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The teraflop supercomputer APEmille: architecture, software and project status report ★

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Abstract

APEmille is a SPMD parallel processor under development at INFN, Italy, in cooperation with DESY, Germany. APEmille is suited for *grand challenges* computational problems such as QCD simulations, climate modelling, neural networks, computational chemistry, numerical wind tunnels, seismic and combustion simulations. Its 1 Teraflop/s peak performance and its architecture, together with its language features, allow such applications to execute effectively.

APEmille is based on an array of custom arithmetic processors arranged on a tridimensional torus. The processor is optimized for complex computations and has a peak performance of 528 Mflop at 66 MHz. Each processing element has 8 Mbytes of locally addressable RAM.

On the software side particular emphasis is devoted to the programming languages that will be available (TAO and C++) and their object oriented, dynamic characteristics: with TAO it is possible to develop language extensions similar to the usual HEP notation; with C++ the portability from and towards different platforms is made possible. © 1998 Published by Elsevier Science B.V.

1. Introduction

APEmille is a parallel processor oriented to floating point intensive computation and suitable for massively parallel homogeneous problems. It is a SPMD (Single Program Multiple Data) array processor with local addressing capability. It has a basic tridimensional toroidal interconnection network implementing first neighbour communications with low latency and high bandwidth. Long distance communications and more general routing capabilities are also present, although the performance is lower in these cases.

APEmille is the last generation of APE supercomputers family following Ape [1] and Ape100 [2,3]. This INFN project [4,5] aims to develop a teraflops processor for Quantum Chromo Dynamics (QCD), complex systems and fluid dynamics simulation and modelling. Although APEmille performance is optimized in these areas, this machine is well balanced also for many other homogeneous problems, e.g. seismic migration, atmosphere and climate modelling, compu-

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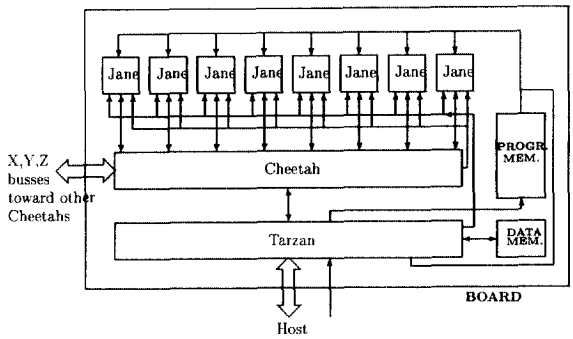

Fig. 1. The processing board block schematic.

tational chemistry, combustion simulation, and image processing. Thus, many of the computational *grand challenges* can be tackled using this architecture.

2. APEmille architecture

APEmille is a tridimensional torus of processing elements (PE) with distributed data memory and periodic boundary conditions. Each node (PE) is directly connected to its six neighbours. A communication network establishes communications between distant nodes. The grid of processing nodes is organized as a set of adjacent *cubes* of size $2 \times 2 \times 2$ in which the vertices corresponds to the PEs. APEmille configurations range from a single cube to 256 cubes with topology $32 \times 8 \times 8$. Cubes are assembled on Processing Boards (PB) as showed in Fig. 1.

APEmille is based on custom processors. These are a sort of VLIW-like (Very Long Instruction Word) processors, in which each field of the instruction word drives a different operational block inside the processor, thereby exploiting internal parallelism.

APEmille uses a Harvard architecture, so program memory and data memories are physically: in fact there is one program memory, while the data memory is distributed as each node has its own one.

There are three distinct processors: *Tarzan* drives the program flow and issues the global addresses to the PEs; *Jane* is the node processor, performing floating point and integer computations; *Cheetah* is the communication processor. Tarzan and Cheetah are replicated every eight Janes.

Tarzan drives the program flow for its eight nodes taking into account *global conditions* (results of its own computations) as well as *local conditions* (those computed by the Janes). Tarzan computes global addresses and delivers them to the nodes. At each clock cycle, Tarzan can send one instruction word and one global address to the Jane processors.

Jane is the processing element. It is a VLIW (in the sense explained above) pipelined processor. It performs a basic operation called `normal` ($R = a \times b + c$) on real (single and double precision) and complex numbers (couples of 32 bit floating point numbers). Jane is able to start a new `normal` operation at each clock cycle. It has an eight-stage (six-stage) pipeline for double precision (single precision). Integer computations, as well as logical bitwise operations, are performed and use a different pipe whose length is 2 clock cycles.

Jane is able to add a local offset to the global address received from Tarzan to obtain a local address for its data memory. Moreover, Jane can evaluate local conditions, using the result to inhibit (locally) the execution of portions of code, or to participate to Tarzan's local aggregate evaluations.

