An Embedded Operating System with a Graphical System Performance Monitor on Raspberry π

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1 introduction

These interactive instructions [6] follow the configuration and build of a Linux-based operating system (OS) for Raspberry π [9]. The goal of the project is a compact and deterministic OS with a running graphical user interface (GUI) system performance monitor application [7]. Standard command-line interface (CLI) tools ensure device remote access and control. The build is done with Yocto [11].

There are several steps organized in corresponding sections as follows. Read in Section 2 how to fetch metadata. Section 3 shows how to configure the OS build. In Section 4 learn how to build the OS image and see how to copy image to SD card in Section 5. Section 6 is dedicated to post-install issues like the configuration of the WiFi interface from the command line.

2 metadata

In current context, metadata is a set of instructions to build targets. The build configuration is managed via files with extension **conf**. They define configuration variables to control the build process.

2.1 structure

Basic concepts needed to understand metadata structure follow.

2.1.1 recipes

The instructions are organized as recipes in files with the bb extension. There are also files with the bbappend extension designed to modify recipes and bitbake classes with the suffix bbclass for instructions shared between recipes. See a full list of metadata file types in Table 2.

2.1.2 targets

The target may be a *software* (SW) package or group of packages. The target may also be a complete OS image.

2.1.3 layers

Metadata is organized in layers. Layers logically separate information of a project. Table 1 presents OpenEmbedded[3] metadata layer types.

The complete list of github SW metadata repositories used in this project includes *Yocto* layers, the *Raspberry* π *board support package* (BSP) layer, a SW layer with custom recipes including target and distribution definitions, and the build configuration itself.

layer type	contents
base	base metadata for the build
machine aka BSP	hardware (HW) support
distribution	policy configuration
SW	additional SW
miscellaneous	do not fall in upper categories

Table 1: metadata layer types as defined by OpenEmbedded[3]

file type	extension	purpose
recipe	bb	SW build instructions
recipe	bbappend	SW recipe modification
class	bbclass	shared instructions
config	conf	build directives
config	inc	shared build directives

Table 2: metadata file types

In short, users fetch metadata in contrast to the real data fetched later during the OS build. See Section 4 for details. It means that users decide where to store fetched metadata. It is nice to have all layer sub-directories in one system location. In these instructions it is referred as <META-DIR>. The second directory to create is the <BUILD-DIR>. This is where the build and the build configuration live. I suggest that <BUILD-DIR> is not inside <META-DIR> to not mix data and metadata.

2.2 meta-thc

Following the OpenEmbedded metadata classification, meta-thc is a SW layer as there are SW recipes. On the other hand, it is a distribution layer because it defines a new distribution based on poky.

See <META-DIR>/thc/meta-thc/conf/distro/thc.conf. In addition, there is an image recipe to build a target in <META-DIR>/thc/ meta-thc/recipes-core/images/core-image-thc.bb.

This allows for an effective isolation of machine, distribution and image features of the OS. The layer includes also shell scripts to clone metadata and to export the OS image on SD-card. These may be found in <META-DIR>/thc/meta-thc/bin. Learn more in following sections. See next the contents of meta-thc. The system location of the layer is <META-DIR>/thc/meta-thc by default.

binmetafetch.sh classes thclass.bbclass conf layer.conf README README.md recipes-core dhcpcd dhcpcd 9.4.1.bbappend init-ifupdown init-ifupdown 1.0.bbappend thcp thep imgui.ini rpip wifini.sh thep 0.1.bbrecipes-sw glfw glfw 3.3.8.bb imgui imgui 0.1.bb

2.3 automation

There is a shell script to clone all metadata from public github repositories. It may serve people to build their own OS for Raspberry π . The script performs metadata fetch, the **bitbake** initialisation and a simple metadata verification.

