



# Emission of volatile halogenated compounds, speciation and localization of bromine and iodine in the brown algal genome model *Ectocarpus siliculosus*

Frithjof C. Küpper<sup>1,2</sup> · Eric P. Miller<sup>3</sup> · Stephen J. Andrews<sup>4</sup> · Claire Hughes<sup>5</sup> · Lucy J. Carpenter<sup>4</sup> · Wolfram Meyer-Klaucke<sup>6</sup> · Chiaki Toyama<sup>7</sup> · Yasuyuki Muramatsu<sup>8</sup> · Martin C. Feiters<sup>9</sup> · Carl J. Carrano<sup>3</sup>

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## Abstract

This study explores key features of bromine and iodine metabolism in the filamentous brown alga and genomics model *Ectocarpus siliculosus*. Both elements are accumulated in *Ectocarpus*, albeit at much lower concentration factors (2–3 orders of magnitude for iodine, and < 1 order of magnitude for bromine) than e.g. in the kelp *Laminaria digitata*. Iodide competitively reduces the accumulation of bromide. Both iodide and bromide are accumulated in the cell wall (apoplast) of *Ectocarpus*, with minor amounts of bromine also detectable in the cytosol. *Ectocarpus* emits a range of volatile halogenated compounds, the most prominent of which by far is methyl iodide. Interestingly, biosynthesis of this compound cannot be accounted for by vanadium haloperoxidase since the latter have not been found to catalyze direct halogenation of an unactivated methyl group or hydrocarbon so a methyl halide transferase-type production mechanism is proposed.

**Keywords** Energy-dispersive X-ray analysis · Halocarbons · Methyl iodide · Phaeophyta · X-ray absorption spectroscopy

## Abbreviations

CCAP Culture Collection of Algae and Protozoa  
DOM Dissolved organic matter  
EDX Energy-dispersive X-ray analysis  
EPR Electron paramagnetic resonance

EXAFS Extended X-ray absorption fine structure  
GG Oligo-gulonates  
ICP-MS Inductively coupled plasma-mass spectrometry  
NIST National Institute of Standards and Technology  
PMA Phorbol myristate acetate  
vBPO Vanadium bromoperoxidase  
vIPO Vanadium iodoperoxidase  
VHPO Vanadium haloperoxidase  
XAS X-ray absorption spectroscopy

This article is dedicated to the memory of Yasuyuki Muramatsu (January 9, 1950–July 2, 2016), a dear friend and outstanding scientist in the fields of Radioecology, Radiochemistry, Geochemistry and Analytical Chemistry in Japan, who untimely passed away during the writing of this article, and to Alison Butler (University of California, Santa Barbara) on the occasion of her Bader Award.

✉ Frithjof C. Küpper  
fkuepper@abdn.ac.uk

<sup>1</sup> Oceanlab, University of Aberdeen, Main Street, Newburgh AB41 6AA, Scotland, UK

<sup>2</sup> Dunstaffnage Marine Laboratory, Scottish Association for Marine Science, Oban, Argyll PA37 1QA, Scotland, UK

<sup>3</sup> Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA 92182-1030, USA

<sup>4</sup> Wolfson Atmospheric Chemistry Laboratories, Department of Chemistry, University of York, York YO10 5DD, UK

<sup>5</sup> Environment Department, University of York, York YO10 5NG, UK

<sup>6</sup> Department of Chemistry - Inorganic Chemistry, Faculty of Science, University of Paderborn, Warburger Strasse 100, 33098 Paderborn, Germany

<sup>7</sup> Geological Survey of Japan, The National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST), Tsukuba, Ibaraki 305-8567, Japan

<sup>8</sup> Department of Chemistry, Faculty of Science, Gakushuin University, Toshima-Ku, Tokyo 171-8588, Japan

<sup>9</sup> Department of Organic Chemistry, Institute for Molecules and Materials, Radboud University Nijmegen, Heyendaalseweg 135, 6525 AJ Nijmegen, The Netherlands

## Introduction

Two centuries ago, the elements bromine and iodine were discovered in sea water and seaweed (*Laminaria* and *Fucus*) ashes, respectively [1, 2]. Due to their unique evolutionary history and phylogenetic distance from other important eukaryotic lineages [3, 4], brown algae present some remarkable chemical and physiological adaptations which are also reflected at the genome level [5], making them fascinating experimental models, not only for phycologists, but for a community of interdisciplinary researchers. This includes the function of iodide as extracellular antioxidant protecting the surface of *Laminaria digitata* (Hudson) Lamouroux against oxidative stress [6]. Indeed, *L. digitata* is the strongest iodine accumulator currently known among living organisms [7]. In fact, this constituted the first documented case of an inorganic antioxidant in a living system—and the chemically simplest antioxidant known. Key to the antioxidant function is the mobilization of iodide in the apoplast and its efflux into the surrounding seawater upon oxidative stress [6, 8]. In this context, communities of the giant kelp *Macrocystis* have been found to impact iodine speciation in coastal sea water [9]. The role of bromine is less well investigated, but a recent study [10] highlights that *Laminaria* accumulates bromide, which complements iodide as an antioxidant especially for the detoxification of superoxide, but with an overall more diverse role.

