

Results from the BEST-2 Array Spatial FFT and FX Correlator

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ABSTRACT

A spatial FFT imager and FX correlator has been developed using CASPER FPGA hardware for the BEST-2 array at the Radiotelescopi di Medicina in Italy. The spatial FFT imager takes advantage of BEST-2 as a regularly gridded array to produce a complete set of correlations for all unique baseline spacings by perform a 2D spatial FFT using $O(n \log n)$ operations. This is the first time a spatial FFT instrument has been used as a correlator on a radio telescope array. The FX correlator has been used to solve complex gain calibrations which are applied in the spatial FFT during observation. During the initial deployment of the instruments several bright radio sources were observed over multiple epochs. An analysis of the spatial FFT imager baseline and image quality is performed and compared to that of the FX correlator. Our study shows the spatial FFT data to be comparable in quality to the FX correlator. Further methods can be implemented in the real time calibration to improve the spatial FFT data quality.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Basic Element for SKA Training II (BEST-2) array is a subset of the Northern Cross cylindrical array, at the Radiotelescopi di Medicina in Italy. In this paper we present results from a new digital backend designed for this array, implemented on Field Programmable Gate Array (FPGA) based hardware from the Collaboration for Astronomy Signal Processing and Electronics Research (CASPER¹; Parsons et al. (2006)). The system developed provides fast-dump correlation, direct imaging, and beamforming capabilities.

The digital backend developed for BEST-2 comprises a 32 element digitizer and channeliser, a correlator, spatial Fast Fourier Transform (FFT) imager, and beamformer, implemented on ROACH² FPGA boards. Of particular interest is the spatial FFT imager which can produce a complete set of unique baselines using $O(n \log n)$ operations by taking advantage of the regularly gridded array geometry. The FX correlator computes all possible baseline pairs which scales as $O(n^2)$. Along with producing correlation data the spatial FFT functions as a gridded beamformer which has been used for pulsar observations. These instruments have been installed as prototypes for larger scale instruments currently in development. The correlator is being used to study the handling of large output data rates and the development of real time millisecond imaging using many antenna elements. The direct imaging system is being used to study the feasibility of such systems in arrays with regular geo-

metric structure, as well as providing a platform for pulsar surveys and space-debris tracking capabilities with BEST-2. Since deployment, a number of sources with the correlator and imager have been successfully observed. Data have been reduced and calibrated using a combination of custom software and existing, popular radio synthesis imaging packages.

In the first section of this paper we give an overview of the BEST-2 Array, Sections ??, 1.2 and 1.3 cover a description of the channelization, correlation and image-domain processing system. Results from preliminary observations of bright radio sources from these systems are presented in section 2.1 and a comparison of data quality between the two instruments is presented in section 3, with a discussion of results in section 4.

1.1 BEST-2 Array

The BEST-2 testbed at the Radiotelescopi di Medicina consists of 8 East-West oriented cylindrical concentrators, each with 64 dipole receivers critically sampling a focal line at 408MHz. Signals from these 64 dipoles are summed in groups of 16, resulting in 4 channels per cylinder, and a total of 32 effective receiving elements laid out on a *4-by-8* grid, shown in Figure 1.

BEST-2 was developed as a reliable, low cost frontend to be used in SKA development, with a core design requirement of simplicity in interfacing with different digital backends (Montebugnoli et al. 2009b). Extensive documentation of the development of the analogue chain developed for BEST-2 can be found in a number of papers (Perini (2009); Perini et al. (2009)). The top level specifications of the array are shown in Table 1.

¹ <https://casper.berkeley.edu/>

² Reconfigurable Open Architecture Computing Hardware – <https://casper.berkeley.edu/wiki/ROACH>

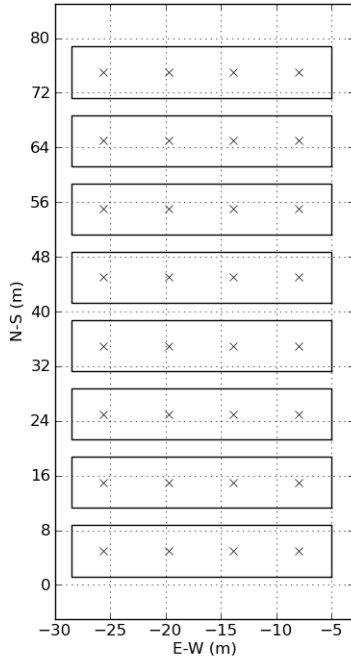


Figure 1. The 32 effective receiving elements of BEST-2, indicated by crosses, lie on a regular 4x8 grid. Each receiver is the analogue sum of 16 dipoles, critically spaced at 408 MHz in the East-West direction.

In 2008 the initial digital correlator backend of the array was based on iBOB and BEE2 FPGA boards from the CASPER group (Montebugnoli et al. 2009a). An upgraded digital backend has been developed using the ROACH board, also developed by CASPER, which includes an FX correlator, spatial FFT imager and beamformer.

1.2 FX Correlator

An FX correlator design is a standard design for large bandwidth and many antenna arrays. The F component represents the frequency channelization, and the X is a complex multiply and accumulate (CMAC). Architecture efficiency goes as $O(M \log M) + O(N^2)$ where M is the number of FFT frequency channels and N is the number of antenna-polarizations. The core component to the X stage of the FX correlator is the complex multiplication of all pairs of independent signals for each frequency channel.

1.3 Spatial FFT

When N receiving elements in an antenna array are placed on a regularly spaced grid, a well known method for producing a complete set of orthogonal beams on the sky is the spatial fast Fourier transform (Williams 1968). Such a beamforming implementation will generate N beams on the sky, with a computational cost of $O(N \log N)$. For large arrays, where many beams are desired, this can be a significant computational saving, with the alternative, so-called *DFT beam-*

| BEST-2 Array Specifications | | |
|-----------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Array Properties | | |
| Number of Cylinders | 8 | |
| Total Number of receivers | 32 | |
| Total Collecting Area | 1411.2 | m^2 |
| A_{eff}/T_{sys} | 11.65 | m^2/K |
| Longest Baseline | | |
| E-W | 17.04 | m |
| N-S | 70.00 | m |
| Bandpass | | |
| Central Frequency | 408 | MHz |
| Analogue Bandwidth | 16 | MHz |
| Primary Beam | | |
| Primary Beam Size | 37.62 | deg^2 |
| Declination | 5.7 | deg |
| Right Ascension | 6.6 | deg |
| PSF | | |
| PSF FWHM | 0.9 | deg^2 |
| Declination | 0.52 | deg |
| Right ascension | 1.73 | deg |

Table 1. The top level specifications of the BEST-2 Array, a subset of the collecting area of the Northern Cross, located in Medicina, Italy.

forming, requiring $O(N)$ operations per synthesized beam. To date, the largest such astronomical implementation of such a spatial fast Fourier transform beamformer is the 64 element dish array constructed in 1994 at Waseda University, Japan (Otobe et al. 1994).

