



1.56





Fig. S8 $^{13}C{^{1}H}$ NMR spectrum of complex 3 (151 MHz, C₆D₆)





Fig. S10 19 F NMR spectrum of complex 3 (565 MHz, C₆D₆).







Fig. S12 $^{13}C{^{1}H}$ NMR spectrum of complex 4 (151 MHz, C_6D_6)



Fig. S14 1 H NMR spectrum of complex 5 (600 MHz, C₆D₆)



Fig. S16 ${}^{31}P{}^{1}H$ NMR spectrum of complex 5 (243 MHz, C₆D₆)

General procedure for the catalytic reactions

Nitrile (1.0 mmol), 1,4-dioxane (1.0 mL), water (1.0 mL), and complex **2** (8.5 mg, 0.02 mmol) were mixed in a reaction tube. The tube was then sealed. The reaction mixture was stirred at 80 °C and monitored by GC-MS. The reaction was stopped at certain time or until the nitrile substrate was consumed completely. Solvents were removed under reduced pressure. The resulting residue was extracted with dichloromethane (3×10 mL) and filtered. Crude amide products were obtained after dichloromethane was removal from the combined extraction solutions. The products were further purified by washing with cold diethyl ether or *n*-hexane and dried in vacuo. The isolated amide products were characterized by ¹H and ¹³C{¹H} NMR spectroscopy. Scope of the substrates is presented in Scheme S1 and the NMR spectra are presented in the Fig. S19–S58.



Scheme S1 Catalytic hydration of different nitriles catalysed by complex **2**. Reaction conditions: nitrile (0.5 mmol), 1,4-dioxane (1.0 mL), water (1.0 mL). Yields were based on the isolated products.

Characterization of the isolated amide products

→ NH₂ 0 (8a)

White solid (35 mg, 70% yield), M.P. 104–105 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 2.22 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 2H, CH₂), 1.58–1.63 (m, 2H, CH₂), 1.37–1.40 (m, 2H, CH₂), 0.96 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 3H, CH₃). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 179.24 (CO), 36.21 (CH₂), 28.95 (CH₂), 23.36 (CH₂), 14.01 (CH₃). These data are in good agreement with literature report.^{S2}





White solid (64 mg, 94% yield), M.P. 162–164 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 7.78 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H, Ar*H*), 7.28 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H, Ar*H*), 2.40 (s, 3H, C*H*₃). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 172.43 (*C*O), 143.66 (Ar*C*), 132.07 (Ar*C*), 130.11 (Ar*C*), 128.71 (Ar*C*), 21.42 (*C*H₃). These data are in good agreement with literature report. ^{S3}



Fig. S20¹³C{¹H} NMR spectrum of the isolated **8b** (151 MHz, CD₃OD)



White solid (54 mg, 71% yield), M.P. 164–166 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 7.85 (d, J = 9 Hz, 2H, Ar*H*), 6.98 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H, Ar*H*), 3.86 (s, 3H, CH₃). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 172.05 (*C*O), 164.16 (Ar*C*), 130.61 (Ar*C*), 126.93 (Ar*C*), 114.67 (Ar*C*), 55.91 (*C*H₃). These data are in good agreement with literature report. ^{S3}







White solid (57 mg, 73% yield), M.P. 173–174 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 7.86 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H, ArH), 7.47 (d, J = 9 Hz, 2H, ArH). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 171.12 (CO), 139.00 (ArC), 133.68 (ArC), 130.36 (ArC), 129.69 (ArC). These data are in good agreement with literature report.^{S4}





White solid (88 mg, 88% yield), M.P. 191–193 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 7.80 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H, Ar*H*), 7.64 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H, Ar*H*). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 171.21 (*CO*), 134.09 (Ar*C*), 132.73 (Ar*C*), 130.50 (Ar*C*), 127.35 (Ar*C*). These data are in good agreement with literature report. ^{S3}





White solid (63 mg, 90% yield), M.P. 154–156 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 7.92–7.94 (m, 2H, Ar*H*), 7.16–7.20 (m, 2H, Ar*H*). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 171.15 (*C*O), 166.37 (d, ¹*J*_{C-F} = 252 Hz, Ar*C*), 131.30 (d, ³*J*_{C-F} = 9.1 Hz, Ar*C*), 116.32 (d, ²*J*_{C-F} = 22 Hz, Ar*C*). ¹⁹F{¹H} NMR (565 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): -106.29. These data are in good agreement with literature report.^{S5}





