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Biotransformation of selenium in the mycelium of the fungus *Phycomyces blakesleeanus*

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Abstract

Biotransformation of toxic selenium ions to non-toxic species has been mainly focused on biofortification of microorganisms and production of selenium nanoparticles (SeNPs), while far less attention is paid to the mechanisms of transformation. In this study, mycelium of fungus *Phycomyces blakesleeanus* was exposed to selenite (Se^{+4}) to examine its ability to reduce Se^{+4} to nanoparticles, as well as to elucidate the mechanisms of reduction itself. Red coloration and pungent odor that appeared after only a few hours of incubation with 10 mM Se^{+4} indicate formation of SeNPs and volatile methylated selenium compounds. SEM-EDS confirmed pure selenium NPs with an average diameter of 57 nm, which indicates to potentially very good medical, optical and photoelectric characteristics. XANES spectroscopy of mycelium revealed concentration dependent mechanisms of reduction, where 0.5 mM Se^{+4} led to predominant formation of Se-S containing organic molecules, while 10 mM Se^{+4} induced production of biomethylated selenide (Se^{-2}) in the form of volatile dimethylselenide (DMSe) and selenium nanoparticles (SeNPs), with SeNPs/DMSe ratio rising with incubation time. Several structural forms of elemental selenium were detected, predominantly monoclinic Se_8 chains, together with trigonal Se polymer chain, Se_8 and Se_6 ring structures.

Keywords: biogenic selenium nanoparticles, *Phycomyces blakesleeanus*, volatile selenium compounds, selenium biotransformation

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Introduction

Selenium represents an essential microelement and, as component of selenoproteins is involved in redox homeostasis and redox regulation of intracellular signaling [1]. It can exist in several oxidation states (-2, 0, +4 and +6) that determine its beneficial or detrimental effects in biosystems. In the form of selenide (Se^{-2}), it plays an important metabolic role as a precursor of a number of organic biomolecules such as coenzyme Q, selenocysteine and selenomethionine [2, 3] or can bind to metals to form metal selenides [4]. Selenite (Se^{+4}) and selenate (Se^{+6}) are often toxic due to their water solubility and bioavailability [3, 5]. Tolerance or resistance toward metal(loid)s can be conferred through physico-chemical properties of the environment, decreased uptake or extracellular precipitation by the organism, adsorption to cell wall components, or through biological reduction to a less toxic chemical form such as Se^0 [6] and volatile methylated selenium compounds. Elemental selenium (Se^0) is water insoluble and inert, non-toxic for humans and animals at low concentrations [7]. Aside from detoxification, bioreduction to Se^0 often has the added value of production of elemental selenium-nanoparticles (SeNPs) that have exceptional physical and chemical properties and numerous applications in biomedicine and industry [5, 8, 9]. Chemical and biological activities of SeNPs vary in size-dependent manner, with significantly better antioxidant activity of particles with diameter under 100 nm [10]. Biogenic formation of SeNPs is mainly attributed to, and mostly studied in bacteria, some of which exhibit capacity for production of SeNPs with a diameter range of 30-500 nm [10]. The research of fungal capacity for SeNPs formation is gaining momentum in the last decade [9–13]. Biomethylation of selenide represents a known and promising detoxification mechanism that produces volatile Se compounds such as dimethylselenide (DMSe) or dimethyldiselenide (DMDS₂) [13].

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3 The majority of fungi are yet to be tested for their ability of Se^{+4} or Se^{+6} reduction, which is
4 not necessarily correlated to their tolerance for selenium anions [5, 6]. Most fungal species
5 known so far to reduce Se^{+4} require a lot of time for reaching substantial mycelial biomass [9,
6 14, 15]. *Phycomyces blakesleeanus* is a non-pathogenic filamentous fungus easy to cultivate,
7 characterized by short life cycle and a rich yield of mycelium in a short time [16].

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14 In this research, we examined the capability of *P. blakesleeanus* for Se^{+4} and Se^{+6} reduction,
15 and investigated ways of Se transformation in dependence of concentration and incubation
16 periods.
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18 19 20 21 **Materials and Methods**

22 *Mycelium cultivation and materials*

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24 The wild-type strain of the fungus *P. blakesleeanus* (Burgeff) (NRRL 1555(-)) was used. The
25 mycelium was grown in standard minimal medium [17], with spore concentration of $10^5/\text{ml}$,
26 in Erlenmeyer flasks which were shaken at 120 rpm in the growth cabinet with continuous
27 overhead white fluorescent light at temperature of 20°C . Fre of growth, mycelium was filter
28 washed and 200 mg of fresh weight (FW) was dissolved in 1 mL of fresh medium
29 supplemented with 0.5, 2 or 10 mM Se^{+4} or Se^{+6} for 24 h.
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40 *Scanning Electron Microscopy - Energy Dispersive X-ray Spectroscopy (SEM – EDS)*

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42 Mycelium treated with 10 mM Se^{+4} for 24 h was washed twice ($4500 \times g$, 10 min) with 50
43 mM K-Pi buffer pH=6. Fixation was performed with 3% glutaraldehyde (GA) in the same
44 medium for 30 min at RT, followed by 3% GA fixation overnight at 4°C . Samples were
45 dehydrated in ethanol series (30%, 50%, 70% and 90%) for 1h, chloroform and 100% ethanol
46 for 1h, and then left overnight in 100% ethanol at 4°C . Samples were dried in Critical Point
47 Dryer K850 CPD (Quorum Technologies, UK), sputter coated with gold for 100 sec at 30 mA
48 (Baltec SCD 005) and examined by SEM (JSM-6390LV, JEOL USA, Inc.). Elementary
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3 composition of samples was obtained with energy dispersive spectroscopy (EDS, Oxford
4 Aztec X-max). EDS analysis was conducted on the area of 500 μm^2 per sample.
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7 For SEM-EDS of exudate, mycelium was filter washed and resuspended in deionized water in
8 1:20 (w/v) ratio and centrifuged at 15000 x g for 10 min to collect exudate of Se^{+4} treated
9 mycelia. Exudate was collected and filtered through 0.22 μm diameter cutoff membrane.
10 Aliquots of 5 μL of exudate were placed on carbon-coated SEM grid and air dried prior to
11 measurements. Samples were mounted to the holder and during measurements were cooled
12 with liquid nitrogen cryo-jet. Electron micrographs were obtained by SEM (Vega TS
13 5130MM) at voltage of 30V. EDS measurements were performed on 5 different positions
14 from 4 samples chosen based on SeNPs distribution on SEM micrographs.
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25 *Dynamic Light Scattering (DLS) spectroscopy*