More recently, spatial FFT based processing has been revisited in the literature with an emphasis on the correlation matrix, rather than the collection of beams, as the mathematical object of interest (Tegmark & Zaldarriaga 2009) (Tegmark & Zaldarriaga 2010). In the method outlined by Tegmark & Zaldarriaga, zero padding is applied to the matrix of antenna signals before the spatial FFT is performed, and as such, the complete set of visibilities for all unique baselines in the array can be obtained, post integration, by inverse Fourier transform. Conversely, in the image plane, the zero-padding required by the prescribed algorithm results in the generation of $2^m N$ beams on the sky and is dependent on the number of dimensions, m , in the antenna array. Regardless of potential downstream visibility domain processing, this oversampling of the sky by a factor 2^m has the benefit of increasing the instantaneous uniformity of sky coverage by synthesized beams, which somewhat alleviates the limitations associated with the inability to steer multiple beams independently.

In the BEST-2 backend described here, the requirements on the spatial FFT processor were multifold. Firstly, the system should be capable of generating images on an

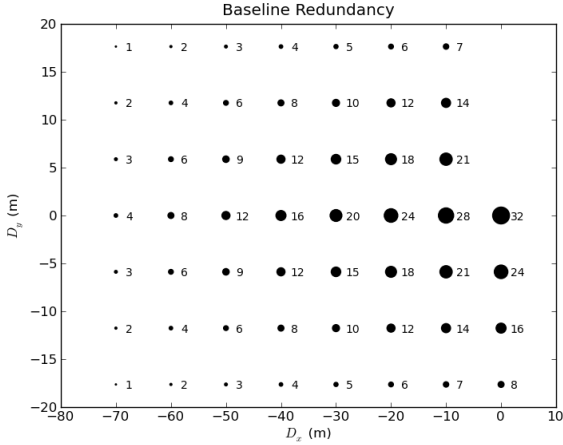


Figure 2. A 4 by 8 regularly gridded array has 53 unique baselines, 480 cross correlations are performed. The number of redundant baseline measurements is labelled and represented by the size of each circle.

O (second) timescale, by the method described by (Tegmark & Zaldarriaga 2009). Further, the system should be capable of passing formed beams at full bandwidth, i.e. without any accumulation, to downstream time domain processing systems such as the real-time pulsar dedispersion engine (Magro et al. 2011).

This redundancy for the BEST-2 array is shown in Figure 2. Instead of making individual correlations of the same baseline as in an FX correlator the correlation of the average of each baseline can be computed. This optimization relies on the assumption that each redundant baseline measurement is indeed identical. Thus any calibration to the complex gains must be applied before the spatial FFT.

2 DEPLOYMENT AND INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

Instrumentation was installed and tested during March 2012, during which time various bright radio sources were observed. Since the Northern Cross is a transiting array there is a limited period of time each day in which a source is in the primary beam. Bright sources such as Cygnus A, Cassiopeia A and Taurus A along with a number of 3C sources were observed along with multiple constant declination 24 hour cycles.

2.1 FX Correlator Imaging

The East-West full width half max (FWHM) beam size of an individual element is $\approx 11.25^\circ$ which translates to a 45 minute ‘observation time’ for a source, as seen in the measured primary beam, figure 3. For the the bright A class sources this time can be extended since they remain the dominating source well after crossing the FWHM. Observations of 80-90 minutes are possible which gives an small improvement in uv coverage at the cost of properly accounting for the amplitude modulation due to the primary beam. This warrants a small sensitivity benefit for a large calibration cost. Most images are created using data within a few

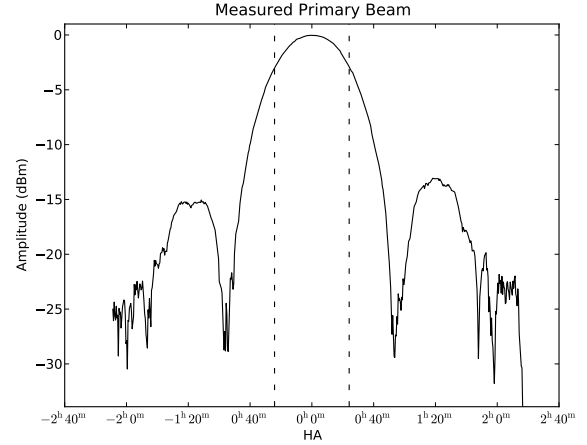
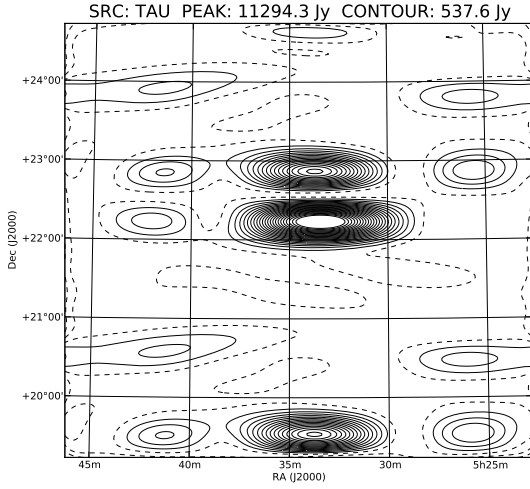


Figure 3. A measured east-west primary beam based on the correlation between antennas 1N-6-1 and 1N-1-3, which are representative of typical antennas, based on a Cassiopeia A transit. The dashed lines indicate the FWHM points. The antennas have a sinc response to a point source, as expected. The first sidelobes are -15 dB down from the peak.

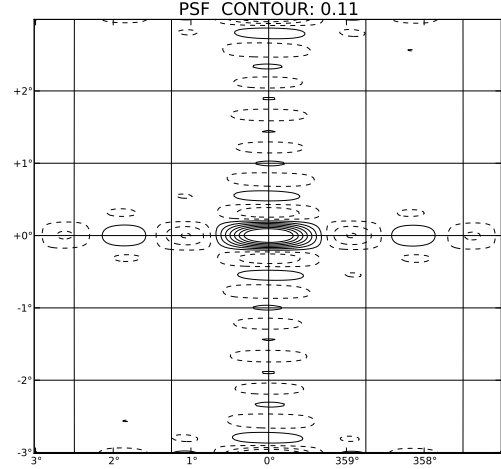
minutes of the source transit time. The high sidelobes in the primary beam, figure 3, cause the bright class A sources to dominate even when they are far from the field of view and makes it difficult to perform calibration and imaging near these sources.