In contrast to kelps such as *Laminaria* and *Macrocystis*, which have a large size (up to around 3 m for *Laminaria*, and 70 m for *Macrocystis*, respectively), very complex morphology and which can attain a high standing stock in rocky coastal seabed ecosystems, *Ectocarpus* is a genus of filamentous brown algae with a worldwide distribution along temperate coastlines, and is a nuisance as a “fouling” organism on many man-made surfaces in the sea. It has some significant advantages as an experimental model compared to *Laminaria* or *Macrocystis* and constitutes one of the best-studied seaweeds [11, 12]: due to its small size of only a few mm or cm and its fast growth it can easily be cultivated in small volumes of seawater media both axenically and with associated bacteria [13]; it belongs to a sister group of the ecologically and economically very important kelps [14]; its entire, well-known life cycle can be completed within a few months in culture, many molecular tools are available, including mutant collections, microarrays and proteomics. It has also become the first seaweed of which the entire genome has been sequenced and thus offers unprecedented opportunities for study [5]. Features of its inorganic biochemistry include a remarkable, non-ferritin mode of iron storage [15]. *Ectocarpus* is also well studied with regards to its pathologies which

include viruses [16, 17], fungi [18], oomycetes [18] and plasmodiophoraleans [19].

While brown algae of the genus *Laminaria* are the strongest accumulators of iodine in life on Earth [20–22] and a major contributor to the biogeochemical flux of iodine [23] and, to a lesser extent, of brominated and iodinated halocarbons to the atmosphere [24], hardly anything is known about *Ectocarpus* in this respect. This is remarkable considering the major role of brown algae in global halogen cycling, but also how well other areas of physiology and biochemistry have been studied in *Ectocarpus*. However, a single gene of a vanadium haloperoxidase (VHPO) and a number of enzymes related to halogen metabolism have been identified in the *Ectocarpus* genome. This includes at least three different families (21 loci) of haloacid dehalogenase (HAD) and two haloalkane dehalogenase families [5, 25]. It is tempting to hypothesize that the dehalogenases protect *Ectocarpus* against halocarbons which act as alkylating, toxic agents and are being produced by kelps and other potential substrate algae on which *Ectocarpus* occurs. The presence of a single VHPO gene, a bromoperoxidase, in the *Ectocarpus* genome contrasts with the presence of multigenic families of VHPOs, of both bromo- and iodoperoxidases in the kelps *Laminaria* [26, 27] and *Macrocystis* [28].

The uptake of iodide from seawater in *Laminaria* involves VHPOs [21] and its strongest accumulation in this species seems to be linked to the presence of a particular VHPO subclass, the iodoperoxidases, specific for iodide oxidation [26, 27]. In *Laminaria*, most of the iodine is accumulated in the apoplast of the cortical cell layer [29].

The first line of defense against pathogens in *Laminaria* is an oxidative burst [30], which is considered a central element of eukaryotic defense in general [31] and which, in the case of kelp species, serves to control bacterial biofilms [32]. Among its triggers are oligogulonates (GG; [30, 32]), bacterial lipopolysaccharides [33], prostaglandin A<sub>2</sub> [34], methyl jasmonate, and polyunsaturated free fatty acids [35]. In *L. digitata*, early transcriptional defense responses are similar to those in land plants but also involve tightly regulated halogen metabolism which might play roles in more sophisticated chemical defense reactions including distance signaling [36, 37]. In brown algae, bromide and VHPOs have also been shown to catalyze oxidative cross-linking between cell wall polymers, suggesting a role in spore and gamete adhesion and cell-wall strengthening (for reviews see [38, 39]). Much less is known about defense mechanisms in *Ectocarpus*. Recent studies observed strong differences in susceptibility to infection by *Eurychasma dicksonii* among different *Ectocarpus* strains [40], and *Eurychasma* infection [41] as well as Cu stress [42] were found to result in overexpression of the single VHPO encoded in the *Ectocarpus* genome.

In our previous studies [6, 10, 43], X-ray absorption spectroscopy (XAS) has proven to be a suitable, non-invasive tool to probe the chemical state and solution environment of accumulated iodine and bromine in kelps. Likewise, we have used energy-dispersive X-ray analysis (EDX) for localization studies of Fe in *Ectocarpus* [44].

Following our recent study which included *Ectocarpus* among a number of taxa from various algal lineages [43], this study explores the speciation and localization of bromine and iodine metabolism in *Ectocarpus*. First iodine and bromine levels in *Ectocarpus* are determined using ICP-MS. Then the localization of bromine and iodine is investigated using energy-dispersive analysis of X-rays. K-edge XAS is applied to probe the stored chemical state of these elements under different physiological conditions in vivo (both in healthy cultures and in the presence of the oomycete *Eurychasma dicksonii*). Finally, the production of volatile halo-carbons is explored.

## Materials and methods

### Biological material

A well-characterized strain of *E. siliculosus* which had served for sequencing the *Ectocarpus* genome [5] was obtained from the Culture Collection of Algae and Protozoa (CCAP 1310/4) and was used for all experiments described here. *Ectocarpus* was grown in half-strength Provasoli-enriched sea water as described previously [13, 45, 46], i.e. at 18.

