



CASSIOPEIA A

Cassiopeia A is the youngest (about 300 years old) known supernova remnant in the Milky Way. Astronomers have used Chandra’s long observations of this remnant to make a map of the acceleration of electrons in this supernova remnant. The analysis shows that the electrons are being accelerated to almost the maximum theoretical limit in some parts of Cassiopeia A (Cas A) in what can be thought of as a “relativistic pinball machine.” Protons and ions, which make up the bulk of cosmic rays, are expected to be accelerated in a similar way to the electrons. The Cas A observations thus provide strong evidence that supernova remnants are key sites for energizing cosmic rays.

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