26 The particle size distribution pattern in exudate was done by Dynamic Light Scattering (DLS)
27 spectroscopy by application of laser light-scattering particle size analyzer (PSA) (Mastersizer
28 2000; Malvern Instruments Ltd., Malvern, Worcestershire, U.K.). The measurements range
29 of this instrument is from 20 nm to 2 μm . Prior to measurements, all samples were treated in
30 ultrasonic bath for 5 min.
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39 *XANES experiments*

40 The mycelium treated with 0.5 and 10 mM Se^{+4} were filtered, washed, and resuspended in
41 deionized water at a ratio of 1:20 (w/v). Aliquots of 5 μL mycelium suspension were placed
42 on 2.5 μm Mylar thin film fixed and attached to the sample holder and freeze-dried overnight.
43 XANES measurements were performed at IAEA X-ray spectrometry experimental station
44 installed at Elettra Sincrotrone Trieste (Trieste, Italy) synchrotron facility [18, 19] . The
45 samples were raster-scanned through the incident X-ray beam with a spot size of 200 μm (h)
46 \times 100 μm (v). XANES spectra were acquired in fluorescence mode using a Silicon Drift
47 Detector (SDD) (XFlash 5030, Bruker Nano GmbH, Germany). The spectra of mycelium
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3 were collected in the energy range from 12500 to 12900 eV, with an energy step of 4 eV in
4 pre-edge region, 0.2 eV in edge region and $\Delta k=0.05 \text{ \AA}^{-1}$ at post-edge region. The experimental
5 spectra were processed by the DEMETER software package [20]. To extract valence
6 information for selenium in mycelium, spectra were compared with those of recorded
7 standards and with literature data.
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14 *Raman spectroscopy*

16 The Raman spectra were recorded at the Thermo DXR Raman microscope. Aliquots of 5 μL
17 of control and treated mycelium suspension were placed on the gold plates and measured
18 under the microscope with 50 x magnification, using the 532 nm laser excitation line, with a
19 constant power of 10 mW. The exposition time was 30 s, with 10 exposures, with 900
20 lines/mm and spectrograph aperture of 50 μm slit. Automatic fluorescence correction was
21 removed by using the OMNIC software (Thermo Fisher Scientific).
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30 For extraction of soluble fraction, filtered and washed mycelium was homogenized with 5
31 mm stainless steel beads in Tissue Lyser II (Quiagen) with frequency of 30/sec for 1 minute,
32 and then resuspended in potassium phosphate buffer (50 mM, pH 7.2) in 1:2,5 ratio (w/v) .
33 Homogenate was shaken on ice for 30 min. and then centrifuged for 15 min. at 15000 x g. The
34 pellet comprised of larger organelles and cell walls was discarded and supernatant was
35 collected. The remaining organelles and the majority of cell membrane parts were further
36 removed by centrifugation at 100000 x g for 30 min. Obtained soluble fraction was divided
37 into 1 ml aliquots and stored at -80°C until use.
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49 **Results and Discussion**