A transiting array provides a unique challenge of gain calibration since a source’s apparent gain will change as it transits the primary beam. To account for this variation, a two stage gain calibration method is used. Phase calibration and setting the flux scale is accomplished using Cassiopeia A and Cygnus A observations as point source sky models set to their 3C flux levels and known spectral indices. Since these sources are very bright, only a few seconds at transit is needed produce a high SNR dataset to use for calibration. Over this period the primary beam can be approximated as flat. A time independent complex gain is derived for an initial calibration. After applying the gain corrections an observation will be set to a flux scale relative to the flux of the calibration source. Each individual source is then self calibrated in MeqTrees (Noordam & Smirnov 2010) based on a local sky model taken from the 3C catalog. This stage is calibrated on short time intervals to account for amplitude changes from the primary beam.

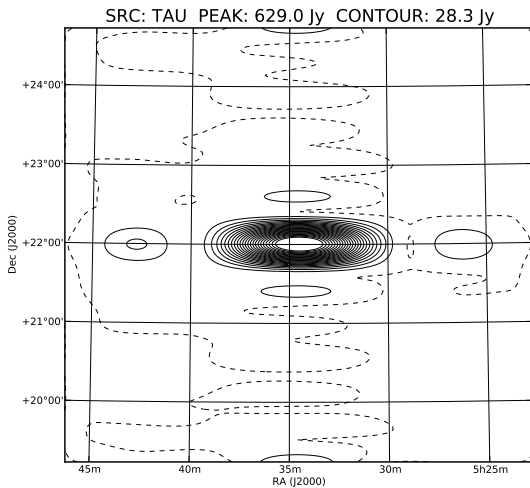
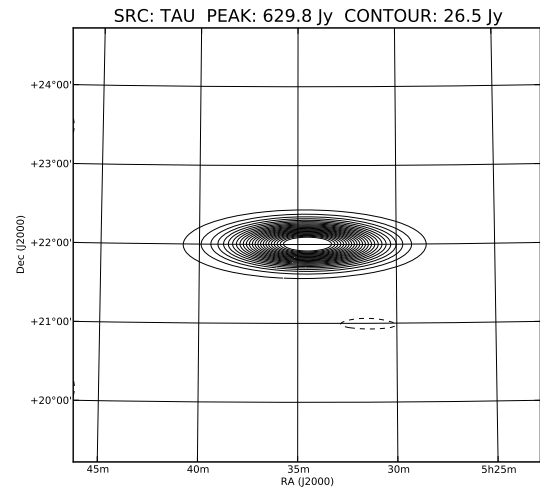
An effect of the density of the antenna layout is a low point spread function (PSF) to field of view ratio (spatial fidelity), thus images tend to contain at most a few spatially separated point sources. The grid layout of the BEST-2 array produces strong sidelobes and grating lobes in the PSF as seen in Figure 4b. Observations of bright point sources produces calibrated dirty images in which the PSF is clearly visible, Figure 4c. After cleaning we measure the residual noise to be around 2 Jy over a number of two minute snapshot observations, table 2. Imaging using longer source transit times has shown the noise floor to decrease at the expected rate of $\frac{1}{\sqrt{F}}$. The various stages of imaging and calibration for the source Taurus A is shown in figure 4. Further images and analysis of the data quality are followed in section 3.



(a) Uncalibrated image of Taurus A.



(b) Point spread function. The high, regular sidelobes are an effect of the regularly gridded array.

(c) Dirty image formed, using natural weighting, after applying complex gain solutions. The structure from the PSF is clearly visible. The dynamic range of this image is ~ 150 .(d) Cleaned image of the field, Taurus A is the dominating point source with a peak of 730 Jy, the image have a dynamic range of ~ 350 .**Figure 4.** Images and PSF formed from an FX correlator two minute snapshot observation of Taurus A.

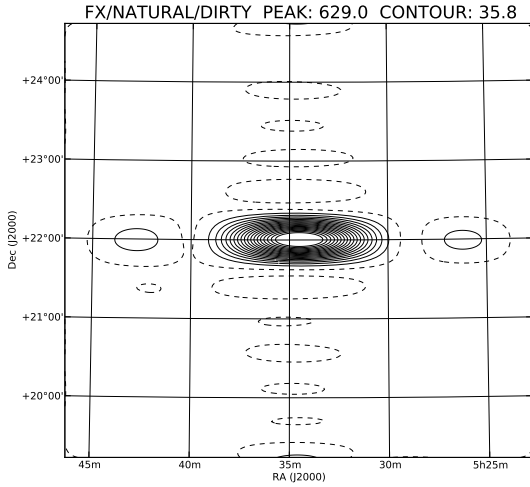
2.1.1 Weighting for a Regularly Gridded Array

As noted, the regular gridded array produces many highly redundant baselines, fig. 4b. When forming the dirty image the choice of weighting greatly effects the outcome of the image. In the highly redundant array case of BEST-2 the effects of using uniform versus natural weighting can be seen in fig. 5. Uniform weighting significantly reduces the sensitivity of the image for a small improvement in spatial resolution. We have used a natural weighting scheme through out to produce images. It is worth noting that the baselines produced by the spatial FFT imager have an inherent ‘natural’ weighting scheme since all redundant baselines are effectively summed together into a single baseline. To change the weighting of the spatial FFT baselines, reweighting fac-

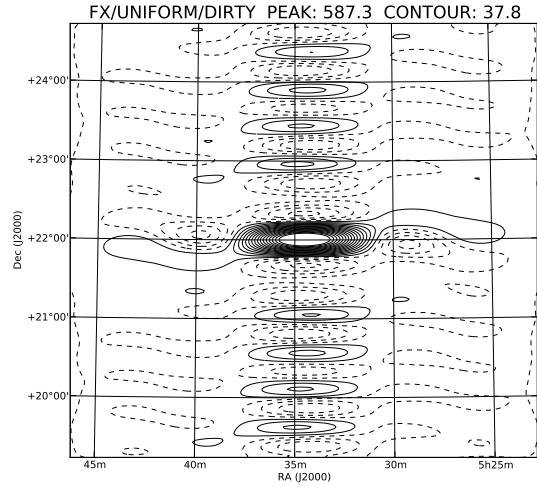
tors must be added to the data based on how redundant each baseline is.