Cheetah is the communication processor. It performs several kinds of internode communications: fixed distance homogeneous communications (both first neighbour and longer distance communications), broadcast communications (one node or a few nodes in different planes of the grid are data sources, while all the others are receivers), and non-homogeneous communications (in a second Cheetah release, which will be plugged in APEmille that is already supporting them), in which each node can send (or ask for) data to (from) a node at an arbitrary distance.

APEmille is connected to a network of conventional PCI based computers that acts as the host computer. There is one such computer for each subcrate (set of 32 PEs).

Three kinds of software tools will be provided with APEmille: the language related tools (cross compilers, optimizers, libraries), the Operating System related tools (the monitor program and the graphic symbolic debugger), and the Development tools (the simulator and the graphic profiler).

3. Hardware implementation

An APEmille cube, the building block composed of eight processing elements, is actually a single printed circuit board where Tarzan, Cheetah and eight Janes are assembled. The memory banks for program and data memories are also plugged on this board.

The APEmille custom processors are designed by the APE Group and implemented as standard cell ASIC design methodology.

Tarzan is capable of integer computations and has two arithmetic units: the ALU and the AGU (Address Generation Unit), a dedicated device for address computation. Tarzan has a register file (multiport internal RAM) with 64 register (32 bits each). It has its own static data memory (256 KBytes static RAM) and drives the program memory, which distribute program words to Tarzan itself and to the Jane processors.

SDRAM (synchronous dynamic RAM) memory technology is used for program memory. Due to the VLIW architecture of the processors, the program memory is 512 KWords × 160 bits each. Most of these bits drive Jane internal devices while the remaining ones will drive Tarzan devices.

As already remarked, Jane is used for integer and floating point computations. It has a 512-deep register file with five ports. The register file based architecture allows one `normal` and one I/O operation at each clock cycle. JANE's data memory, based on SDRAM technology, ranges from 2 to 8 MWord/node (from 8 to 32 MBytes/node).

Jane complies with the IEEE standard for floating point numbers and delays the rounding of $a \times b$ to after the sum, i.e. it rounds only the result of (the infinitely precise) $a \times b + c$.

Cheetah is a bitsliced device: four identical chips are required on each board to drive the communication of the 32 bit words exchanged among the Janes. Each chip manages one fourth of the word.

The APEmille clock frequency is 66 MHz. When dealing with complex arithmetics where a normal operation consists in 8 floating point operations, Jane's peak power is 528 Mflop/s. Performances for the different configurations scale linearly: 4 Gflops for a single board and 1.081 Tflops for the full APEmille configuration. The PCI interface (named APEnic) will provide an I/O bandwidth of 133 MB/s.

4. Languages and programmability

The main constraint when dealing with code developers who are scientists rather than professional programmers is that they prefer to concentrate on the physical problem and the algorithm used to solve it rather than on the details of its program implementation.

We are trying to build an user-friendly environment for this class of users in two different ways:

- implementing standard languages – although with some nonstandard features linked to the nonstandard architecture; these are necessary to let people reuse code developed on different platforms;
- designing new languages that try to solve some problems associated with the new general purpose languages.

To satisfy these constraints, we planned to implement two languages on this machine: the C++ language and the TAO language.

The C++ compiler will have some extensions to exploit APEmille features; at the same time, in its first release, it will partially implement the standard.

The TAO language is the language that we designed already for Ape100, and that we are now refining for APEmille.

We are developing PICO, a machine independent optimizer which will be the core of the APEmille high level language compilers.

TAO is an extensible language which has Fortran flavour but, as its main characteristic, allows the user to define new operators and new statements or overload old ones. Using the TAO language in its native form still remains possible and it becomes very natural to mix the new statements and operators to the basic ones to produce compact but expressive code. An example of extension, on which we spent much effort, is the QCD header file which extends the TAO language with data structures and operators used in QCD simulations.

5. APEmille status report

The hardware and software architecture of the machine is fully defined and custom processors description is almost completed.

The APEmille simulator, named JUNGLE, is now able to simulate the whole machine in very deep detail

allowing APEmille users to develop code and evaluate performance of the real machine.

The physical components of APEmille (VLSI devices, board architecture and PCI interface) were described using the VHDL language which is easily interfaced with the JUNGLE simulator to test the electrical behaviour of the APEmille devices.

The prototypes of the APEnic PCI interface and of the backplane as well as a "test board", a reduced APEmille processing board useful to test technology solutions, will be completed and tested soon.

The whole APEmille supercomputer will be assembled in two step: from the beginning of 1998, we will produce and test a 256 nodes system (first APEmille prototype) followed, in a few months, by the assembly of the whole APEmille system.

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