51 The ability of the fungus *P. blakesleeanus* to reduce selenium in anionic forms as selenite
52 (Se^{+4}) and selenate (Se^{+6}) was examined on 28-hour-old mycelium (mid-exponential growth
53 phase), where the reduction process was initially visualized by color changes of the mycelium
54 treated with Se^{+4} or Se^{+6} for 24 h (Fig 1). The mycelium itself is yellow-orange due to
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3 presence of β -carotene [21], so the light red color in 2 mM Se^{+4} treatment is barely visible, but
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5 very intense in 10 mM Se^{+4} treatment, indicating the ability of *P. blakesleeanus* for Se^{+4}
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7 reduction and formation of amorphous elemental selenium nanoparticles (Fig 1a). The
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9 addition of 10 mM Se^{+4} led to a change in color to reddish yellow within 1-2 h. A pungent
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11 odor from treated samples indicated the formation of volatile selenium compounds. After 24 h
12
13 of incubation with 2 mM and 10 mM Se^{+4} , mycelium was separated from growth medium by
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15 centrifugation (Fig 1b) and then washed in sterile deionized water 3 times (Fig 1c). Intense
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17 red color of the washed mycelium suggests either intracellular reduction and SeNP formation,
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19 or SeNP formation adjacent to the cell wall. Pale red color of the first supernatant may
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21 originate from SeNPs released through cell lysis or detachment from the cell wall. To test for
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23 reactions with components of the medium and exudate (Fig 1d), 10 mM Se^{+4} was added to
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25 fresh medium (M), medium filtered after 28 h of fungal growth (F) and boiled 28 h old
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27 mycelium (BM) and incubated for 7 days. No visible reduction occurred without the contact
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29 of Se^{+4} with live mycelium, indicating its necessity for SeNP synthesis. Mycelium treated
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31 with 10 mM Se^{+6} did not change color compared to control for up to 7 days of treatment
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33 (results not shown).
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40 Elemental selenium can be produced intra- or extracellularly, with extracellular formation
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42 being especially interesting as the particles can be collected without the additional steps of
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44 cell lysis [12], while intracellular synthesis of SeNPs prevents migration of Se through water
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46 and soil [22]. Pale red color of supernatant in Fig 1c suggests presence of extracellular SeNPs
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48 which was further confirmed by SEM – EDS (Fig 2). EDS microanalysis of mycelium
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50 suspension and exudates showed characteristic Se signals at 1.4 (SeL α), 11.2 (SeK α) and 12.5
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52 (SeK β) keV [23, 24], and in addition to carbon and oxygen, measurable amounts of potassium
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54 and phosphorous from the wash buffer were detected in the mycelium (Fig 2a down). The
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3 signal of selenium in exudate is practically devoid of any other signals belonging to cellular
4 components (Fig. 2b down).
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7 The size of SeNPs in exudate of mycelium incubated with Se^{+4} for 24 h was measured by
8 DLS (Fig. 3). Diameters of all SeNPs were in the range of 32-95 nm, with an average value of
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10 57 nm. Although the term 'nanoparticles' should be limited to particles with one of dimension
11 up to 1 μm , biogenic SeNPs smaller than 200 nm, that are of particular importance for their
12 biological activity, are found rarely [25, 26]. The size of nanoparticles plays a significant role
13 in their biological activity [27] as the likelihood of interaction with the target system increases
14 with the surface area, so SeNPs produced by *P. blakesleeanus* with the size range of 32-95 nm
15 are worthy of further research.
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26 X-ray absorption near edge structure (XANES) spectroscopy is a suitable method to study
27 physico-chemical properties of atoms in biological systems, and was used to examine the
28 oxidation states and related symmetry of vanadium in *P. blakesleeanus* [28]. Therefore, the
29 process of Se^{+4} transformations in the mycelium of *P. blakesleeanus* was monitored by
30 synchrotron based XANES spectroscopy by using different Se^{+4} concentrations and
31 incubation times (Fig 4). Concentration of 0.5 mM Se^{+4} (low) was chosen for monitoring
32 pathway of reduction with no visible SeNPs synthesis, while 10 mM Se^{+4} (high) induced
33 abundant SeNPs production.
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44 The spectrum of mycelium incubated 24 h in 0.5 mM Se^{+4} reveals reduction of Se^{+4} , indicated
45 by red shift of absorption edge with regard to Se^{+4} standard. (Fig 4a). Since the energy values
46 of absorption edge of Se^{+2} , Se^{+1} and Se^0 are similar and not unequivocally separated, exact
47 oxidation form cannot be determined this way. However, the post-edge region contains
48 additional peak at 12667 eV (Fig 4a), typical for XANES of RSSeSR containing organic
49 molecules [29, 30]. Yu et al. (2018) have found that sulfhydryl sites of bacterial cell envelope
50 promote Se^{+4} reduction to neutral RSSeSR compounds that can be more easily transported
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3 across cell membrane. On the other hand, production of $\text{Se}_n\text{S}_{8-n}$ (monoclinic Se^0) form is
4 reflected in similar spectral fashion [22]. The derivative spectrum confirms sulfur (S) as the
5 atom in the first coordination sphere of Se (Fig 4b), with characteristic trough that discerns
6 these from Se^0 derivative [29, 31]. Even though the results are more indicative of Se-S
7 containing organic molecules, at this point we cannot exclude presence of Se-C bond
8 containing metabolites such as Se-Methionine and/or Se-Cysteine, particularly having in mind
9 the ratio in the intensities of the main peak and the peak at 12667 eV [32]. Reduction of 0.5
10 mM Se^{+4} was monitored in time (Fig 4c), and it is shown that already after 1 h, contribution
11 of Se^{+4} decreased considerably, while after 3 h it could no longer be detected.

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24 As color changes are clearly visible in samples incubated in 10 mM Se^{+4} we ran XANES with
25 high Se concentration for three aforementioned incubation periods. Fig 4d shows XANES
26 spectra of mycelium incubated in 10 mM Se^{+4} for 24 h. The shoulder at 12658.5 eV appeared
27 as a new component in spectrum (Fig 4d insert), indicating reduced form of Se different from
28 those produced in samples treated with lower Se^{+4} concentration [30]. Unlike other elements,
29 the position of Se K lines does not state unequivocally of the oxidation state of Se, but as Se^0
30 edge is most red shifted among all Se forms and compounds [33], it could indicate that this
31 shoulder originates from elemental red selenium, whose presence was visually confirmed. The
32 main peak of the spectrum positioned at 12663 eV can originate from methylated selenide
33 (Se^{-2}) compounds. It has been published that these volatile compounds represent the product
34 of selenium metabolism in some bacterial [34–36], fungal [6, 37, 38] and microalgal [39, 40]
35 species. Its main edge energy is positioned between the values typical for Se^0 and Se^{+4} [34,
36 36], with distances that fully correspond to those obtained in the paper of Van Fleet-Stalder
37 for dimethyl selenide (DMSe), Se^0 and Se^{+4} . The corresponding first derivative spectra clearly
38 confirm the observed energy separations (Fig 4e), and comparison with DMSe standard gave
39 a good match (Fig 4e). As volatilization in the form of pungent odor was observed during
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3 incubation of *P. blakesleeanus* mycelium with Se^{+4} , DMSe, together with red Se^0 in the form
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5 of SeNPs, is likely to be the product of Se^{+4} reduction. XANES of the sample incubated for 1
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7 h with 10 mM Se^{+4} showcases that Se^{+4} is completely removed and transformed into two far
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9 less toxic forms, Se^0 and Se^{-2} (Fig 4f). The first derivative spectra establish predominance of
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11 methylated Se^{-2} form, but $\text{Se}^0/\text{Se}^{-2}$ ratio gradually rises with time (Fig 4f).

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14 Interesting observation from these experiments was that when Se^{+4} in low concentration was
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16 added, this form was still present after 1h (Fig 4c), suggesting that Se transformation is faster
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18 with high Se^{+4} concentration, i.e., different, or additional mechanisms are employed.