*Eurychasma*-infected, unialgal host cultures were grown as described previously [13, 46], i.e. at 15 °C, illumination by 20 to 30  $\mu\text{E m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$  from daylight type fluorescent lamps for 16 h day<sup>-1</sup>. In a first experiment, about equal amounts (about 50 mg fresh weight each) of 6 *Ectocarpus* strains (Ec sil NZ Vic KU13/CCAP 1310/56, Ec fas Irl96 23-1n/CCAP 1310/342, Ec sil NZ4a3♀/CCAP 1310/47, Ec sil Vic88 12-1 lat. sp./CCAP 1310/185, Ec sil Vic Z2 lat. sp./CCAP 1310/191, Ec sil vic Z1 lat sp./CCAP 1310/192) infected by *Eurychasma* 96 [CCAP 4018/2, isolated from Shetland [18, 47] which had been cultured for about 6 months were pooled and used for XAS (below). In a second set of experiments, the following host–pathogen strain combinations were used: the host strains *E. siliculosus* (CCAP 1310/4, the genome model strain used by [5]), *E. siliculosus* (CCAP 1310/56, Ecsil NZ KU 1-3♂), *E. fasciculatus* (Ec fas Ros 007-04), *Pylaiella littoralis* (CCAP 1330/3, Pyl IR g), either without any *Eurychasma* infection, or infected with *E. dicksonii* Eury 96 (CCAP 4018/2) or *E. dicksonii* Eury 05 (CCAP 4018/1), respectively. Algal host strains (which included a close relative of *Ectocarpus*, *Pylaiella littoralis*) were initially cultured for 55 days on their own. Then, the above *Eurychasma*

inocula were added and cultures were continued for another 30 days. Host–pathogen co-cultures were then harvested, placed in Kapton™ cells, and frozen in liquid nitrogen until use for XAS.

### ICP-MS analysis of total iodine and bromine

Iodine and bromine contents in freeze-dried *Ectocarpus* filament samples were analyzed by ICP-MS after pyrohydrolysis separation as described previously [48, 49]. Concentrations obtained are given in ppm (i.e.  $\mu\text{g halogen g}^{-1}$  of freeze-dried material).

### Energy-dispersive analysis of X-rays

*Ectocarpus siliculosus* was harvested from cultures prior to fixation, dehydration, and embedding. Filaments were fixed in a 0.1 M phosphate buffer solution containing 2% (w/v) paraformaldehyde, 1% (w/v) glutaraldehyde, and 1% (w/v) caffeine for 2 h. The fixed cells were then washed with 0.1 M phosphate buffer and dehydrated in successive ethanol baths of 30, 50, 75, 85, 95, and 100% (three times). The cells were then embedded in 1:1 (v/v) ethanol/LR White resin (LWR; EMS, Hatfield, PA, USA) for 3 h followed by 100% LWR overnight in gelatin capsules under vacuum. Sections of 3  $\mu\text{m}$  were cut on a Leica EMUC6 microtome and deposited on glass slides. Slides were coated with platinum in a Quorum Technologies Q150T ES sputter coater. platinum-coated samples were analyzed under high vacuum in a Quanta 450 FEG environmental scanning electron microscope (ESEM) equipped with an Oxford Instruments INCA energy dispersive X-ray (EDX) microanalysis system.

### X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy

*Ectocarpus* filaments were washed briefly with 100  $\mu\text{M}$  ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA) followed by distilled water to mitigate calcium ion interference in the fluorescence spectrum. Washed filaments were placed on Ultralene™ film (Spex Sample Prep, USA), allowed to dry, and then placed in the GEOCARS X-ray beam of the Advanced Photon Source at Argonne National Laboratory (Lemont, IL).

The selected region of interest was rastered at a resolution of 2  $\mu\text{m}$  with an X-ray beam energy of 5.0 keV, flux of  $1.206 \times 10^{12}$  photons  $\text{s}^{-1}$ , and dwell time of 20 ms pixel<sup>-1</sup>. The resulting iodine  $L_{\beta 1}$  X-ray fluorescence signal was mapped using the Larch Mapviewer™ software version 0.9.32 [50]. By virtue of the intensity and broadness of the Ca  $K_{\beta 1}$  signal, calcium ion interference precluded mapping of both the iodine  $L_{\alpha 1}$  and  $L_{\beta 1}$  fluorescent signals from untreated *Ectocarpus* filaments. Only after EDTA washing was the I  $L_{\beta 1}$  signal resolved from Ca  $K_{\beta 1}$ , while the I  $L_{\alpha 1}$

remained confounded by calcium due to proximity of their respective fluorescent energies.

### X-ray absorption spectroscopy

Bromine and iodine K-edge XAS measurements and extended X-ray absorption fine structure (EXAFS) data reduction were carried out at the EMBL Outstation Hamburg at DESY, Germany as described previously [51].

### Halocarbons

*Ectocarpus* was sub-cultured into three 1 L flasks filled to 800 mL with sterilized coastal seawater enriched with Guillard's F/2. Three identical flasks of the media (excluding the *Ectocarpus* culture) were incubated as controls. Incubation conditions were 20 °C at 100  $\mu\text{mol m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$  and a 12:12 light/dark cycle. Flasks were stoppered with sterilized cotton in hessian plugs and covered with foil.

For *Ectocarpus* emission experiments, the solid contents of a culture flask was divided into two 200 mL flasks, filled completely to eliminate headspace with purged, filtered seawater obtained from the Atlantic Ocean at 3000 m depth and sealed with glass stoppers. A third flask was prepared without *Ectocarpus* addition as a control. The flasks were stored at 15 °C in the dark, sampled and immediately analyzed every 2 h over a 12 h period. 10 mL sample aliquots were taken each time using autoclaved perfluoroalkoxy (PFA) tubing into borosilicate gas syringes, filtered through a standard glass-fiber filter (GFF) and 10 mL of blank seawater added to compensate and eliminate the headspace. The blank seawater used was continuously purged throughout the course of the experiment to minimize VOC content. At the end of the 12 h period the flasks were filtered and the solid mass of *Ectocarpus* recorded. This was then allowed to air dry and the dry weight was recorded. For investigating the effects of oxidative stress, the experiment was performed as described above except for the addition of 2 mM  $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$  to simulate oxidative stress.