name: metafetch # purpose: clone rpi metadata

```
FETCHER=https://github.com/
GITFETCHER=git@github.com:
BRANCH=kirkstone
unset LONGSFX
DEFMETADIR=$HOME/yocto/$SFX/metadata
DEFBUILDIR=$HOME/yocto/$SFX/rpi4
TARGET=core-image-thc
XNAME =  (basename $0)
say() { printf ":: $XNAME :: $*\n"; }
die() { say $* && exit 0 || kill $$; }
use() { # print options and quit
   printf "
    die
confirm() {  # get confirmation or quit
    read -p "please confirm (y/n) " choix
    [ "$choix" == "y" ] && say confirmed || die
 "$SFX" ] || die try again
while getopts ":m:b:r:hgd" option; do # parce command-line options
   case $option in
       m) METADIR=$OPTARG;;
       b) BUILDIR=$OPTARG;;
       r ) BRANCH=$OPTARG;;
       g ) FETCHER=$GITFETCHER;;
       d) DRYRUN=yes;;
       h ) use ; ;
        * ) use ; ;
   esac
done
 "$METADIR" ] || METADIR=$DEFMETADIR
```

```
BUILDIR=$DEFBUILDIR
   $BUILDIR"
                || mkdir -p $METADIR || die $? cannot create $METADIR
|| mkdir -p $BUILDIR || die $? cannot create $BUILDIR
  -d $METADIR
  -d $BUILDIR ]
METADIR=$(realpath $METADIR) && say "metadata:\t $METADIR" || die $? cannot find
   $METADIR
BUILDIR=$(realpath $BUILDIR) && say "build:\t $BUILDIR" || die $? cannot find
   $BUILDIR
say "branch:\t $BRANCH"
say "protocol:\t $FETCHER"
declare —A REPO
REPO=( # associative git repository array
     yoctoproject/poky.git]=$METADIR/poky
     openembedded/meta-openembedded.git] = \$METADIR/oe
     agherzan/meta-raspberrypi]=$METADIR/rpi/meta-raspberrypi
     kaloyansen/meta-thc.git]=$METADIR/thc/meta-thc
     kaloyansen/rpiconf.git]=$BUILDIR/conf
 "$DRYRUN" ] || confirm
for repo in ${!REPO[@]}; do # clone repositories
    command="git clone -b $BRANCH $FETCHER$repo ${REPO[$repo]}"
    say $command
    [ "$DRYRUN" ] || $command
done
 "$DRYRUN" ] && die
sed -i s#/home/yocto/layer#$METADIR#g $BUILDIR/conf/bblayers.conf || die sed $?
OEINIT=oe-init-build-env
cd $METADIR/poky && pwd || die $? cannot find $METADIR/poky
[ -f $OEINIT ] && .../$OEINIT $BUILDIR || die $? cannot find $OEINIT
bitbake-layers show-layers
echo && say "how to start a new build"
printf "
 ./$OEINIT $BUILDIR
bitbake $TARGET
```

Do not copy/paste metafetch. Download it here. Note the associative array REPO. It defines the remote and local system path of repositories. The script is designed in a way that after a successful run one may start a build with bitbake. Do not forget to grant permissions to make script executable. It takes <META-DIR> and <BUILD-DIR> names from the command-line. You may use next examples to run metafetch. Running the script without command-line options like the first example results in some default configuration. You may want to specify custom directories like the second example. Otherwise the script will use default values. The default github protocol is https but I recommend using *secure shell* (SSH) because it is an order of magnitude faster. You may need to export one SSH public key to your github account. Use the command-line option -g to switch protocol. The default git branch is kirkstone. Use -h to see all CLI options.

```
chmod + x metafetch
```

```
./metafetch
./metafetch -m <META-DIR> -b <BUILD-DIR>
./metafetch -g
```

3 configuration

Build configuration is in <BUILD-DIR>/conf, check files local. conf and bblayers.conf. Yocto layers are specified in bblayers. conf. The build directives are in local.conf. Variables in this file control the build. Sometimes I call these directives to avoid repetitions. To not mix them, I have isolated target HW specific directives. Two possible targets are defined in <BUILD-DIR>/conf/ raspberrypi4-64.inc and <BUILD-DIR>/conf/qemuarm64.inc. The host configuration is optional. See the bottom lines in <BUILD-DIR>/conf/local.conf for details. Note the difference between the optional include and not optional require. The latter will interrupt the build configuration if the corresponding file does not exist.

3.1 directives

Directives control the build. It is not always easy to understand their meaning and their relations. For example, some directives change values of other directives. What is more, **bitbake** syntax is pretty complicated. In result, your life may become unbearable if the build configuration is too long. See next an alphabetical list of some important build configuration directives.

• BB_DISKMON_DIRS This bitbake variable enables free storage space verification. Users may add rules to monitor as many directories as they wish. Of course, it makes sense to add only directories on different storage partitions. The directive contains rules to trigger actions in case of low storage space during builds. Possible actions are WARN, STOPTASKS and HALT. Rules are defined in the following format.