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21 No changes have been observed in the spectra of the mycelium treated with 10 mM Se^{+6} ,
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23 suggesting that the mycelium does not have a capacity for its transformation. This is in
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25 collision with previous work of Lindblow-Kull [41] who has shown synthesis of selenobiotin
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27 by *P. blakesleeanus* with the addition of Se^{+6} , albeit different medium and culture conditions
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29 were applied.
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33 Elemental selenium can appear in several crystal allotropes, as monoclinic, trigonal, vitreous,
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35 amorphous and cubic [22, 42]. Structural arrangement of Se atoms in SeNPs produced by *P.*
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37 *blakesleeanus* mycelium treated with 10 mM selenite for 24 h was studied by Raman
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39 spectroscopy. The most intensive band at 255 cm^{-1} (low-wavenumber spectral region,
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41 characteristic for vibrational bands of SeNPs [43, 44] (Fig. 5a) corresponds to symmetric
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43 stretching vibration of Se-Se bond, implying production of monoclinic eight-membered
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45 single-chain selenium (Se_8) [43–45]. However, deviation from regular Lorentzian shape and
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47 broadening points to overlapping of more than one band in this region, implying existence of
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49 amorphous form of SeNPs [46]. The shoulder at around 236 cm^{-1} indicates formation of
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51 trigonal Se as it derives from a combination of symmetric and antisymmetric stretching
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53 vibrations of trigonal structured Se polymer helix chain [43, 46]. The obtained band is a result
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55 of E and A1 vibration of aforementioned structural unit [47]. In addition, two most common
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3 allotropes of crystalline SeNPs induce appearance of vibrational bands at 233 and 251 cm^{-1}
4 for trigonal polymeric chain and Se_8 chain structures, respectively [48]. The wavenumbers of
5 these two lines in the spectrum of *P.blakesleeanus* are shifted toward higher wavenumbers
6 (236 and 255 cm^{-1}), and according to Brodsky (1972), this shift along with broad signal could
7 further indicate high degree of disorder in the amorphous structure produced by altered
8 intermolecular interactions [49]. Less ordered amorphous structure induced by polymerization
9 process has been also noted for the next chalcogen, sulfur [46]. Shoulder at high-wavenumber
10 side of the main peak could be attributed to vibrational band of Se_8 ring structures [43], so to
11 clarify, we performed deconvolution of group of signals around 255 cm^{-1} (Fig. 5b). Two
12 bands of lower intensity centered at 268 and 274 cm^{-1} were detected (Fig. 5b). The band at
13 268 cm^{-1} is attributed to E2 bending vibration of eight-membered elemental selenium [50].
14 The latter is assigned to the symmetric stretching vibration of six-membered Se ring
15 [43]. These results are in some extent similar to those obtained from the Se^{+4} reduction in
16 bacterial strain of *B. selenitireducens* [44] but with a considerably higher partake of chain-like
17 structure of Se_8 nanoparticles whose band is centered at 255 cm^{-1} . Remarkably broader
18 corresponding band has been obtained in the bacterial strain of *A. thiophylum*, which was
19 interpreted as an existence of the amorphous SeNPs [47]. Such explanation should be taken
20 with a caution, as broadening may also be assigned to considerably large size of NPs [51],
21 However, as already mentioned, the appearance of low-wavenumber signal centered at around
22 236 cm^{-1} from the Se^{+4} incubated mycelium of *P. blakesleeanus* strongly indicates production
23 of amorphous SeNPs [52].

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26 Raman measurements of cellular soluble fraction did not detect any observable signal in the
27 region of SeNPs (Fig. 5a), but broad band with low intensity at 354 cm^{-1} , not observed in the
28 whole mycelium spectrum, most probably derived from the intracellular interaction between
29 Se and sulfur containing protein components [53]. The identical band has been detected in
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3 bacterial strain *Azospirillum brasilense* where formation of Se_6S_2 has been proposed [22].
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5 Since EDX spectra of exudate with SeNPs indicate pure selenium nanoparticles, it is possible
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7 that the reduction pathway of Se^{+4} includes Se-S clusters [54]. Selenate/selenite reduction
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9 mechanisms seem to be strain specific, but one of proposed mechanisms includes interaction
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11 of selenite with sulfur containing tripeptide glutathione in bacteria *Rhodospirillum rubrum*
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13 and *E. coli* in the form of selenodiglutathione [5, 23]. The existence of this compound was
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15 confirmed in fungal endophyte *Alternaria tenuissima* when exposed to both Se^{+4} and Se^{+6}
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17 [55].
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21 Raman spectroscopy of Se^{+6} treated mycelium did not yield results that differed from the
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23 control, confirming that *P. blakesleeanus* mycelium cannot reduce extracellularly added Se^{+6}
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25 to SeNPs under the given experimental conditions. This could be expected to some extent,
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27 having in mind that *P. blakesleeanus* is an aerobic fungus. The same has been documented for
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29 various aerobic bacterial and fungal strains where no activity of selenite reductase has been
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31 established [10]. Biogenic reduction of Se^{+6} is, mostly, linked to dissimilatory reduction, with
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33 Se^{+6} being terminal electron acceptor [56, 57].
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37 The “essential toxin” [1], selenium, is not essential for most fungi, and therefore it can be
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39 assumed that their selenium metabolism is primarily focused on detoxification. This is most
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41 likely the case for *P. blakesleeanus*, judging by the presence of SeNPs on the outside of the
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43 cell wall, and synthesis of volatile DMSe. However, Raman spectra of cytosol extract tell us
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45 that *P. blakesleeanus* internalizes Se^{+4} , and its transformation begins intracellularly, where it
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47 interacts with S containing organic molecules, or initiates formation of $\text{Se}_n\text{S}_{n-2}$ NPs. This is
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49 supported by the XANES spectra of mycelium incubated with low Se^{+4} concentrations. As
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51 EDS suggests pure SeNPs, interaction with S containing organic molecules as a part of Se
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53 reduction pathway is more likely. In yeast, and most other organisms, further transformations
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55 of selenodithiols leads to Se^0 and H_2Se , a major intermediate metabolite involved in the
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3 synthesis pathway of all forms of selenium occurring in microbial cells, including DMSe [58].
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5 However, a number of pathways for biomethylation of selenium have been suggested to date,
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7 including a four step Challengers pathway via methane selenonic acid [54]. Doran [59]
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9 proposed a scheme where methylation of inorganic Se by soil *Corynebacterium* involved the
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11 reduction of SeO_3^- to Se^0 and then a reduction to the selenide. The selenide is then methylated
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13 to form DMSe. Rise in Se^0/DMSe ratio with time in 10 mM Se^{+4} incubated mycelium could
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15 be a simple consequence of DMSe evaporation while Se^0 concentration rises, but also, rise in
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17 insoluble Se^0 concentration makes it more difficult to access for enzymatic methylation [39].
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19 On the other hand, *Alternaria tenuissima* can convert C-Se-C to S^0 [55].
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24 **In conclusion**, our work has shown that Zygomycetous fungus *Phycomyces blakesleanus* can
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26 transform soluble toxic selenite to insoluble innocuous SeNPs and volatile DMSe. The
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28 transformation is at least partially intracellular via selenodithiols such as seleno-diglutathione
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30 or seleno-dicysteine. The precise position of DMSe first inflection point in XANES derivative
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32 spectrum was identified at 12661 eV, and its presence was confirmed by comparison with
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34 spectra of DMSe standard. The dimensions of the obtained nanoparticles promise great
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36 biological potential and are therefore worth further research.
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Figure legends