10 mL sample aliquots were analysed using purge and trap coupled to thermal desorption–gas chromatography—time of flight mass spectrometry (P&T-TD-GC-TOFMS, Markes Unity2 CIA8 TDU, Agilent 6890, Markes Bench-Tof MS) with a custom built purge and trap unit [52]. The TOF-MS allowed high sensitivity monitoring of all ions from 35 to 500 amu simultaneously. Halocarbons were calibrated using NOAA standard SX-3570, accounting for the purge and trap efficiencies of each gas [52]. The control flask was analysed first at each time point to check for carry-over in the analysis and/or production in the blank seawater. No significant change in the analysed VOC content of the blank seawater was observed throughout the emission experiments.

## Results

### Total halogen levels (ICP-MS)

Initially, halogen levels in cultured *Ectocarpus* were determined in order to establish whether there is any significant accumulation of iodine and bromine in this organism. Freeze-dried thalli of the brown alga *Ectocarpus siliculosus* cultivated in normal PES medium contained mean concentrations of  $196 \pm 11$  ppm iodine and  $738 \pm 3$  ppm bromine. In contrast, freeze-dried *Ectocarpus siliculosus* thalli cultivated in PES medium supplemented with 50  $\mu\text{M}$  KI contained  $804 \pm 3$  ppm iodine, but only  $186 \pm 3$  ppm bromine.

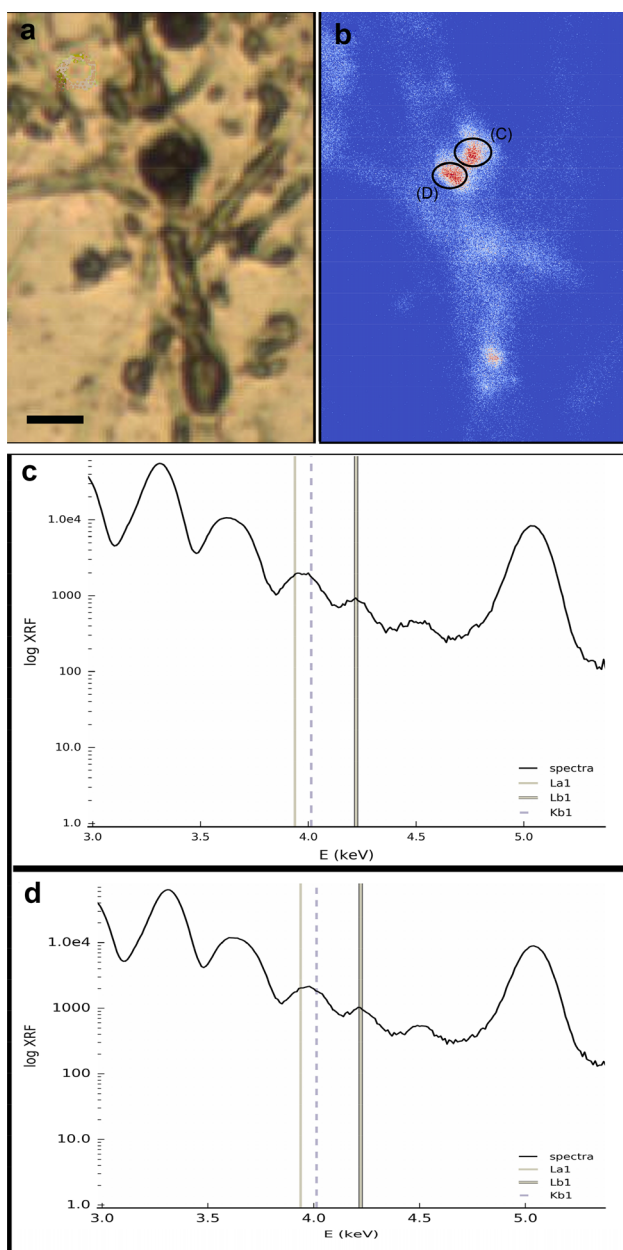
### Localization of halogens (EDX and XFS)

Next, the localization of halogens was explored in order to get first insight into potential function. Based on XFS and EDX, most iodine was concentrated in physode-like vesicles (Fig. 1), even though some was also detectable in the cytosol and/or apoplast (Fig. 2). The EDX signal from bromine (Fig. 2) was considerably weaker than that of iodine, showing some localization to the apoplast, cytosol, and possibly intracellular structures (Fig. 2).

### XAS

XAS is the method of choice for determining the chemical environment and redox state of halogens in seaweeds [51]. The X-ray Absorption Near-Edge spectra (XANES) at the Br K-edge in Fig. 3 show that non-infected *Ectocarpus* (trace C) is quite similar to an aqueous solution of NaBr (trace D); it appears that Br is present in *Ectocarpus* as hydrated bromide [43]. The spectrum of *Ectocarpus siliculosus* infected with *Eurychasma dicksonii* (trace B) is subtly different and resembles more that of Br incorporated in an aromatic system, such as in the model compound 4-bromophenylalanine (trace A). The spectra show that in uninfected algae, bromine is present in its reduced anionic form, bromide, whereas upon infection prevailing over several months, incorporation of a major fraction into organic compounds occurs, concomitant with general senescence of the cultures. However, this was not detectable in experiments with a shorter time span of infective pressure.