 $"<\!action\!>,<\!directory path\!>,<\!space left\!>,<\!inodes left\!>"$

- DISTRO This is the short name of the OS distribution. *Yocto* provides four variants of their reference distribution poky. See details in <META-DIR>/poky/meta-poky/conf/distro/poky*. conf. Some distribution dependent directive values are presented in Table 3.
- DISTRO_FEATURES Distributions can select which features they want to support through the DISTRO_FEATURES variable, which is set in the distribution configuration file.
- IMAGE_FEATURES This directive controls the contents of the OS image. Different predefined packages could be added, removed or modified via this variable. Useful examples for image features are allow-empty-password, allow-root-login, empty-root-password, post-install-logging, splash, package-man and ssh-server-dropbear.
- IMAGE_FSTYPES This is another important directive. Here I have removed archived images to decrease the built time and added the wic format. One may want to use the wic command-line tool to list the partitions on a wic image. See how to copy it to an SD card in Section 5.
- IMAGE_OVERHEAD_FACTOR This defines the free storage space on the root partition. Overhead factor of 2 means that the free space will be equal to the space already used by the OS. This will double the size of the image. The default value of 1.3 increases image size with 30%.
- INHERIT This is a list of included bitbake classes. See Section 3.2.

- INIT_MANAGER The OS init process could be sysvinit, systemd or mdev-busybox.
- MACHINE No doubt, this is the most important directive, set here to raspberrypi4-64. You may want to change this value if you build an OS for a different HW. If you want to emulate $Raspberry \pi$ on your host machine with qemu, set MACHINE to qemuarm64. I confirm that this works although I did not find this approach very useful to test a GUI.
- MACHINE_FEATURES This directive controls machine features. It is set in the machine configuration file and specifies the hardware features for a given machine.
- PACKAGE_CLASSES There are different package formats used in various Linux-based OS's to distribute and manage programs. Both debian package format - deb and rpm from RedHat do well, but recently I had issues with ipk so I disabled it.
- PACKAGE_INSTALL This is where to specify additional SW packages. This is useful for packages not included in the image by default. In my experience, the default OS has all necessary programs or compact alternatives. However this is the directive used to append imgui.
- SANITY_TESTED_DISTROS This is a list of tested *GNU is* not UNIX (GNU)/Linux distributions. Using another distribution is not prohibited, but a warning messages is generated each time bitbake is run. One may want to append the host machine Linux distribution to get rid of this warning. See next examples for users of Manjaro and OpenSuse rolling releases.

SANITY_TESTED_DISTROS: append = " manjaro" SANITY_TESTED_DISTROS: append = " tumbleweed --*"

config file	INIT_MANAGER	TCLIBC	status
poky.conf	sysvinit	glibc	fine
poky-bleeding.conf	sysvinit	glibc	unknown
poky-altcfg.conf	systemd	glibc	unknown
poky-tiny.conf	mdev-busybox	musl	unknown

 Table 3: reference distribution configurations

• TCLIBC The GNU standard C library variant to use during the build. Available options are glibc, musl, newlib and baremetal.

3.2 classes

Find bitbake classes in <META-DIR>/poky/meta/classes. For example rm_work.bbclass defines a specific task for packages to remove intermediate files generated during the build. This decreases storage space about twice. Those who want to keep the working data and have enough storage space may comment the next line in local.conf.

Another class, extrausers.bbclass, is used with the directive EXTRA_USERS_PARAMS to manage OS users and passwords. In example, it may be useful to define a superuser password.

 $INHERIT: append = " rm_work'$

4 build

It is very likely that you will need to install *Yocto* requirements[12] to be able to run **bitbake**. The list of *Yocto* sanity checked distributions currently includes poky-3.3, poky-3.4, Ubuntu-18.04, Ubuntu-20.04, Ubuntu-22.04, Fedora-37, Debian-11, OpenSUSEleap-15.3 and AlmaLinux-8.8. However, I do builds on Manjaro - a not officially supported GNU/Linux distribution - and it works fine.

4.1 requirements

Ensure that the following packages are installed.

- git
- tar
- python
- gcc
- GNU make

Find more details in *Yocto* documentation at [12]. You may need to install in addition diffstat, unzip, texinfo, chrpath, wget, xterm, sdl, rpcsvc-proto, socat, cpio, lz4, gawk, findutils, crypt, mtools and inetutils. As a double check, make sure to have the following command-line tools on your host machine: chrpath, diffstat, lz4c, rpcgen, bash, bzip2, file, grep, patch, sed and mdir.