3 SPATIAL FFT RESULTS

Observations with the FX correlator of various astronomical sources has verified the array and digital system is functioning as expected. We will use the FX correlator observations as a baseline to compare the results of observations from the spatial FFT imager. In the ideal case, observations using the spatial FFT will be identical to observations using an FX correlator. The spatial FFT imager has the effect of averaging together all identical spacing baselines, and produces a set of correlations for each unique baseline. Zero padding



(a) Dirty image with natural weighting of the point source Taurus A.



(b) Dirty image with uniform weighting of the point source Taurus A.

Figure 5. Natural versus uniform weighting of a point source.

the data in the spatial FFT preserves the phase information which allows the beams to be transformed into correlations. The variation in complex gains from when they were derived and when the observations with the spatial FFT imager was performed will introduce the leading error in the data. We start this section by discussing the calibration methods used and how the derived complex gains vary.

3.1 Calibration Methods

As with an interferometric telescope, variations in the complex gains of each receiver must be compensated for before forming images with the correlation matrices. In the case of the FX correlator, such gains, once known, can be applied after data is obtained. Conversely, in the case of the spatial FFT correlator, gain corrections must be applied before the spatial FFT is performed, as this operation effectively averages together redundant baselines. To illustrate the effect of gain calibration on spatial FFT images, Figure 7 shows an observation of Taurus A with and without gains applied during observation.

Deriving the complex gain terms to be applied to the antennas can be achieved with a wide variety of calibration methods, and may or may not require knowledge of the array topology or sky model (Wieringa 1991). For simplicity, in the initial observations presented in this paper, per channel, per antenna gain corrections were computed using an implementation of the column ratio gain estimation method (Boonstra & Veen 2001). This method computes gain corrections based on the simple sky model of a bright calibrator in the array phase center.

The observations with the spatial FFT images in this paper have been calibrated using previous transits of Cassiopeia A, Taurus A and Cygnus A. With a transiting array and a limited field of view these observations can only be made at a set time of day. Thus gains for a spatial FFT can often only be derived many hours before an observation. If an array is sufficiently stable over that time period then this

does not pose a serious problem. Gain coefficients obtained from several transits of these sources are shown in Figure 6. The stability of a calibration over several days can only be relied upon to an accuracy of several degrees and $O(0.1\text{dB})$. We note that, unsurprisingly, these variations are greatest when comparing the transits of different sources. This effect that is likely to be temperature dependent, but may also depend on the pointing angle of the array.

3.2 Spatial FFT as a Beamformer

The raw output of the spatial FFT engine is 128 complex beams regularly (in $\sin \theta$ space) oversampling by two times the primary field of view of the BEST-2 array. This sampling of the primary field of view is emphasized in Figure 8, which shows the response of a row of beams during a transit of Cassiopeia A. This set of beams may itself be interpreted as an image of the sky, but each beam can also be independently processed by downstream computing resources. In the current BEST-2 system, an observer is free to send up to 8 complex valued beams at full bandwidth over 10GbE to be further processed. The choice of beams can be dynamically changed during an observation, allowing a source to be tracked as it transits the instrument's field of view. Ongoing work is currently in progress to allow more than 8 beams to be processed at a reduced bandwidth, for applications where field of view is preferable to frequency coverage.

3.3 Spatial FFT as a Correlator

The output of the spatial FFT is a set of 128 beam powers which can be converted to uv sampled baselines by performing an inverse FFT. In total 52 unique baselines are produced along with the auto correlation. Each spatial FFT baseline is the sum of antenna pair baselines at the same antenna spacing, for a given frequency channel. For the case of the spatial FFT we will call them effective baselines. Once

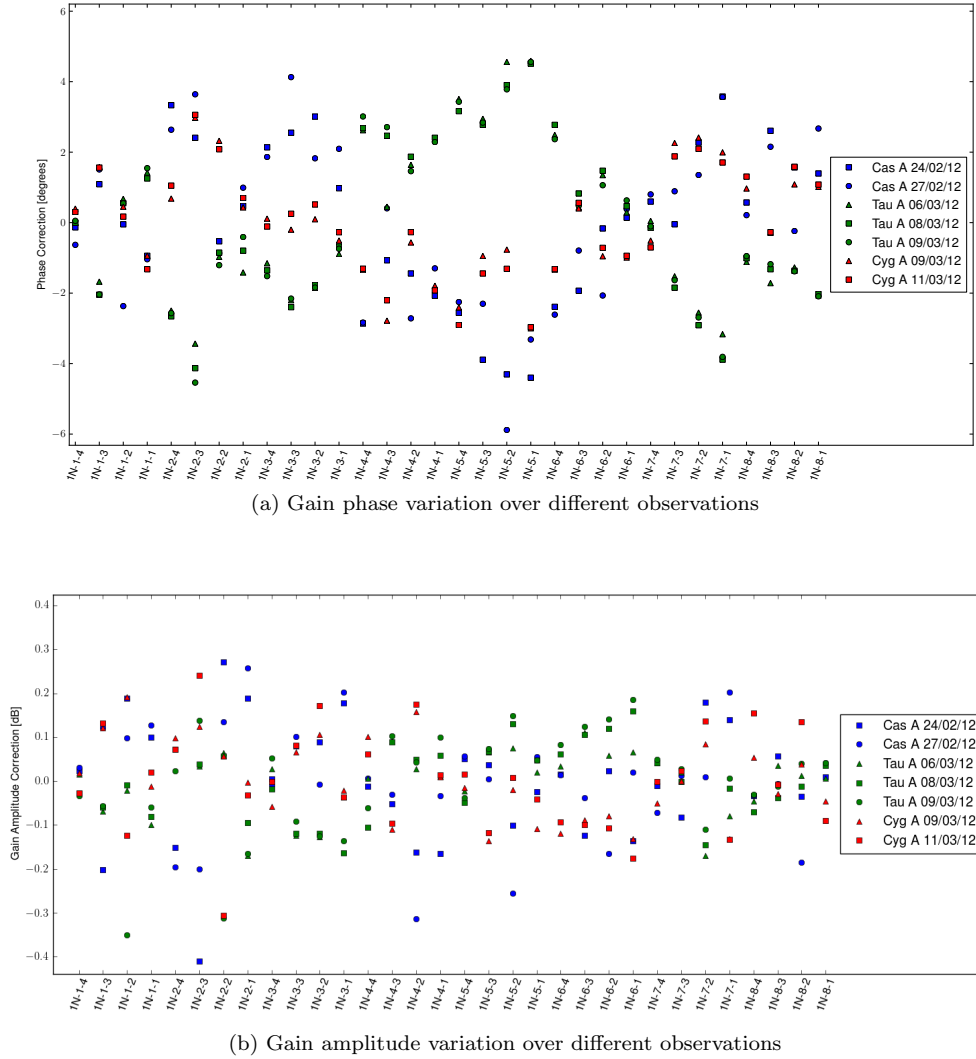


Figure 6. Gain variation over different observations. Gains are plotted relative to mean. Over the period of observations shown Cassiopeia A, Taurus A and Cygnus A transited at approximately 13:30, 18:30 and 09:00 local time, respectively.