White solid (65 mg, 84% yield), M.P. 142–144 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 7.52 (d, J = 7.2 Hz, 1H, Ar*H*), 7.48 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H, Ar*H*), 7.38 (t, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H, Ar*H*), 7.45 (t, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H, Ar*H*). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 172.34 (*C*O), 137.32 (Ar*C*), 132.17 (Ar*C*), 131.76 (Ar*C*), 131.09 (Ar*C*), 129.92 (Ar*C*), 128.05 (Ar*C*). These data are in good agreement with literature report. ^{S3}



Fig. S30 $^{13}C{^{1}H}$ NMR spectrum of the isolated **8g** (151 MHz, CD₃OD)



White solid (87 mg, 93% yield), M.P. 183–185 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 8.05 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H, Ar*H*), 7.77 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H, Ar*H*). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 170.82 (CO), 138.79 (Ar*C*), 134.26 (q, ² J_{C-F} = 33 Hz, ArC), 129.38 (Ar*C*), 126.46 (q, ³ J_{C-F} = 4 Hz, Ar*C*), 125.27 (q, ¹ J_{C-F} = 272 Hz, *C*F₃). ¹⁹F{¹H} NMR (565 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): -64.50. These data are in good agreement with literature report. ^{S4}



Fig. S32¹³C{¹H} NMR spectrum of the isolated **8h** (151 MHz, CD₃OD)



White solid (55 mg, 91% yield), M.P. 128–131 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 7.87 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H, Ar*H*), 7.54 (t, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H, Ar*H*), 7.45 (t, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H, Ar*H*). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 172.52 (*C*O), 134.97 (Ar*C*), 132.92 (Ar*C*), 129.51 (Ar*C*), 128.63 (Ar*C*). These data are in good agreement with literature report. ^{S3}





White solid (66 mg, 77% yield), M.P. 190–192 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 8.43 (s, 1H, Ar*H*), 7.97 (d, 1H, $J_{\text{H-H}} = 8.2$ Hz, Ar*H*), 7.90–7.93 (m, 3H, Ar*H*), 7.54–7.60 (m, 2H, Ar*H*). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 172.45 (CO), 136.41 (ArC), 134.04 (ArC), 132.18 (ArC), 130.08 (ArC), 129.32 (ArC), 129.27 (ArC), 128.92 (ArC), 128.75 (ArC), 127.81 (ArC), 125.08 (ArC). These data are in good agreement with literature report.⁸⁴







White solid (48 mg, 75% yield), M.P. 180–183 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 7.71 (d, J = 3.7 Hz, 1H), 7.65 (d, J = 5.0 Hz, 1H), 7.11 (t, J = 4.3 Hz, 1H). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 166.81 (CO), 139.88 (ArC), 132.40 (ArC), 130.49 (ArC), 128.95 (ArC). These data are in good agreement with literature report. ^{S4}



Fig. S38¹³C{¹H} NMR spectrum of the isolated **8k** (151 MHz, CD₃OD)



White solid (39 mg, 61% yield), M.P. 183–185 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 2.22 (tt, *J* = 12.0, 3.4 Hz, 1H, CH), 1.79–1.84 (m, 4H, CH₂), 1.70 (d, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 1H, CH₂), 1.41–1.47 (m, 2H, CH₂), 1.24–1.36 (m, 3H, CH₂). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 182.13 (CO), 45.96 (CH), 30.74 (CH₂), 26.91 (CH₂), 26.81 (CH₂). These data are in good agreement with literature report.^{S4}





White solid (53 mg, 79% yield), M.P. 146–148 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 7.69 (s, 1H, Ar*H*), 7.65 (d, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 1H, Ar*H*), 7.31–7.36 (m, 2H, Ar*H*), 2.38 (s, 3H, C*H*₃). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 172.63 (*C*O), 139.49 (Ar*C*), 134.91 (Ar*C*), 133.56 (Ar*C*), 129.42 (Ar*C*), 129.18 (Ar*C*), 125.76 (Ar*C*), 21.34 (*C*H₃). These data are in good agreement with literature report. ^{S3}