It was shown earlier [43, 51] that the Extended X-ray Absorption Fine Structure (EXAFS) of hydrated bromide could be simulated with a shell of oxygen atoms at approx. 3.3 Å; although the hydrogen atoms cannot be observed in EXAFS, it can be safely assumed that these oxygens are non-covalently bound to bromide by hydrogen bonds. For non-infected *Ectocarpus* this is the only contribution (Fig. 4a, b, bottom trace in both panels, attempts to simulate the weaker



**Fig. 1** **a** Optical image of *Ectocarpus* filaments; **b** heat map of iodine  $L_{\beta 1}$  fluorescence intensity with two regions of interest showing high iodine concentrations; **c**, **d** fluorescence spectra for regions of interest from **b**. Light and dashed vertical lines denote  $I L_{\alpha 1}$  and  $Ca K_{\beta 1}$  signals, respectively. Dark vertical lines represent the  $I L_{\beta 1}$  signal. These are whole, intact filaments (not a section). The two circled regions of interest are probably physodes at the junction of the main filament and a branched filament. Scale bar = 10  $\mu$ m

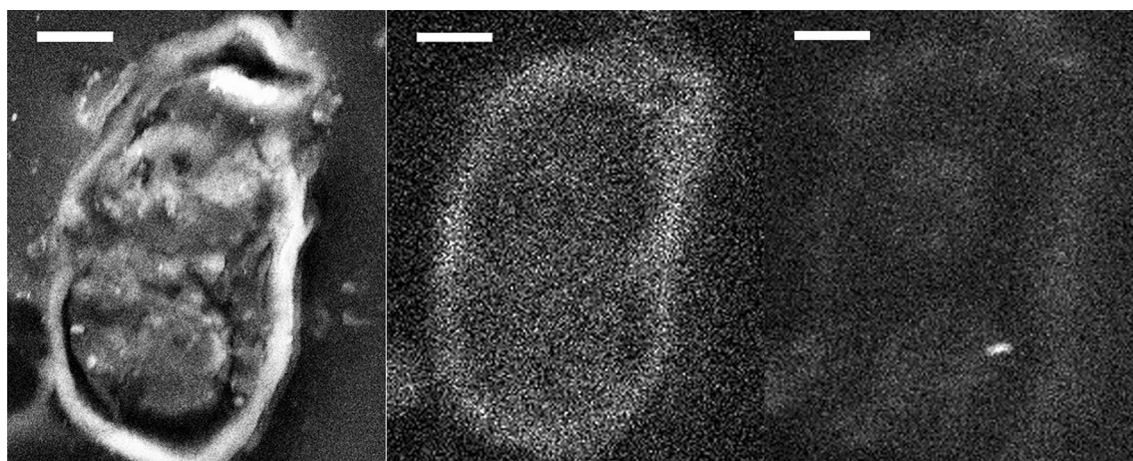
peaks in the Fourier transform did not lead to significant improvements). For infected *Ectocarpus* (Fig. 4a, b, top traces in both panels) the carbon peak in the Fourier transform is the strongest, and the pattern of peaks is reminiscent of that of aromatic amino acids such as 4-bromophenylalanine and 3,5-dibromotyrosine. The Br–C distance found

in the simulation with both a phenyl group and a shell of H-bonded heteroatoms is 1.90 Å, which is in between the ranges considered typical for bonds with  $sp^2$  (1.87–1.88 Å) and  $sp^3$  (1.92–1.96 Å) C; the good agreement between experiment and simulation for the other atoms of the phenyl ring strongly indicates  $sp^2$  C in this case (Table 1). For the incorporation of Br in organic compounds to be observed by XAS, it is necessary that the infection lasts for a prolonged duration of time (> 1 month in a batch culture); experiments in which the infection was left for only 3 weeks did not result in EXAFS other than that of hydrated bromide.

The iodine K-edge spectra (Fig. 5) showed hardly any characteristic features. The EXAFS was so weak that it could not be reliably extracted. The XANES of non-infected *Ectocarpus* (Fig. 5, trace C) remotely resembles that of an aqueous solution of NaI (trace E) and probably represents iodide in the form of  $I^-$ . In its lack of features it resembles the XANES of lyophilized *Laminaria* [6] which contains iodide surrounded by a rather disordered shell of hydrogen-bonded heteroatoms, probably from biomolecules rather than water. Addition of 50  $\mu$ M iodate (trace B) resulted in an increase of the edge step by a factor of approx. 2 prior to normalization (not shown). This addition did however not result in a significant change in the appearance of the edge, as might have been expected on the basis of the spectrum of pure iodate (trace A), suggesting that the added iodate is reduced to iodide upon contact with *Ectocarpus*. Addition of 50  $\mu$ M iodide (trace D) resulted in a much larger edge step prior to normalization (not shown), viz. by a factor of 5. The resulting spectrum is featureless like that of the control, except for the more pronounced shoulder at 33,230 eV. In spite of the addition of a considerable amount of hydrated iodide, the features are not as sharp as that of the NaI solution (trace E). This implies that the iodide was taken up by *Ectocarpus* and that a relatively ordered hydration shell was replaced by biomolecules.