The complete list of packages to install on Manjaro includes git, tar, python, gcc, make, chrpath, cpio, diffstat, patch, rpcsvc-proto.

Fetched metadata requires only 412 MB of free space. In contrast the OS build may need up to 30 GB or even 50 GB if intermediate files are kept. Read about the bitbake class rm_work in Section 3.

4.2 environment

The primary build tool of OpenEmbedded based projects, such as *Yocto* is **bitbake**. To initialise **bitbake** build environment navigate to <META-DIR>/poky and source the initialization script like the next command.

source oe-init-build-env <BUILD-DIR>

The script changes the system path to <BUILD-DIR>. Next, you may want to run the following command to check project layers.

bitbake-layers show-layers

Alternatively, source the dedicated *portable operating system interface* (POSIX) script <META-DIR>/thc/meta-thc/bin/yoctoinit. First of all, uncomment the two lines in the script to define the system path to <META-DIR> and <BUILD-DIR>. In addition to the environment initialisation, the script defines some useful functions. Have a look at the code for details.

The target core-image-thc is a compact OS image with a X server and a running GUI system performance monitor[7] based on [2]. Run next command to build the OS.

 ${\tt bitbake \ core-image-thc}$

Unless your host machine is a supercomputer, this will take at least two hours. Find a list of tasks performed by **bitbake** for a typical SW package in Table 4. If a build is interrupted during a fetch task, this could be the connection with a server. A simple rerun of **bitbake** may solve this issue. If not, you may try rebuild the target responsible for the failure. See next how to do this.

task	description
do_fetch	fetch the source code
do_unpack	unpack the source code
do_patch	apply patches to the source
do_configure	source configuration
do_compile	compile the source code
do_install	copy files to the holding area
do_populate_sysroot	copy files to the staging area
do_package	analyse holding area
do_package_qa	check quality
do_package_write_rpm	deploy SW package in rpm format
do_package_qa	quality checks on the package

Table 4: bitbake tasks

bitbake $<\!\!{\tt target}\!>-\!\!{\tt c}$ clean && bitbake $<\!\!{\tt target}\!>$

4.3 flow

The build happens in $\langle BUILD-DIR \rangle$. Table 5 presents a list of important $\langle BUILD-DIR \rangle$ sub-directories.

Source archives are saved in the download directory. They are extracted, configured, compiled and installed in the work directory. Built packages are stored in the package directory. Finally, following the build configuration packages are unpacked to create the OS image found in the image directory. The build flow is summarised in Table 5.

name	location	description
configuration	conf	build configuration files
download	downloads	fetched SW source code archives
work	tmp/work	working directory
package	tmp/deploy/rpm	final SW packages in rpm format
image	tmp/deploy/images	boot files, kernels and images

Table 5: bitbake workflow

5 install

The OS includes a kernel ARM, 64 bit boot executable image of 23 MB, a Raspberry π configuration of Linux 5.15. This is a long – term support (LTS) kernel release. The total size of kernel modules is 21 MB.

Yocto provides multiple package and image formats. Different ways exist to install images on SD-card. The OS has two partitions - /root and /boot. There are no swap and home partitions.

I recommend the classic command-line tool dd to copy data. It works fine with different image formats like rpi-sdimg, hddimg and wic. The last one is recommended. Find the SD-card device name, for example /dev/<xxx>, unmount it with umount if mounted, and do copy data with the next command.

 $dd \ if = core-image-thc-raspberry pi4-64. wic \ of = /dev / < xxx > \ status = progress$

- note 1: run this command in <BUILD-DIR>/tmp/deploy/ images/raspberrypi4-64
- note 2: run this command with **root** privileges
- note 3: be careful to not specify the device name of your hard drive (see note 2)

Alternatively, there is a dedicated POSIX shell script - <META-DIR>/thc/meta-thc/bin/burn. Use the command-line option -h for details. The transfer does not take long. When it is over, replace the card to *Raspberry* π and turn it on. That's it.

