**Sierra Supercomputer: Unleashing the Power of High-Performance Computing**

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**Submitted by**

**<Student1 full official name>**

**<Student2 full official name>**

**<Student3 full official name>**

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**Supervised by**

**<Supervisor full official name>**

**Department of Computer Science**

**University of Peshawar**

# Project Approval

This is to certify that this project is approved and recommended as a partial fulfillment for the degree “B.S. Computer Science” from the Department of Computer Science, University of Peshawar.

**External Examiner**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Internal Examiner**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Chairman**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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# Abstract

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# Chapter 1

Introduction

Hennessy and Patterson [1] provide an in depth view of computer hardware. This is an Example of using references.

## Overview of High-Performance Computing (HPC)

High-Performance Computing (HPC) represents a paradigm of computational science that pushes the boundaries of traditional computing capabilities to tackle complex and data-intensive problems. At its core, HPC involves the use of powerful supercomputers or clusters of interconnected computers to process and analyze vast amounts of data at extraordinary speeds.

The exponential growth of data in scientific, engineering, and research domains has necessitated the development of supercomputers with immense computational power. HPC has become an indispensable tool for a wide range of disciplines, including climate modeling, nuclear physics, astrophysics, computational chemistry, genomics, and artificial intelligence, among others.

### The Role of Supercomputers in Scientific Advancements

Supercomputers have played a pivotal role in advancing scientific understanding and technological innovation. The ability to process massive datasets and conduct complex simulations has opened new frontiers in research and discovery. Scientists and researchers now have unprecedented computational resources at their disposal to model intricate phenomena, analyze vast amounts of observational data, and conduct simulations that were once thought impossible.

In the field of computational fluid dynamics, for instance, supercomputers have revolutionized the understanding of fluid behavior and enabled the design of more efficient aircraft and vehicles. Similarly, in the realm of bioinformatics, supercomputers have accelerated gene sequencing and protein folding simulations, leading to breakthroughs in personalized medicine and drug discovery.

### Supercomputing for National Security

Beyond scientific research, supercomputers also play a critical role in bolstering national security efforts. Organizations such as the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) rely on advanced supercomputing platforms to conduct simulations for nuclear weapons stockpile stewardship. These simulations help ensure the safety, security, and reliability of the nation's nuclear deterrent without the need for nuclear testing.

Moreover, supercomputers are instrumental in analyzing and mitigating potential threats, such as cybersecurity risks and natural disasters. They enable the rapid processing of vast amounts of data from various sources, allowing for real-time decision-making and response strategies.

### Challenges in High-Performance Computing

### While the potential of high-performance computing is immense, it also presents significant challenges. One of the primary challenges is the sheer complexity of managing and coordinating thousands or even millions of processors in a supercomputing environment. Efficiently distributing computational tasks and ensuring effective communication between processors demand sophisticated software algorithms and interconnect technologies.

### Additionally, the increasing power requirements of supercomputers pose energy efficiency challenges. As supercomputers continue to scale in size and processing power, optimizing energy consumption becomes essential to reduce operational costs and environmental impact.

### Despite these challenges, the field of high-performance computing continues to evolve rapidly, driven by advancements in hardware, software, and algorithms. The development of supercomputers like Sierra pushes the boundaries of computational capabilities, opening doors to new possibilities and propelling scientific discovery and innovation to new heights.

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## Significance of Supercomputers in Scientific Research and Innovation

Supercomputers have emerged as indispensable tools in scientific research and innovation, enabling advancements across various disciplines. Their massive processing capabilities and ability to handle complex simulations and data analysis have opened new avenues for scientific exploration and discovery. In this section, we delve into the key areas where supercomputers have made a significant impact:

### Advancing Scientific Understanding

Supercomputers have accelerated scientific breakthroughs by providing researchers with the computational power needed to model and simulate intricate natural phenomena. Fields such as astrophysics, climate modeling, and particle physics have greatly benefited from supercomputing simulations, allowing scientists to better understand the cosmos, climate patterns, and fundamental particles. These simulations provide insights that are often unattainable through traditional experimental methods.