Fig 1: Mycelium of *P. blakesleeanus* reduces sodium selenite to SeNPs. **a)** 28 h old mycelium of *P. blakesleeanus* supplemented with 2 mM and 10 mM Se^{+4} and incubated for 24 h, C-control; **b)** Separated mycelium and growth medium from Fig 1a; **c)** Washed mycelium from Fig 1a; **d)** fresh medium (M), filtrate of 28 h old mycelium (F) and boiled 28 h old mycelium (BM) supplemented with 10 mM Se^{+4} and incubated for 7 days

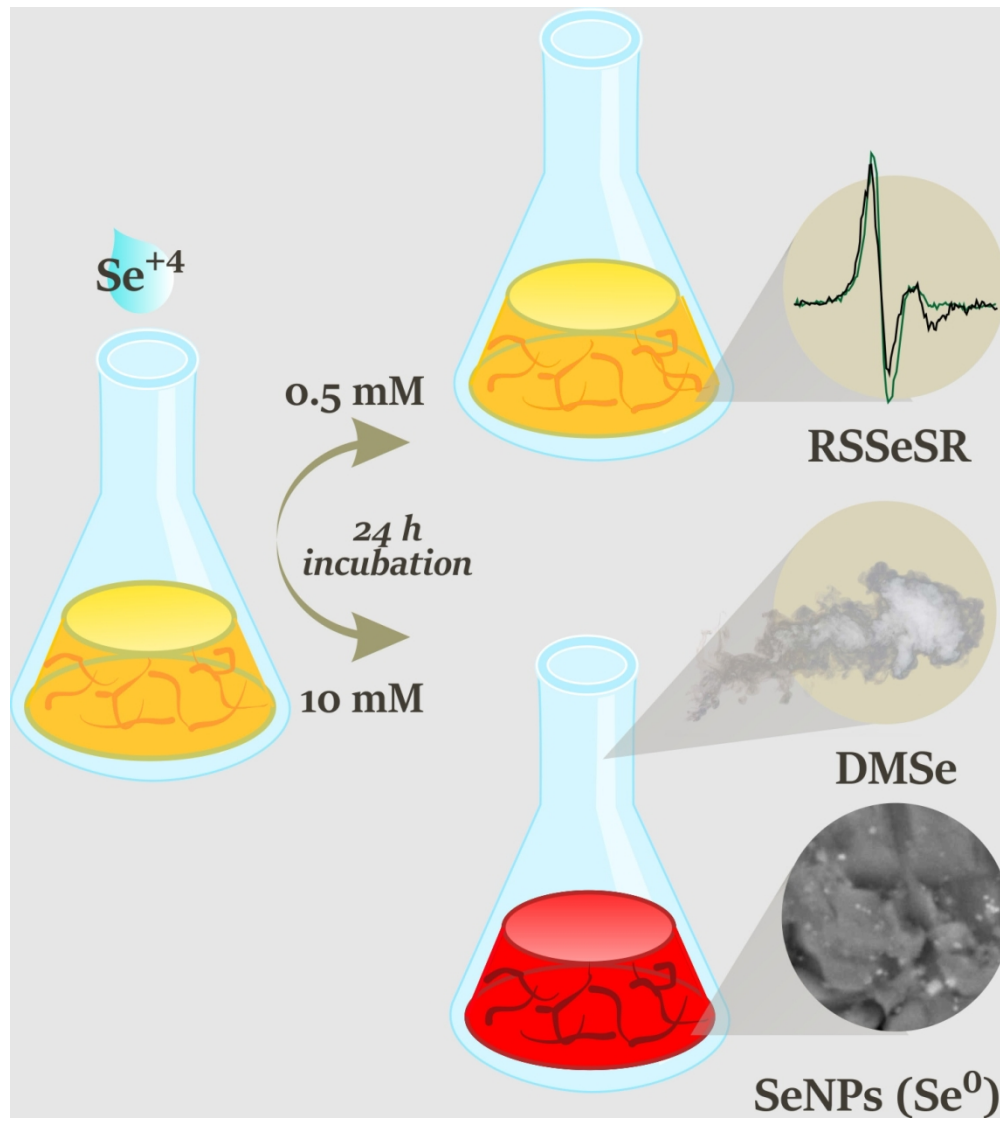
Fig 2. SEM (up) and EDS (down) of a) 28 h old mycelia and b) mycelial exudate treated with 10 mM Se^{+4} for 24 h. SeNPs are indicated by arrows.