## Emission of volatile compounds

In virtually all other seaweed species studied, halogen metabolism comes with the emission of volatile halogenated compounds [7, 24]. In the present study of *Ectocarpus*, the most predominant emission from the list of calibrated species ( $CH_3I$ ,  $CH_2BrCl$ ,  $CHCl_3$ ,  $CCl_4$ ,  $CH_2Br_2$ ,  $CHBrCl_2$ ,  $CH_2ICl$ ,  $CHBr_2Cl$ ,  $CH_2IBr$ ,  $CHBr_3$ ) was methyl iodide ( $CH_3I$ ), which was markedly enhanced under oxidative stress conditions with a production rate of  $1.16 \times 10^{-5}$  pmol (g FW  $\times$  min) $^{-1}$  when exposed to 2 mM  $H_2O_2$  compared to  $5.98 \times 10^{-6}$  pmol (g FW  $\times$  min) $^{-1}$  under control conditions during the first 2 h of the experiment (after which production leveled off, cf. Fig. 6). The % relative



**Fig. 2** SEM image of an *E. siliculosus* section (left), EDX map of iodine (middle), and EDX map of bromine (right). Scale bar = 5  $\mu\text{m}$ . This is a cross-section of a filament that had been fixed, dehydrated,

embedded in acrylic, sectioned with a microtome, and coated with platinum before performing EDX

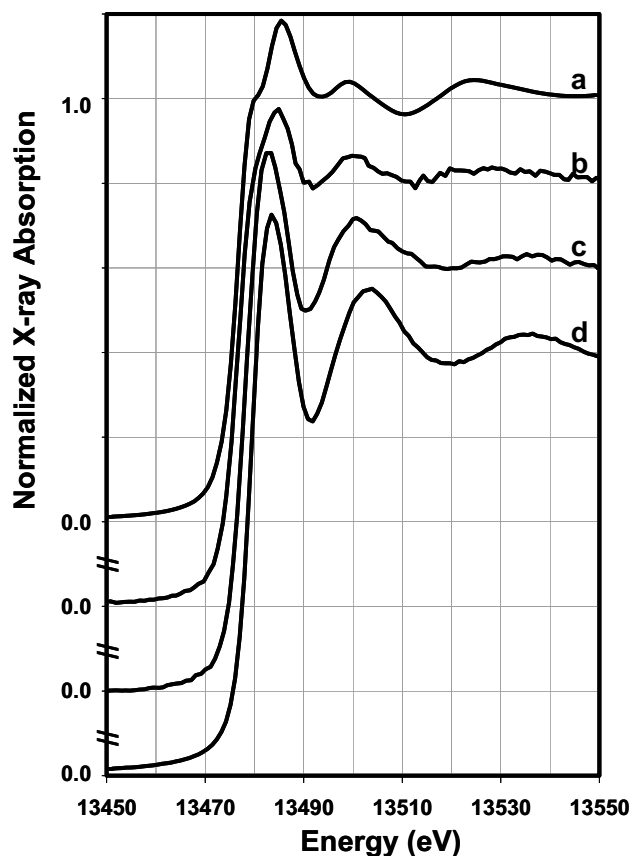
standard deviation for  $\text{CH}_3\text{I}$  for this system is 9.4% [52]. No appreciable production of bromocarbons was observed. Many other non-halogenated species, mostly oxygenated, were detected (but calibrations were not available) based on similarities with NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) Mass Spectral Library spectra including acetone, isopropyl alcohol, 2-methyl propanol, butanal, 2-butanone, hexane, 3-methyl 2-butanone, 2-pentanone, pentanal, 3-methyl 2-pentanone, 3-methyl pentanal, 2-hexanone, hexanal, 4-methyl 2-hexanone, 3-heptanone, heptanal, 2-methyl 4-heptanone, 3-methyl 4-heptanone, 4-methyl 2-heptanone, 5-methyl 3-heptanone, 6-methyl 2-heptanone, 5-methyl 2-heptanone and 2-octanone.

## Discussion

Overall, the results of this study show that *Ectocarpus* has an active bromine and iodine metabolism. Both elements are actively accumulated from surrounding seawater, albeit (especially in the case of iodine) at much lower concentration factors than *Laminaria* [20, 21]: This study observed concentration factors of 714 for iodine and 2.6 for bromine (i.e. 2–3 and < 1 order of magnitude, respectively, based on fresh weight) compared to normal seawater. This compares to up to 5 orders of magnitude for iodine [21] and around 1 order of magnitude for bromine in *Laminaria* [10], and 3–4 orders of magnitude for iodine in *Macrocystis* [28]. Interestingly, artificial iodine supplementation (50  $\mu\text{M}$  KI) in the culture medium resulted in a much lower bromine tissue concentration ( $186 \pm 3$  ppm) than in *Ectocarpus* cultures grown in medium without iodide supplementation ( $738 \pm 3$  ppm). This suggests that iodide and bromide compete for the same uptake and storage system,