For instance, in astrophysics, supercomputers have facilitated simulations of galaxy formation and black hole dynamics, shedding light on the mysteries of the universe. In climate modeling, supercomputing simulations help predict weather patterns, study climate change, and assess the impact of human activities on the environment.

### Facilitating Drug Discovery and Biomedical Research

In the realm of bioinformatics and biomedical research, supercomputers have revolutionized the study of complex biological processes. They play a crucial role in genomics, enabling researchers to sequence and analyze vast amounts of genetic data rapidly. Supercomputing algorithms can also simulate protein folding, which is critical for understanding disease mechanisms and drug interactions.

Supercomputers have accelerated drug discovery by conducting virtual screening of potential drug compounds against specific targets. These simulations significantly reduce the time and cost required to identify potential candidates for further experimental testing, expediting the development of life-saving medications.

* + 1. **Engineering and Design Innovations**

In engineering and design fields, supercomputers have transformed the way products are developed and optimized. Computational fluid dynamics simulations on supercomputers allow engineers to analyze the aerodynamics of vehicles, aircraft, and wind turbines. This, in turn, leads to the design of more efficient and eco-friendly products.

Finite element analysis, a numerical technique employed by supercomputers, helps engineers predict the structural behavior of complex systems and components. This capability has revolutionized the design of bridges, buildings, and other critical infrastructure.

* + 1. **Understanding Complex Systems**

Supercomputers have also proven invaluable in understanding complex systems, such as neural networks in artificial intelligence (AI) research. Deep learning algorithms, which power many AI applications, rely on vast amounts of data and require significant computational power for training. Supercomputers enable AI researchers to train sophisticated models on large datasets, leading to advancements in natural language processing, image recognition, and autonomous systems.

In conclusion, supercomputers are transformative instruments that have revolutionized scientific research and innovation across a myriad of domains. Their role in advancing scientific understanding, drug discovery, engineering, and AI research is instrumental in addressing some of humanity's most pressing challenges and pushing the boundaries of knowledge and innovation. As supercomputing technology continues to evolve, we can anticipate even more profound contributions to human progress and the betterment of society.

## The Emergence of Sierra: A Breakthrough in Computational Prowess

In the dynamic landscape of high-performance computing (HPC), Sierra has emerged as a groundbreaking supercomputer that exemplifies the cutting-edge capabilities of modern computational technology. Developed collaboratively by the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) and the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), in partnership with IBM and NVIDIA, Sierra was designed to address the most demanding computational challenges across a diverse array of scientific disciplines.

* + 1. **Objectives of Sierra's Creation**

The primary objective behind the development of Sierra was to equip researchers, scientists, and engineers with a supercomputing platform capable of achieving breakthroughs in scientific understanding, advancing technological innovations, and bolstering national security efforts. Specifically, Sierra was designed to excel in nuclear weapons simulations, supporting the stockpile stewardship mission, and contribute to broader scientific research.

* + 1. **Architectural Marvel: Harnessing the Power of Hybrid Computing**

At the core of Sierra's computational prowess lies its innovative and efficient architecture. Leveraging a hybrid computing approach, Sierra employs a unique blend of IBM's Power9 Central Processing Units (CPUs) and NVIDIA's Volta Graphics Processing Units (GPUs). This powerful combination harnesses the strengths of both CPUs and GPUs, enabling Sierra to achieve remarkable levels of parallelism and computational performance.

The Power9 CPUs deliver exceptional single-threaded performance and provide the foundation for general-purpose computing tasks. On the other hand, the Volta GPUs, with their thousands of cores, excel at handling massively parallel workloads, such as machine learning, molecular dynamics simulations, and climate modeling.

* + 1. **Interconnect Technologies: Enabling Scalability and Efficiency**

Sierra's performance is further enhanced by its advanced interconnect technologies that facilitate efficient data exchange between its CPUs and GPUs. To enable seamless communication, Sierra is equipped with cutting-edge interconnect fabric, which ensures minimal data latency and maximizes the system's overall throughput.

This optimized interconnect architecture allows Sierra to tackle complex simulations and data-intensive computations, paving the way for groundbreaking discoveries in scientific research.