White solid (62 mg, 92% yield), M.P. 94–97 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, *δ*): 7.64–7.69 (m, 2H, Ar*H*), 7.31–7.36 (m, 2H, Ar*H*), 2.39 (s, 3H, C*H*₃). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, *δ*): 172.49 (CO), 139.35 (ArC), 134.77 (ArC), 133.42 (ArC), 129.28 (ArC), 129.04 (ArC), 125.62 (ArC), 21.20 (CH₃). These data are in good agreement with literature report.^{S2}



Fig. S44 $^{13}C{^{1}H}$ NMR spectrum of the isolated **8n** (151 MHz, CD₃OD)



White solid (74 mg, 95% yield), M.P. 131–133 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 7.88 (s, 1H, Ar*H*), 7.79 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 1H, Ar*H*), 7.54 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 1H, Ar*H*), 7.44 (t, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 1H, Ar*H*). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 170.71 (*C*O), 136.99 (Ar*C*), 135.57 (Ar*C*), 132.74 (Ar*C*), 131.11 (Ar*C*), 128.79 (Ar*C*), 126.97 (Ar*C*). These data are in good agreement with literature report.^{S3}



Fig. S46¹³C{¹H} NMR spectrum of the isolated 80 (151 MHz, CD₃OD)



White solid (66 mg, 90% yield), M.P. 148–151 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 7.54–7.57 (m, 3H), 7.34–7.39 (m, 3H), 6.65 (d, J = 15.9 Hz, 1H). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 170.882 (CO), 142.70, 136.13, 130.92, 129.93, 128.85, 121.39. These data are in good agreement with literature report. ^{S4}



Fig. S48 $^{13}C\{^1H\}$ NMR spectrum of the isolated 8p (151 MHz, CD₃OD)



White solid (54 mg, 73% yield), M.P. 183–186 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 7.17 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H, Ar*H*), 7.11 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 2H, Ar*H*), 3.45 (s, 2H, CH₂), 2.30 (s, 3H, CH₃). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 177.14 (CO), 137.67 (ArC), 133.59 (ArC), 130.18 (ArC), 130.03 (ArC), 43.18 (CH₂), 20.98 (CH₃). These data are in good agreement with literature report. ^{S6}







White solid (49 mg, 64% yield), M.P. 158–159 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 7.28–7.30 (m, 2H, Ar*H*), 7.00–7.03 (m, 2H, Ar*H*), 3.48 (s, 2H, C*H*₂). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 176.70 (*C*O), 163.30 (d, ¹*J*_{C-F} = 244.3 Hz, Ar*C*), 132.87 (d, ³*J*_{C-F} = 3.3 Hz, Ar*C*), 131.91 (d, ⁴*J*_{C-F} = 3.1 Hz, Ar*C*), 116.12 (d, ²*J*_{C-F} = 21.8 Hz, Ar*C*), 42.39 (*C*H₂). ¹⁹F{¹H} NMR (565 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): -118.37. These data are in good agreement with literature report. ^{S2}



Fig. S52 $^{13}C\{^1H\}$ NMR spectrum of the isolated $8r~(151~MHz,~CD_3OD)$



White solid (33 mg, 54% yield), M.P. 109–110 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 8.61 (d, J = 4.7 Hz, 1H), 8.11 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 7.92 (t, J = 7.7 Hz, 1H), 7.51–7.53 (m, 1H). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 169.37 (CO), 151.09 (ArC), 149.80 (ArC), 138.71 (ArC), 127.82 (ArC), 123.24 (ArC). These data are in good agreement with literature report. ^{S3}





White solid (51 mg, 92% yield), M.P. 140–142 °C. ¹H NMR (600 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 7.64 (d, J = 1.6 Hz, 1H), 7.16 (d, J = 3.5 Hz, 1H), 6.57 (dd, J = 3.3, 1.6 Hz, 1H). ¹³C{¹H} NMR (151 MHz, CD₃OD, δ): 163.00 (CO), 148.95 (ArC), 146.42 (ArC), 115.72 (ArC), 113.26 (ArC). These data are in good agreement with literature report.^{S4}



Fig. S56 $^{13}C{^{1}H}$ NMR spectrum of the isolated 8t (151 MHz, CD₃OD)

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