Fig 3. Size distribution of SeNPs produced by mycelium of 28 h old *P.blakesleeanus* measured by DLS method. Distribution, given as a function of size vs number of SeNPs in exudate of mycelium, reveals the SeNPs diameter range from 32 to 95 nm.

Fig 4. XANES spectra of *P. blakesleeanus* mycelium treated with Se^{+4} . **a)** reference standards of Se^0 (black), Se^{+4} (blue) vs. mycelium incubated with 0.5 mM Se^{+4} for 24h (green); **b)** the first derivative spectra of Se^0 reference standard and the mycelium treated with Se^{+4} after 1h from treatment; **c)** mycelium incubated with 0.5 mM Se^{+4} for 1h (orange), 3h (purple and 24 h (green); **d)** mycelium incubated with 10 mM Se^{+4} for 24 h (red) vs reference standards of Se^0 (black) and Se^{+4} (blue); **e)** the first derivative spectra of Se^0 , Se^{+4} and DMSe reference standards vs mycelium treated for 24 h with 10 mM Se^{+4} ; **f)** the first derivative spectra of mycelium treated for 1h, 3h and 24 h with 10 mM Se^{+4} .

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3 **Fig 5. Raman spectra of *P blakesleeaus* treated with 10 mM Se⁺⁴ for 28 h. a)** spectra of
4 mycelium (green) with most intensive band at 255 cm⁻¹, characteristic for vibrational bands of
5 SeNPs, and soluble fraction (red) with broad band at 354 cm⁻¹, most probably derived from
6 the intracellular interaction between Se and sulfur containing protein components; **b)**
7 deconvolution of main mycelial band at 255 cm⁻¹ reveals predominantly monoclinic Se₈
8 chains, together with trigonal Se polymer chain, Se₈ and Se₆ ring structures.
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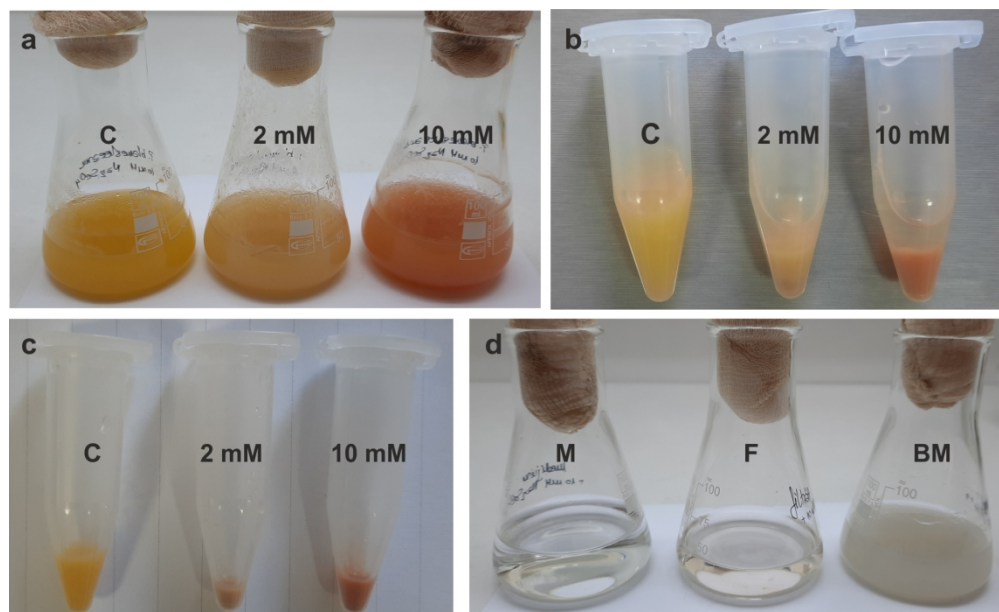


Fig 1: Mycelium of *P. blakesleeanus* reduces sodium selenite to SeNPs. a) 28 h old mycelium of *P. blakesleeanus* supplemented with 2 mM and 10 mM Se+4 and incubated for 24 h, C-control; b) Separated mycelium and growth medium from Fig 1a; c) Washed mycelium from Fig 1a; d) fresh medium (M), filtrate of 28 h old mycelium (F) and boiled 28 h old mycelium (BM) supplemented with 10 mM Se+4 and incubated for 7 days.