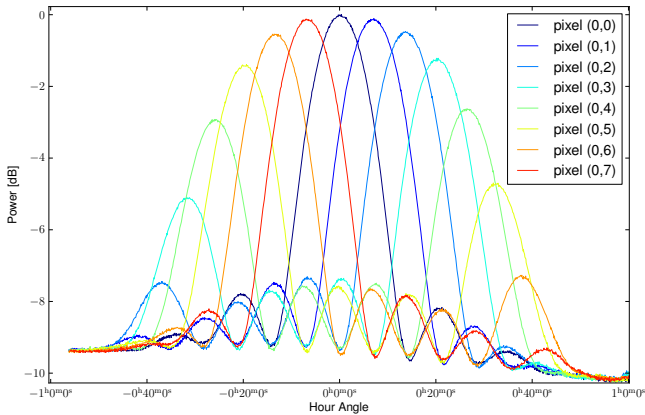


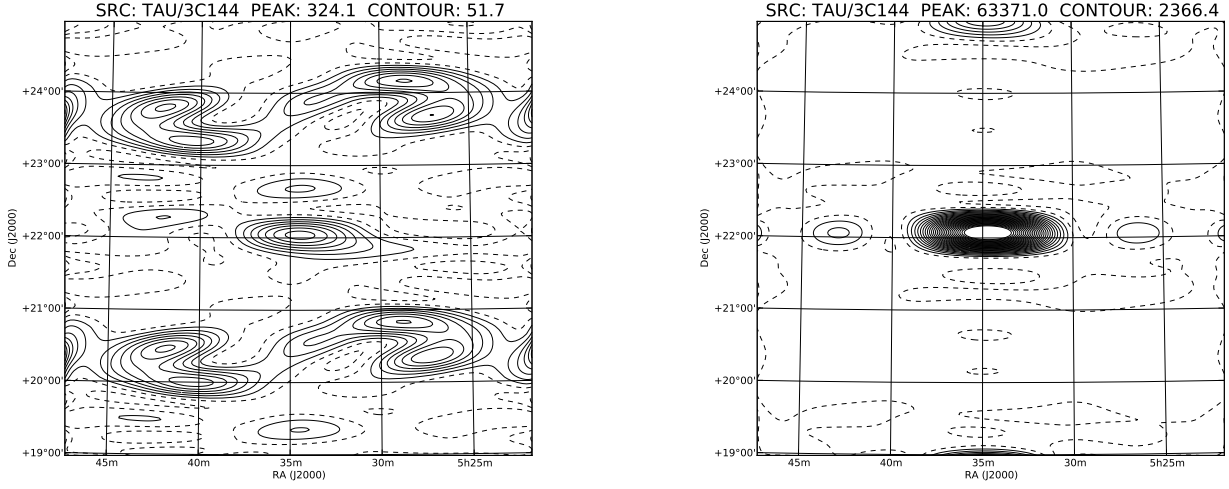
Figure 8. The power, as a function of time, of a row of 8 beams at approximately constant declination during a transit of Cassiopeia A.

in the effective baseline correlation format the same pipeline that is used for the FX correlator is used to convert the data into measurement sets.

Due to the calibration limitation of the data no post observation calibration is applied. The flux scale is set by using the flux scale from FX data. This scale can be set during the observation or in post processing since it is a baseline independent amplitude scaling. Figures 9a and 9b show the dirty and clean images of Taurus A during a properly calibrated observation. The signal to noise of the images are comparable to that of the images formed with the FX correlator during the same observation, fig. 4. In the following section we look at the results of observations from both instrument to understand to the quality of images produced by the spatial FFT relative to that of the FX correlator.

3.3.1 Image Comparison

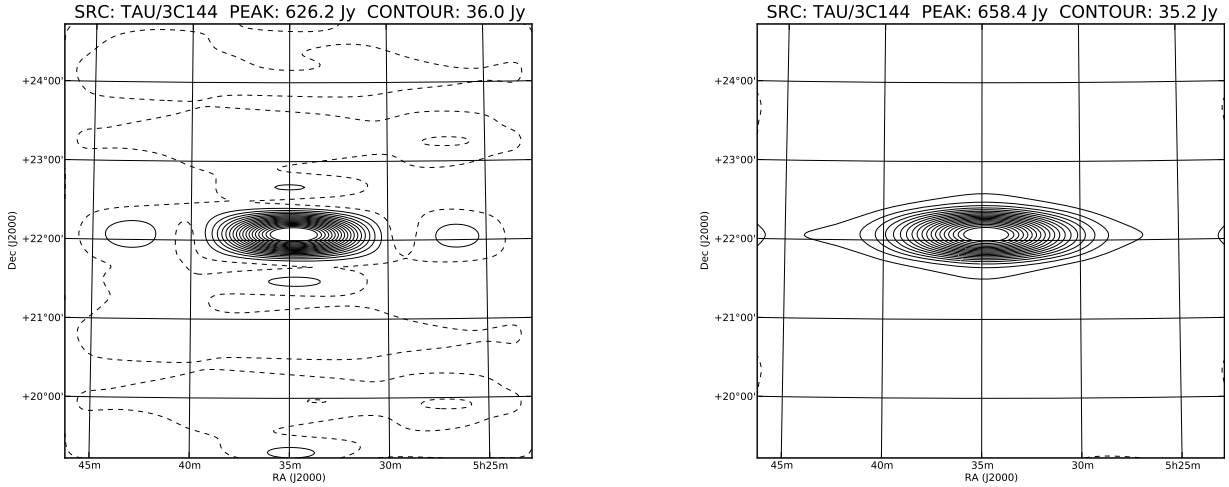
A number of 3C source fields have been imaged from concurrent observations of the FX correlator and spatial FFT imager, figures 13 and 14. To make a comparison between images we define the dynamic range of each image to the peak flux divided by the standard deviation of the noise in a empty region of the image. Selecting an empty region of



(a) Dirty image of Tau/3c144 formed before applying complex gain calibrations in the F-Engine for the spatial FFT. The uncalibrated phases spread the power through out the image.