6 run

Wireless connection is established via classic command-line tools like ip[1] and iw. The dynamic host configuration protocol (DHCP) client is udhcpc[1], and wpa_passphrase[10] stores WiFi connections. A dedicated POSIX shell script named wifini.sh is installed in /usr/bin, as well as a running GUI system performance monitor[7]. The application uses Dear ImGui[2] library and is configured to start automatically on boot.

```
\#!/\operatorname{bin}/\operatorname{sh}
MYNAME='basename $0'
WPACONF=/etc/wpa supplicant.conf
IFCONF=/etc/network/interfaces
WPAPASS=/usr/bin/wpa_passphrase
IW=/usr/sbin/iw
WPASUPP=/usr/sbin/wpa_supplicant
DHCP=/sbin/udhcpc
IP = /sbin/ip
die() { echo $MYNAME $* && exit 0; }
say() { echo $MYNAME $*; }
auto() { # enable wifi connection on boot
    patch=auto\ $WIFACE
     say $patch
     grep "patch" 1 > /dev/null | printf "
" >> $1;
  "$USER" == "root" | || die run with root privileges
IWD='$IW dev'
WIFACE='echo $IWD | grep Interface | awk '{print $3}''
SSID='getopt s: $* | awk '{print $2}''
say whoami: $0
  $SSID ] && say network: $SSID || die specify network: $MYNAME -s SSID
  $WIFACE | && say interface: $WIFACE || die wireless interface not found
```

```
echo $IWD | grep $SSID > /dev/null && die $SSID connected || say connecting $SSID
$IP link show $WIFACE | grep UP > /dev/null || $IP link set $WIFACE up
$IW $WIFACE scan | grep $SSID > /dev/null || die cannot find $SSID
FINE='grep $SSID $WPACONF'
[ $FINE ] && say $SSID already configured || $WPAPASS $SSID >> $WPACONF
[ -f $IFCONF ] && auto $IFCONF || die $IFCONF not found
say reboot in six seconds
                          && sleep 3
say reboot in three seconds && sleep 2
say reboot in one second
                           && sleep 1
reboot & die see you later || kill $$
WPASOCKET=/run/wpa supplicant/$WIFACE
WPAPID=/run/wpa_supplicant.$WIFACE.pid
DHCPID=/run/udhcpc.$WIFACE.pid
rm $WPASOCKET
$WPASUPP -B -D wext -i $WIFACE -c $WPACONF || say cannot create $WPASOCKET
DHCP -i WIFACE || die ?
$IP addr show $WIFACE
$IW $WIFACE link
$IP route show
```

Do not copy/paste the script. It may be downloaded here but it is already installed on the target OS. Specify network id from the command line with a short command-line option -s. See next example usage.

wifini.sh -s <SSID>

The script asks for the network password to store it encrypted for future connections. Once an *internet protocol* (IP) address is assigned to *Raspberry* π network device, the SSH server by Dropbear[5] allows for secure remote login, control and file transfer.

A client is needed to transmit mails to some *simple mail transfer protocol* (SMTP) server. Here this functionality is powered by a compact SMTP client called msmtp[8]. To configure user email account edit </META-DIR>/thc/meta-thc/recipes-extended/msmtp/msmtp/ .msmtp.conf on the host machine or ~/.msmtp.conf on the target machine. In both cases the msmtp configuration is performed on the target machine. Use the following command to run configuration functions, including generation of a security key, encryption of your password and the client configuration. Privacy is assured and security protected by GnuPG[4].

 $configure_mail_client$

7 outlook

This reports the progress in the development of a custom Linux-based OS for *Raspberry* $\pi[9]$. The kernel version of this embedded OS is Linux release 5.15. A GUI system performance monitor application[7] is built as a part of the OS image. In addition, an SSH server provides remote connection, data transfer and device control.

As the OS is now functional, performance and real-time tests are ongoing. For precision measurements the OS has to be tested both on the target platform and on virtual HW via emulators, e.g. *quick emulator* (QEMU) <META-DIR>/poky/scripts/runqemu.

acronyms

BSP	board support package
CLI	command-line interface
DHCP	$dynamic\ host\ configuration\ protocol$
GNU	GNU is not UNIX
GUI	graphical user interface
$\mathbf{H}\mathbf{W}$	hardware
IP	internet protocol
LTS	$long-term \ support$
OS	operating system
POSIX	$portable\ operating\ system\ interface$
QEMU	quick emulator
SMTP	simple mail transfer protocol
SSH	secure shell
\mathbf{SW}	software

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Figure 1: Raspberry π - 4 - model B behind a Kuman Capacitive 7" touchscreen TFT LCD module