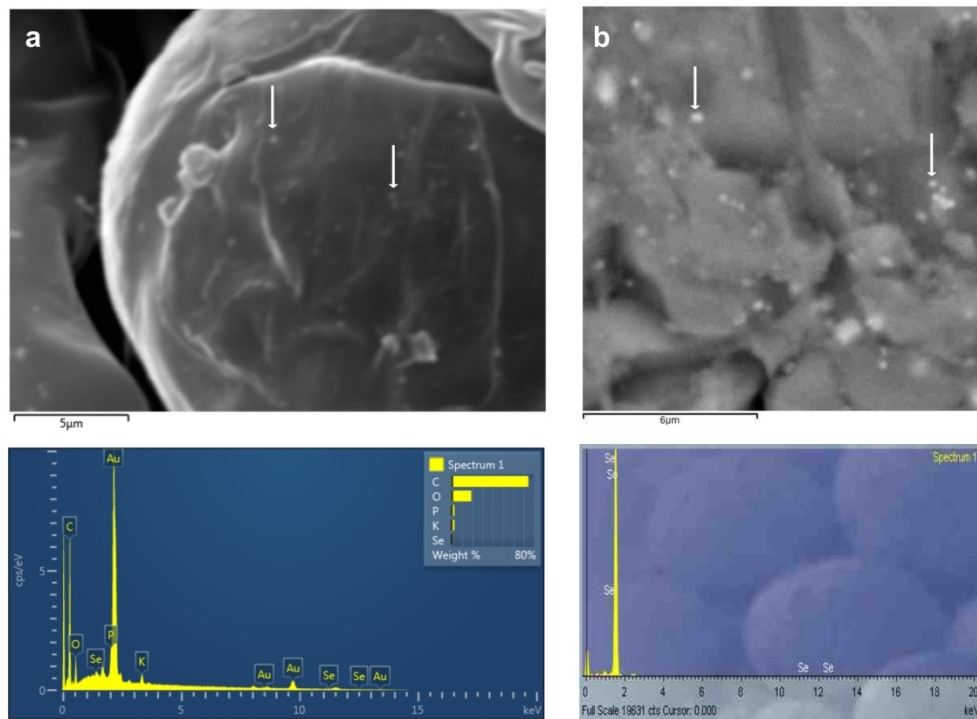


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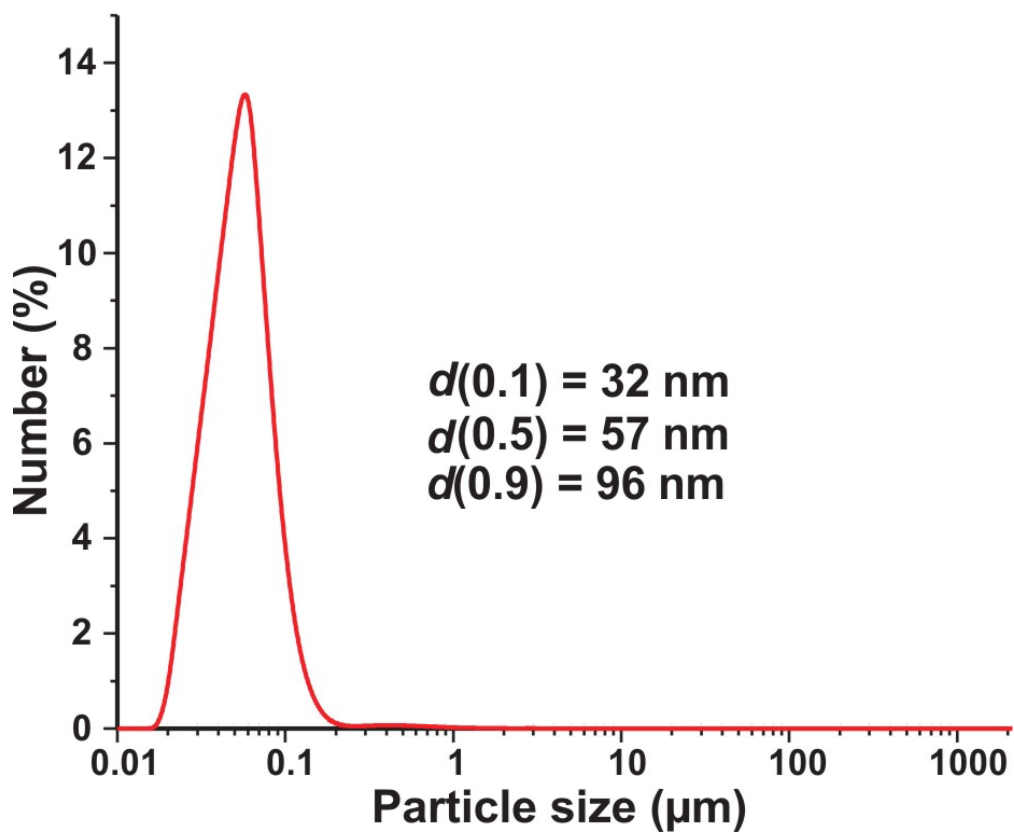


Fig 3. Size distribution of SeNPs produced by mycelium of 28 h old *P.blakesleeanus* measured by DLS method. Distribution, given as a function of size vs number of SeNPs in exudate of mycelium, reveals the SeNPs diameter range from 32 to 95 nm.