(b) Dirty image of Tau/3c144 with complex gain calibrations applied. This image has a signal to noise ratio around 100, a standard CLEAN method can be used to improve the image dynamic range.

Figure 7. After applying complex gain calibration a bright point source such as Tau/3c144 appears similar to the array PSF, and has a significant improvement in the image fidelity compared to the uncalibrated image.



(a) Dirty image of Taurus formed from the spatial FFT imager, the flux scale has been fixed to the scale based on the same image from the FX correlator. The dynamic range, ~ 100 , is less than that of the FX correlator image, ~ 150 .

(b) Cleaned image of the Taurus field. The cleaning process brings the dynamic range up to around 300, similar to the value from the FX correlator image in fig. 4d. A notable feature about the the cleaned images from the spatial FFT is the apparent low level skewing of the image, particularly in the east-west direction.

Figure 9. The images produced by the spatial FFT imager are comparable in noise and dynamic range to those produced with calibrated FX correlator data.

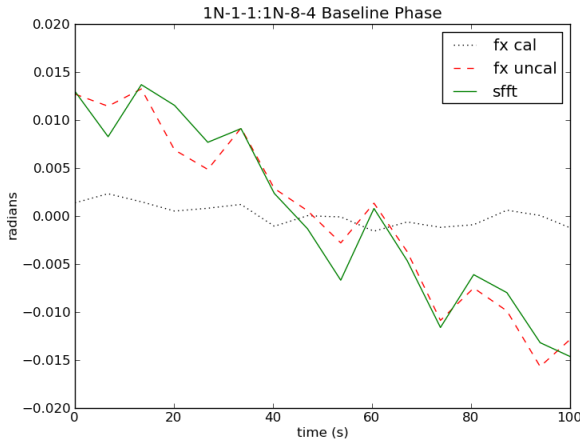
an image can greatly influence the dynamic range if there is low level structure. We took care to select a few regions per image to find a representative region. The same region was then used for images from both the FX correlator and the spatial FFT imager as to avoid bias. In the image analysis we are not so much interested in the absolute flux and noise level of each image but a relative comparison in im-

ages between the FX correlator and spatial FFT imager. In table 2 we list a number of 3C sources along with their measured flux and noise levels. For these snapshot images the spatial FFT produces essentially the same results as the FX correlator.

Even though the results have comparable dynamic range in the spatial FFT images there is a noticeable distor-

Measured Source Flux and Noise Levels

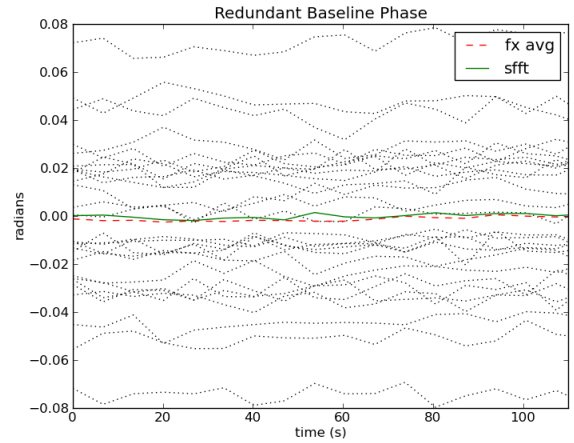
| Source | 3C Flux (Jy) | Peak Flux (Jy) | FX Noise Level (Jy) | SFFT Noise Level (Jy) |
|--------|--------------|----------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| 3C10 | 134 | 67.2 | 1.1 | 1.3 |
| 3C48 | 47 | 27.3 | 0.9 | 0.8 |
| 3C123 | 175 | 91.1 | 2.1 | 1.9 |
| 3C144 | 1420 | 729.5 | 2.0 | 2.5 |
| 3C157 | 210 | 116.5 | 1.6 | 2.3 |
| 3C196 | 59 | 34.6 | 0.9 | 1.7 |

Table 2. Noise level for various 3C sources calculated for images formed with data from the FX correlator and the spatial FFT imager.**Figure 10.** The (1N-1-1, 1N-8-4) baseline is the one of the non-redundant baselines in the array. The solid line is the phase from the spatial FFT imager during a calibrated observation of Cygnus A. FX correlator phase data, dashed line, from the same observation has the same noise level, within 20%, of the spatial FFT data. Once self calibration is performed the FX correlator phase data, dotted line, flattens out and the noise level has decreased a factor of two.

tion. The cleaned image of Taurus, fig. 9b, begins to form points at the low levels, primarily in the east-west direction. The distortion can also be seen in a number of the 3C images in figures 13 and 14. And is not noticeable until the image has been cleaned. The dynamic range of the images does not fully describe the difference between a pair of images. We must look at the individual baselines to further compare the data.

3.3.2 Baseline Phase Comparison

The major difference in data quality between the spatial FFT imager and the FX correlator is the use of self calibration with the FX correlator data. This can be seen by looking at the phase data before and after self calibration. There are two baselines in the array, (1N-1-1, 1N-8-4) and (1N-1-4, 1N-8-1), which are unique. The spatial FFT and the FX correlator should produce the same result for these baselines. Figure 10 shows the phase for the (1N-1-1, 1N-8-4) baseline as calculated from both instruments. The output data from both instruments are nearly identical. After self calibration the FX correlator noise is further reduced and the slope is flattened.

**Figure 11.** Phase plot of an observation of Taurus A. Comparison of the FX correlator baselines which are redundant with the (0,4) antenna spacing and the corresponding spatial FFT baseline. The lines are: redundant FX correlator baselines(dotted), spatial FFT combined baseline (solid), all the FX baselines averaged together(dashed). For this baseline, the spatial FFT baseline fits the averaged FX baseline well but has $\sim 35\%$ more noise.

If we look at a highly redundant baseline, such as (0,4), we expect the individual FX baselines to have a higher noise figure than the spatial FFT effective baseline, figure 11. But, the effective FX baseline which is an average of same redundantly spaced baselines should be the same as the effective spatial FFT baseline. This is shown to be correct, but again the spatial FFT effective baseline has a higher noise standard deviation.

If we look at the noise standard deviation for all the baselines during an observation we see the individual FX baselines have no dependence on baseline length or redundancy, figure 12. When the FX baselines are averaged together based on their redundancy the noise decreases as expected. The spatial FFT effective baseline noise also falls off with an increase in redundancy. Yet, the noise standard deviation is higher on every baseline compared to the averaged FX baselines.