* + 1. **Software Environment and Programming Models**

To fully exploit Sierra's hardware capabilities, its software environment and programming models are meticulously optimized. Researchers and scientists can leverage a variety of programming languages, libraries, and frameworks tailored to take advantage of the hybrid CPU-GPU architecture effectively.

The software ecosystem of Sierra ensures that researchers can easily port and optimize their existing applications for high-performance execution, while also enabling the development of new software for emerging scientific challenges.



Figure 1.1: [Add Caption here]

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Architecture and Performance

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## Advanced Architecture and Hardware Components of Sierra

Sierra supercomputer, one of the world's most powerful systems, boasts an advanced architecture that enables groundbreaking scientific simulations and data-intensive computations. At its core, Sierra is equipped with cutting-edge hardware components that synergistically work together to deliver unparalleled processing power and memory capacity.

* + 1. **Advanced Architecture and Hardware Components of Sierra**

Sierra's processing power is harnessed through a vast array of central processing units (CPUs) and graphics processing units (GPUs). These CPUs and GPUs are specifically designed for high-performance computing (HPC) workloads and offer immense parallel processing capabilities. The combination of multi-core CPUs and thousands of GPU cores enables Sierra to execute complex computational tasks with remarkable speed and efficiency.

* + 1. **Processing Power**

Sierra's processing power is harnessed through a vast array of central processing units (CPUs) and graphics processing units (GPUs). These CPUs and GPUs are specifically designed for high-performance computing (HPC) workloads and offer immense parallel processing capabilities. The combination of multi-core CPUs and thousands of GPU cores enables Sierra to execute complex computational tasks with remarkable speed and efficiency.

* + 1. **Memory**

To support the demanding memory requirements of large-scale simulations and data processing, Sierra is equipped with a substantial memory hierarchy. The system features a tiered memory architecture that includes high-speed random-access memory (RAM) and high-capacity, high-bandwidth memory (HBM) for GPUs. This memory hierarchy minimizes data access latencies and maximizes data throughput, enabling efficient handling of massive datasets.

* + 1. **Interconnectivity**

The interconnectivity within Sierra is a crucial aspect of its architecture, allowing for seamless communication and data transfer between its numerous compute nodes. The system utilizes cutting-edge high-performance interconnects, such as InfiniBand or Omni-Path, to provide low-latency, high-bandwidth communication channels. This interconnect fabric facilitates efficient parallelization and distribution of computational tasks across Sierra's nodes.

## Software Environment and Programming Models

Sierra's advanced hardware is complemented by a sophisticated software environment that optimally utilizes its capabilities. The system employs a combination of custom software and industry-standard tools to ensure efficient execution of diverse scientific applications.

* + 1. **Custom Software Stack**

Sierra benefits from a tailored software stack designed to exploit the system's architecture fully. This custom stack includes optimized compilers, libraries, and runtime systems that enhance application performance and scalability. Furthermore, specialized runtime environments and schedulers are employed to manage the concurrent execution of multiple tasks across the system.

* + 1. **Programming Models**

To facilitate the development of parallel applications, Sierra supports various programming models, including Message Passing Interface (MPI) and OpenMP for distributed memory and shared memory parallelism, respectively. Additionally, Sierra leverages the power of GPUs through programming frameworks like CUDA and OpenACC, enabling developers to offload computationally intensive tasks to the GPU accelerators.

* 1. **Benchmark Results and Performance Metrics**

Sierra's computing power and efficiency are demonstrated through rigorous benchmarking and performance evaluations. These assessments are essential for understanding the system's capabilities and optimizing its performance for various scientific applications.

* + 1. **Benchmark Suites**

Sierra undergoes testing with well-established benchmark suites to evaluate its performance across different dimensions. Commonly used benchmark suites include LINPACK for measuring floating-point performance, HPC Challenge for assessing memory bandwidth and communication speed, and SPEC for evaluating general-purpose compute-intensive performance. These benchmark suites provide standardized metrics that allow for fair comparisons with other supercomputers in the HPC community.

* + 1. **Real-World Scientific Applications**

In addition to synthetic benchmarks, Sierra's performance is evaluated using real-world scientific applications. Researchers and scientists run simulations and computations from diverse fields, such as climate modeling, astrophysics, quantum chemistry, and computational biology. These application-centric benchmarks showcase Sierra's ability to tackle complex scientific problems efficiently and provide insights into the real-world impact of the supercomputer.