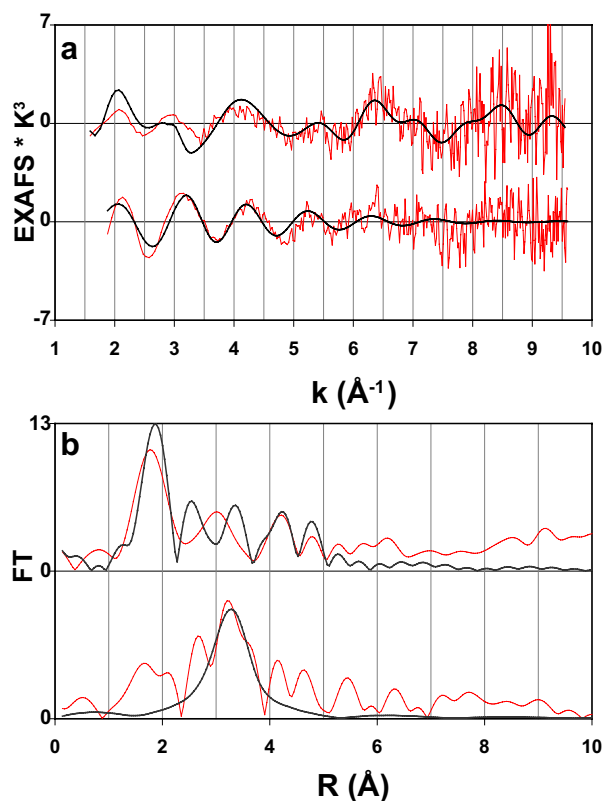
in which the sole V-bromoperoxidase detected in *Ectocarpus* [5, 25] is likely the key driver. Iodide is well established as being the preferred substrate of V haloperoxidases [53], viz. of both bromo- and iodoperoxidases [27]. Our recent work had already shown that *Ectocarpus* accumulates bromide [43], similar to morphologically more complex brown algae (*Laminariales* and *Fucales*). Here, XAS has shown that, like *Laminaria* [6], *Ectocarpus* also accumulates iodine in its reduced form, iodide, bound to H-bonding heteroatoms (O–H, N–H) in biomolecules, with the hydration shell removed, as in lyophilized *Laminaria*. Again, similar to *Laminaria* [29], the present study also shows that *Ectocarpus* accumulates bromide and iodide in the apoplast (iodine storage is exclusively apoplastic, while smaller amounts of bromine can also be detected in the cytosol—Fig. 1). Our observation that the addition of iodate to the *Ectocarpus* growth medium results in an increased (estimated from X-ray absorption intensity) uptake of the element as iodide implies a reduction, which is in line with recent observations concerning the iodine uptake by marine macroalgae [9]. Interestingly, the reductant could be iodide, to form elemental iodine, which may be considered besides HOI to be the neutral species that is formed as an intermediate in VHPO-mediated iodine uptake. According to Küpper & Kroneck [54] the equilibrium is towards disproportionation at high pH and temperature, so that one might argue that starting at lower T and pH with only  $\text{IO}_3^-$  and  $\text{I}^-$ , some  $\text{I}_2$  might be formed by comproportionation, and removed from the equilibrium by uptake in *Ectocarpus* and subsequent reduction, potentially explaining the enhanced iodine uptake upon addition of iodate.

The strong production of methyl iodide ( $\text{CH}_3\text{I}$ ), which was slightly increased under oxidative stress conditions,



**Fig. 3** Br K-edge XANES. Bromine K-edge X-ray absorption edge spectra of *Ectocarpus* and relevant model compounds: **a** 4-bromophenylalanine (aq., from [51]); **b** *Ectocarpus siliculosus* infected with *Eurychasma dicksonii*; **c** non-infected *Ectocarpus siliculosus*, and **d** NaBr (10 mM, aq., from [51])

is remarkable and stands out among macroalgae. Production of this compound cannot be accounted for by the V bromoperoxidase present in *Ectocarpus* (which can, at least in theory, account for the production of  $\text{CH}_2\text{BrCl}$ ,  $\text{CHCl}_3$ ,  $\text{CCl}_4$ ,  $\text{CH}_2\text{Br}_2$ ,  $\text{CHBrCl}_2$ ,  $\text{CH}_2\text{ICl}$ ,  $\text{CHBr}_2\text{Cl}$ ,  $\text{CH}_2\text{IBr}$ ,  $\text{CHBr}_3$ ), catalysis of which results in compounds with multiple halogenations on the same carbon atom. It is worth noting that some of the methyl ketones observed here (2-butanone, 3-methyl 2-butanone, 2-pentanone, 3-methyl 2-pentanone, 2-hexanone, 4-methyl 2-hexanone, 4-methyl



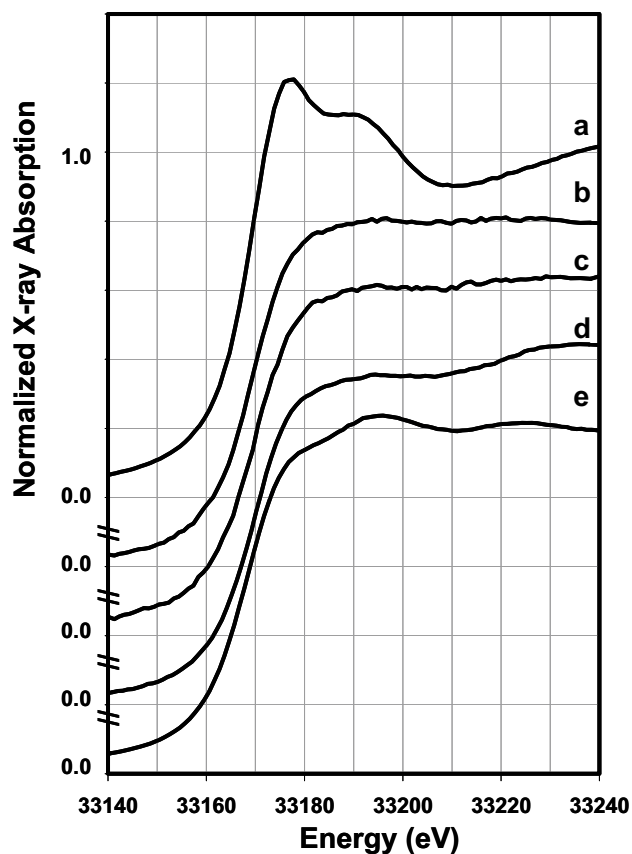
**Fig. 4** Experimental (red) and simulated (black)  $k^3$ -weighted Br K-edge EXAFS (**a**) and its Fourier transform (**b**) of (top traces) *Ectocarpus siliculosus* infected with *Eurychasma dicksonii*, and (bottom traces) non-infected *Ectocarpus siliculosus*. Simulation parameters are given in Table 1

2-heptanone, 6-methyl 2-heptanone, 5-methyl 2-heptanone and 2-octanone) would be good starting materials for the haloform reaction [55, 56] that we proposed recently [43], which could account for the trihalomethanes listed above.