3.3.3 Error Effects

In the extreme case where a set of antennas are not functioning the effects on the spatial FFT imager are significant. With an FX correlator a 'bad' baseline or antenna can be flagged in the data during post processing. If we assume all

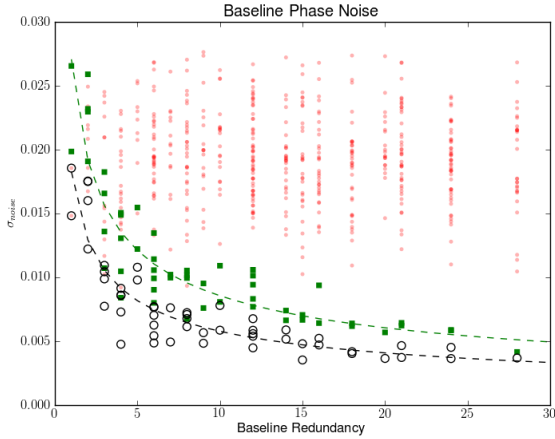


Figure 12. Phase noise for each baseline during an observation plotted against the the number of redundant baselines. Small dots are the 496 FX correlator baselines. Open circles are the FX correlator baselines after averaging together sets of equal spacing baselines. This decreases as $\frac{1}{\sqrt{n}}$ on the more redundant spacings as shown with the best fit dashed lines. Squares are the spatial FFT baselines, which are effectively an average of all the redundant spacing baselines. The spatial FFT baseline noise also decreased at a rate similar to the averaged FX correlator baselines. Though the spatial FFT phase noise is $.48 \pm .26$ higher than the FX averaged baselines in this data set.

the antennas in an array are identical and each baseline has an nominal phase noise of σ_{nom} then a ‘bad’ baseline can be defined as having a noise level of N times higher than the nominal noise level, $N\sigma_{nom}$. For a spacing with m redundant baselines the combined noise is $\sigma_{bl} = \sigma_{nom}\sqrt{m}$. If there are B bad baselines which are flagged the noise becomes $\sigma_{bl} = \sigma_{nom}\sqrt{(m-B)}$. In the case of the spatial FFT all the baselines are summed together before a baseline can be flagged. Then the baseline noise is $\sigma_{bl} = \sigma_{nom}\sqrt{m-B} + \sigma_{nom}N\sqrt{B}$. A malfunctioning antenna corrupts any effective baselines it is part of, and can not be flagged and filtered in post processing. The stability of every antenna must be checked during an observation or the observation could be a waste. It should be noted that in the case of a known bad antenna, that antenna can be flagged during an observation and dropped.

This is the effect we see in the effective spatial FFT baselines. Though the baselines are not ‘bad’, each baseline has a different noise characteristic. By combining them we can not use self calibration to apply per antenna calibration later to reduce the noise like is done with the FX correlator. The initial phase calibration from a bright source is the same for the both instruments, though the gains are applied during the observation in the spatial FFT case and in post processing for the FX correlator. The additional calibration on the FX data by solving for a sky model solution further improves the image quality.

4 CONCLUSION

An FX correlator and spatial FFT imager have been successfully installed on the BEST-2 array at Medicina Observatory. The digital firmware was developed using the open

source CASPER libraries and their generic ROACH hardware. This is the first time a spatial FFT imager has been used to produce complex baseline correlations. Both instruments can operate simultaneously which has allowed us to compare the respective data quality.

We have shown that the spatial FFT imager produces correlations similar to that of a traditional FX correlator. Complex gains are derived from calibration sources and applied during observations. The FX correlator data can be improved with further self calibration. Self calibration can not be performed on the spatial FFT imager since the effective baseline is a linear combination of redundant spacing baselines. The BEST-2 array is limiting our ability to improve the calibration. Bright sources are needed in the field of view to derive calibrations. A more advanced calibration method which can take into account multiple sources would allow more fields to be used for calibration and improve the time difference between calibration observation and science observation.

For low frequency dipole arrays which have a very large field of view there will always be bright sources in the field to calibrate against. With a fast enough calibration algorithm a small correlator can be used to derive gains on short timescales $O(seconds)$ and apply them to the spatial FFT imager. A good sky model and close time proximity between calibration observations and science observations will bring the spatial FFT calibration closer quality to a FX self calibration result.

With the successful installation and testing with the spatial FFT imager on the BEST-2 array we are working on developing the system further for science observations. Medicina Observatory is involved with space debris tracking using BEST-2 in a beamformer mode. The spatial FFT provides all beams within the field of view. This would improve the ability to detect and track space debris with the array. As noted earlier the beams have been used with a dedispersion machine to detect various pulsars. Work on this is in further development.

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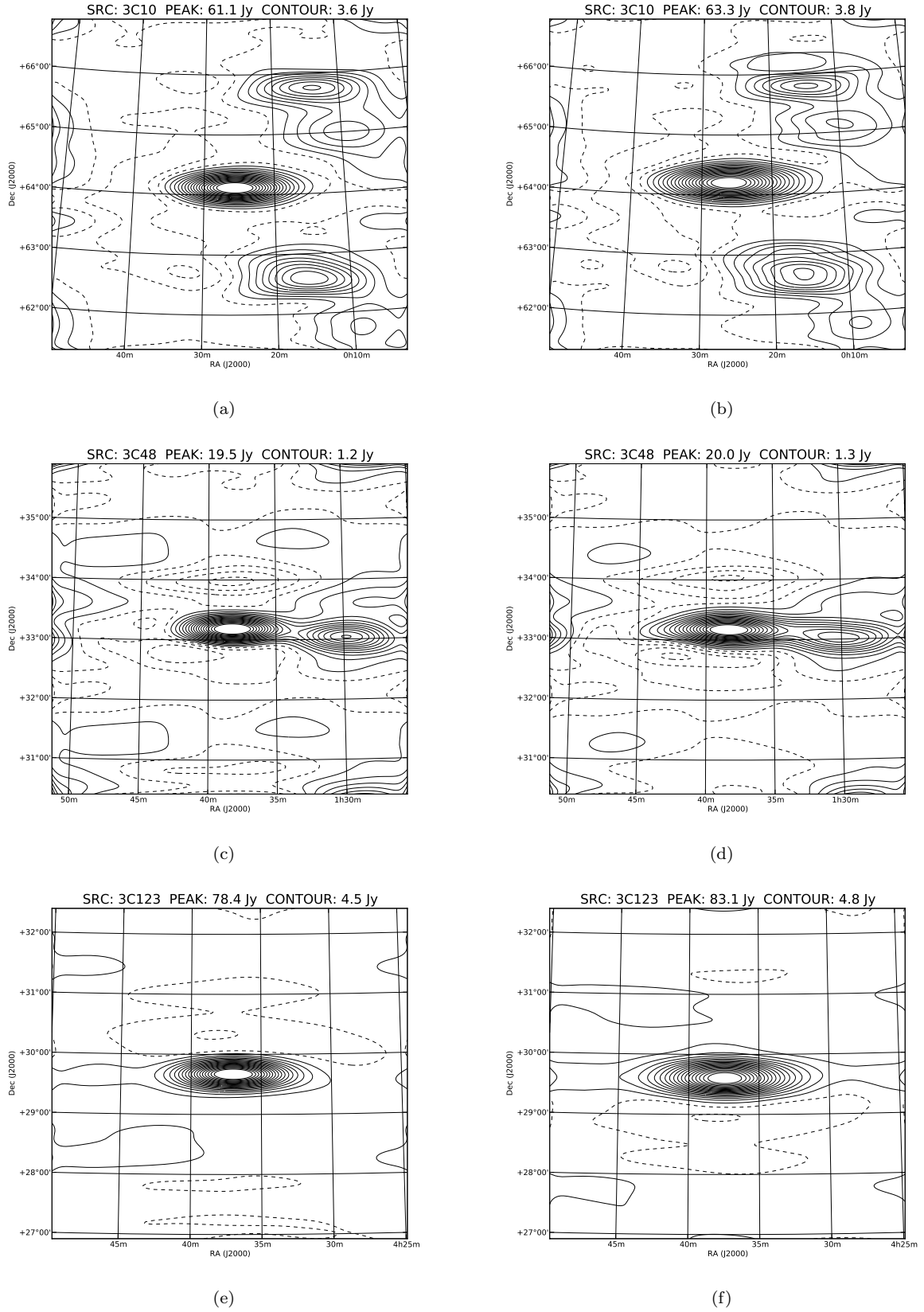