* + 1. **Scalability**

Scalability is a critical aspect of evaluating supercomputers. Sierra's performance is tested under increasing workloads and problem sizes to assess its ability to efficiently handle larger and more complex simulations. Strong scalability ensures that Sierra can effectively utilize additional resources as more compute nodes are added to the system, resulting in higher computational throughput and reduced time-to-solution for large-scale problems.

* + 1. **Energy Efficiency**

In addition to raw performance, Sierra's energy efficiency is also evaluated. Measured in terms of FLOPS per watt, energy efficiency is crucial for sustainable supercomputing operations. Sierra's advanced architecture and optimized software aim to achieve high computational efficiency while minimizing power consumption, making it a green and environmentally conscious supercomputing solution.

* + 1. **Performance Validation**

Sierra's benchmark results and performance metrics are regularly validated to ensure accuracy and reliability. The supercomputer's performance is continually monitored, and any deviations are thoroughly investigated. Validation processes involve cross-verifying results from different benchmark suites and comparing them with past performance records to ensure consistency.

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Applications and Research Contributions

## Scientific Applications Leveraging Sierra's Power

Sierra plays a vital role in accelerating research and innovation across numerous scientific disciplines. From climate modeling and astrophysics to materials science and drug discovery, Sierra's computing power enables scientists and researchers to push the boundaries of their respective fields. The supercomputer's ability to handle massive datasets and perform complex simulations at unprecedented speeds has made it an invaluable tool for tackling some of the most challenging scientific problems.

* + 1. **Climate Modeling and Weather Prediction**

Climate modeling and weather prediction require extensive computational resources to simulate complex atmospheric dynamics accurately. Sierra's parallel processing capabilities and memory bandwidth enable scientists to run high-resolution climate models, leading to more precise and reliable weather forecasts. These advancements in climate modeling contribute to a better understanding of climate change and its potential impacts, aiding policymakers in making informed decisions.

* + 1. **Astrophysics and Cosmology**

Sierra's supercomputing capabilities are instrumental in simulating the vast and intricate structures of the universe. Astrophysicists use Sierra to model galaxy formations, study cosmic evolution, and simulate the behavior of black holes. These simulations provide valuable insights into the origin and evolution of our universe, enriching our knowledge of fundamental astrophysical processes.

* + 1. **Drug Discovery and Biomedical Research**

In the field of drug discovery and biomedical research, Sierra's computational power enables researchers to perform large-scale molecular simulations and virtual screenings of potential drug compounds. By simulating drug interactions with target proteins, Sierra accelerates the identification of promising drug candidates and reduces the time and costs associated with drug development.

* + 1. **Materials Science and Nanotechnology**

Materials scientists leverage Sierra's high-performance computing to study the properties and behavior of complex materials at the atomic level. This research aids in the development of new materials with enhanced properties for applications in renewable energy, electronics, and aerospace industries. Sierra's simulations have accelerated the discovery of novel materials with superior strength, conductivity, and other desirable attributes.

## Breakthrough Research Projects Enabled by Sierra

Sierra has played a pivotal role in driving several research projects that have led to significant breakthroughs in their respective fields. The following are examples of groundbreaking research facilitated by Sierra's computational capabilities:

* + 1. **Precision Medicine and Cancer Treatment**

Sierra's computational power has been harnessed to analyze vast genomic datasets from cancer patients, leading to personalized treatment strategies based on individual genetic profiles. This approach, known as precision medicine, has shown promising results in improving cancer treatment outcomes and patient survival rates.

* + 1. **Seismic Hazard Assessment**

Sierra's ability to process massive amounts of seismic data has revolutionized seismic hazard assessment. By simulating earthquake scenarios and predicting potential ground shaking patterns, Sierra assists in identifying vulnerable regions and designing robust earthquake-resistant infrastructure.

* + 1. **Fusion Energy Research**

Sierra's simulations have significantly contributed to fusion energy research, allowing scientists to model plasma behavior in fusion reactors. These simulations aid in optimizing reactor design and understanding plasma confinement, bringing us closer to realizing sustainable and clean fusion energy.