Instead, it is tempting to hypothesize that an *S*-adenosyl-methionine-dependent methyl transferase-type mechanism is operative here, similar to that described for methyl halide transferase, a class of enzymes which is responsible for chloromethane production in the higher plant *Mesembryanthemum crystallinum* [57] and other salt-tolerant higher plants [58]. Considering that halocarbon production in seaweeds has usually been associated with oxidative stress and, in

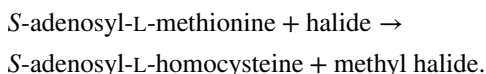
**Table 1** EXCURVE results for bromine K-edge EXAFS (Fig. 4, Debye–Waller factors as  $2\sigma^2$  ( $\text{Å}^2$ ) in parentheses)

<i>Ectocarpus siliculosus</i> infected with <i>Eurychasma dicksonii</i>	Fit index 0.3985E-02 1.00 Ph (1 C at 1.89940 Å (0.00916); 2 C at 2.74504 Å (0.01912); 2 C at 4.28701 Å (0.02146); 1 C at 4.71337 Å (0.00297) + 1.43 O at 3.38615 Å (0.00302) EF – 11.0613 eV, range 4.3623–350 eV	$\text{Br}^- + sp^2\text{C}$
<i>Ectocarpus siliculosus</i>	Fit index 0.3011E-02 7.53 O at 3.36691 Å (0.05396) EF – 8.4995 eV, range 4.5913–350 eV	$\text{Br}^-$

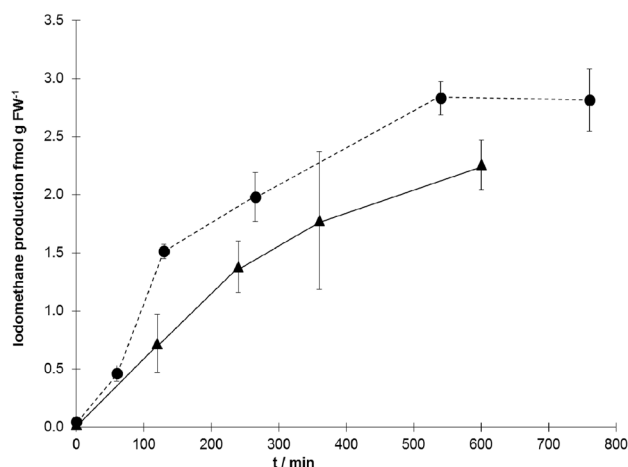


**Fig. 5** I K-edge XANES. Iodine K-edge X-ray absorption edge spectra of *Ectocarpus* and relevant model compounds: **a** NaIO<sub>3</sub> (aq., from [51]); **b** *Ectocarpus siliculosus* with 50 μM NaIO<sub>3</sub> added; **b**, **c** *Ectocarpus siliculosus* control; **d** *Ectocarpus siliculosus* with 50 μM NaI added; and **e** NaI (20 mM, aq., from [51])

particular, with hydrogen peroxide, it has to be highlighted that this reaction is independent of any reactive oxygen species:



It should be noted that (like for *V* haloperoxidases), iodide is the preferred substrate for methyl halide transferases, with usually much lower  $K_M$  and higher  $V_{\max}$  values reported for iodide over bromide and chloride [58]. While a very moderate increase of methyl iodide production was observed in this study under oxidative stress conditions, this may arguably not be due to the direct participation of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> in the biosynthetic reaction(s), but rather due to the mobilization of iodide from its apoplastic store due to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>, analogous to the situation in *Laminaria* [6], thus merely increasing substrate availability for a hypothetical methyl transferase-type enzyme. It should be noted that *Ectocarpus* genome annotation has at present not uncovered any *S*-adenosyl-methionine-dependent methyl transferase—but also that, at present, many open reading frames in the *Ectocarpus* genome



**Fig. 6** Iodomethane production by *E. siliculosus* without (triangles) and with (circles) 2 mM H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> treatment

encode for genes of still unknown function [25]. A BLAST search of the complete cDNA sequence of *Beta maritima* [AF084829; 58] against the *Ectocarpus* genome (11×) and latest (as of November 2017) cDNA database did not yield any significant matches (not shown). Other halogen-related enzymes that have been identified in the *Ectocarpus* genome include at least three different families (21 loci) of haloacid dehalogenase (HAD) and two haloalkane dehalogenases. The HADs belong to a large superfamily of hydrolases with diverse substrate specificity, including phosphatases and ATPases. The dehalogenase enzymes may contribute to protect *Ectocarpus* against halogenated compounds produced as defence metabolites by kelps [6] allowing it to successfully grow as an epiphyte or endophyte on kelp thalli [59, 60].

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