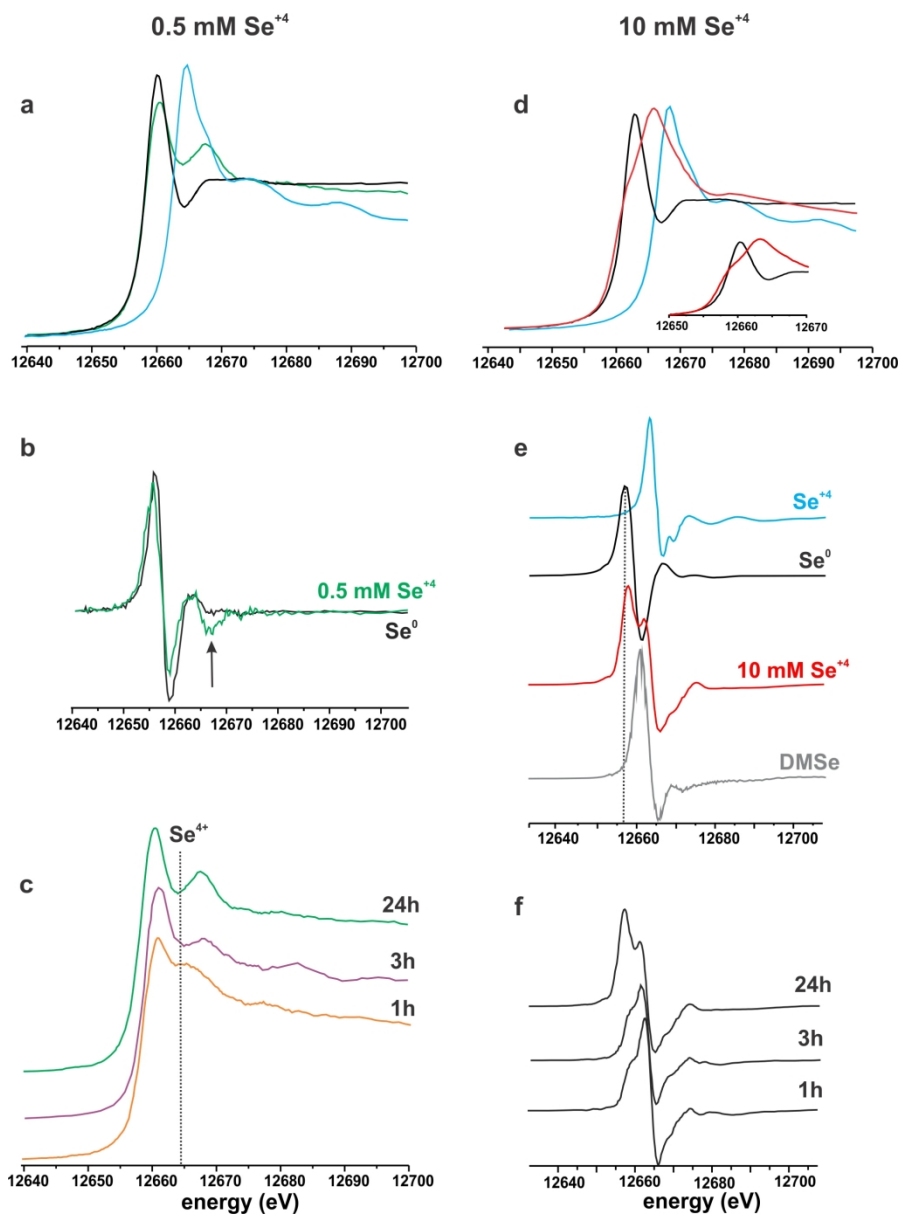


Fig 4. XANES spectra of *P. blakesleeanus* mycelium treated with Se+4. a) reference standards of Se0 (black), Se+4 (blue) vs. mycelium incubated with 0.5 mM Se+4 for 24 h (green); b) the first derivative spectra of Se0 reference standard and the mycelium treated with Se+4 after 1h from treatment; c) mycelium incubated with 0.5 mM Se+4 for 1h (orange), 3h (purple) and 24 h (green); d) mycelium incubated with 10 mM Se+4 for 24 h (red) vs reference standards of Se0 (black) and Se+4 (blue); e) the first derivative spectra of Se0, Se+4 and DMSe reference standards vs mycelium treated for 24 h with 10 mM Se+4; f) the first derivative spectra of mycelium treated for 1h, 3h and 24 h with 10 mM Se+4.

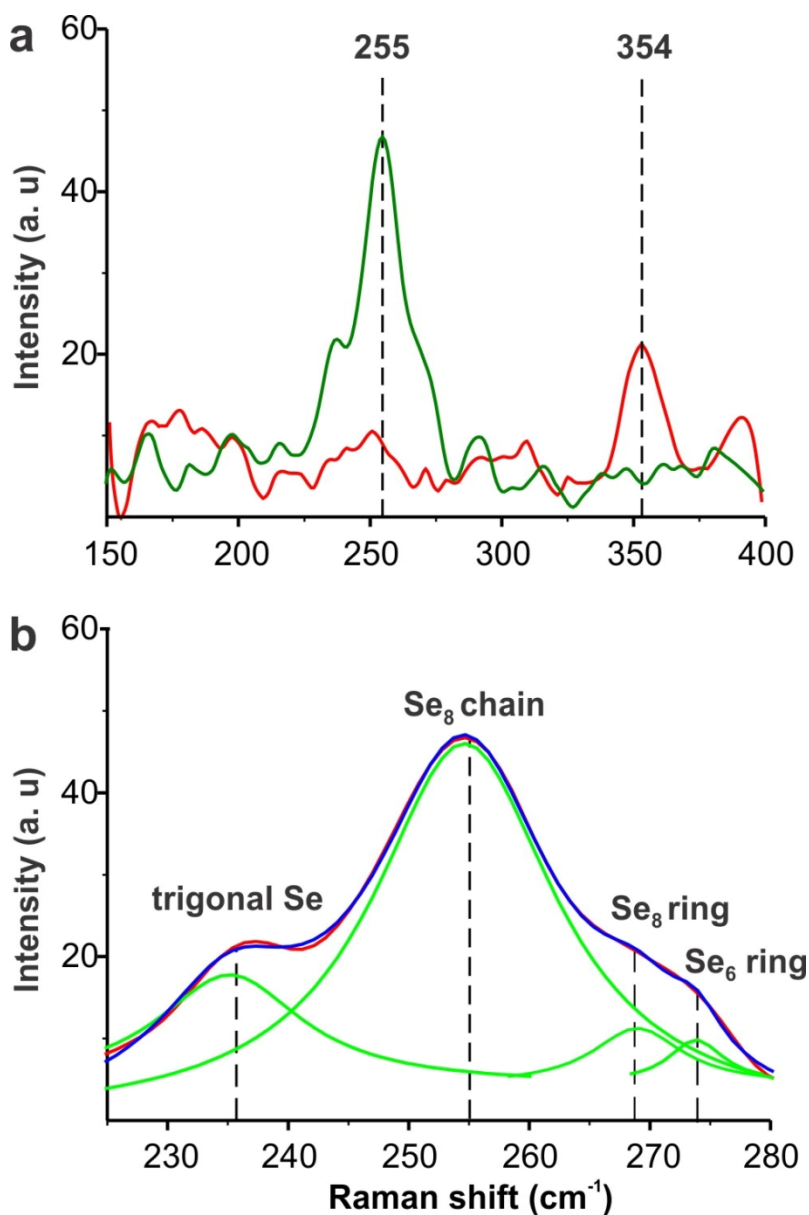


Fig 5. Raman spectra of *P. blakesleeanus* treated with 10 mM Se⁴⁺ for 28 h. a) spectra of mycelium (green) with most intensive band at 255 cm⁻¹, characteristic for vibrational bands of SeNPs, and soluble fraction (red) with broad band at 354 cm⁻¹, most probably derived from the intracellular interaction between Se and sulfur containing protein components; b) deconvolution of main mycelial band at 255 cm⁻¹ reveals predominantly monoclinic Se₈ chains, together with trigonal Se polymer chain, Se₈ and Se₆ ring structures.