Figure 13. Cleaned images formed from simultaneous observation of various sources with the FX correlator and spatial FFT imager. The left column is from FX correlator data, the right column is spatial FFT data. Sources are 3c10 (fig. 13a,13b), 3c48 (fig. 13c,13d), 3c123 (fig. 13e,13f). The FX correlator and spatial FFT images have comparable noise floors of about 2 Jy in all images and difference in dynamic range varying from a few percent to 10 percent depending on the source.

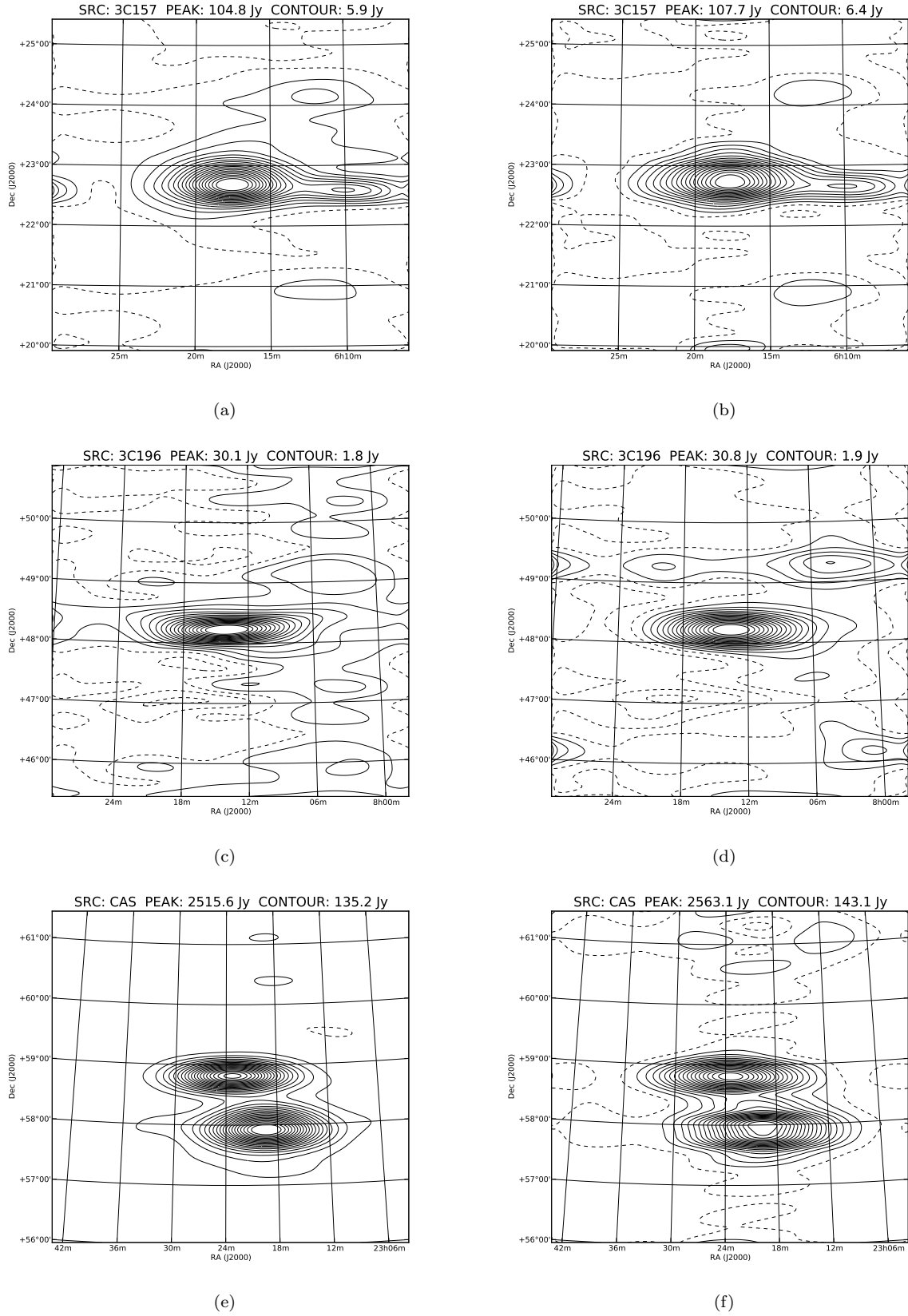


Figure 14. Cleaned images formed from simultaneous observation of various sources with the FX correlator and spatial FFT imager. The left column is from FX correlator data, the right column is spatial FFT data. Sources are 3c157 (fig. 14a,14b), 3c196 (fig. 14c,14d), Cassiopeia A with the sun in a sidelobe (fig. 14e,14f). The FX correlator and spatial FFT images have comparable noise floors of about 2 Jy in all images and difference in dynamic range varying from a few percent to 10 percent depending on the source.

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