## Sierra's Impact on Advancing Scientific Research

Sierra's presence in the high-performance computing landscape has brought about a paradigm shift in scientific research, offering unparalleled computational power and sophisticated hardware architecture. Its exceptional performance has revolutionized data-driven research and simulation capabilities, empowering scientists to tackle complex problems with greater precision and efficiency. In this section, we delve deeper into Sierra's transformative impact on advancing scientific research across various domains.

* + 1. **Accelerating Time-to-Discovery**

One of Sierra's most significant contributions is its ability to accelerate the time-to-discovery in scientific research. With its high-performance computing capabilities, Sierra enables researchers to perform complex simulations and analyses in significantly shorter timeframes. Problems that would have taken years or even decades to compute using traditional computing resources can now be solved in a matter of days or weeks with Sierra. This acceleration in research timelines empowers scientists to iterate and refine their experiments rapidly, leading to faster breakthroughs and discoveries.

* + 1. **Enabling Large-Scale Simulations**

Sierra's advanced hardware architecture and memory capacity make it an ideal platform for conducting large-scale simulations. From simulating complex climate models to molecular interactions, Sierra can handle massive datasets and compute-intensive tasks with ease. This capability allows researchers to gain insights into intricate phenomena that were previously impossible to model comprehensively. By scaling simulations to unprecedented levels, Sierra opens new horizons for scientific exploration and a deeper understanding of natural processes.

* + 1. **Facilitating Data-Intensive Research**

The increasing emphasis on data-intensive research in various fields necessitates powerful computing resources capable of handling vast amounts of data. Sierra's high-performance data analytics capabilities enable researchers to process and analyze large datasets efficiently. From genomics and healthcare to cosmology and environmental science, Sierra's ability to rapidly analyze immense data volumes empowers researchers to draw meaningful conclusions and make data-driven decisions.

* + 1. **Advancing Machine Learning and AI**

The intersection of high-performance computing and artificial intelligence has led to significant advancements in machine learning and AI applications. Sierra's computational power is leveraged in training complex deep learning models, optimizing neural networks, and solving intricate AI problems. This synergy between supercomputing and AI drives innovations in natural language processing, image recognition, and autonomous systems, furthering the frontiers of AI research.

## Sierra's Contribution to Scientific Breakthroughs and Innovations

Sierra's extraordinary computing capabilities have played a pivotal role in driving groundbreaking scientific breakthroughs and fostering technological innovations across various research domains. In this section, we explore specific research projects and achievements that owe their success to Sierra's immense computational power and efficiency.

* + 1. **Climate Modeling and Earth Sciences**

One of Sierra's most impactful contributions lies in climate modeling and earth sciences. Researchers have utilized Sierra's high-performance computing to run complex climate models, enabling detailed simulations of global climate patterns and atmospheric dynamics. These simulations have significantly improved our understanding of climate change, extreme weather events, and the potential impacts on ecosystems and human populations.

* + 1. **Drug Discovery and Biomedical Research**

Sierra's computational prowess has also had a transformative impact on drug discovery and biomedical research. With the ability to perform large-scale molecular simulations, Sierra aids in identifying potential drug candidates and understanding molecular interactions. Researchers can use Sierra's simulations to screen vast libraries of compounds, shortening the drug discovery process and reducing costs.

By leveraging Sierra's computing power, scientists can model complex biological systems at the atomic level, offering insights into diseases' molecular mechanisms. This knowledge is crucial for developing targeted therapies and personalized medicine approaches. Sierra's contribution to drug discovery and biomedical research has accelerated the development of new treatments for various diseases, benefiting global healthcare and patient outcomes.

* + 1. **Materials Science and Nanotechnology**

In the field of materials science, Sierra's computational capabilities have revolutionized materials design and optimization. Researchers can simulate the behavior of materials at the atomic level, leading to the discovery of novel materials with extraordinary properties. Sierra's simulations have paved the way for the development of advanced materials for aerospace, energy storage, electronics, and other industries.

Furthermore, Sierra's influence extends to nanotechnology, where it enables simulations of nanoscale phenomena and quantum mechanical systems. Understanding nanoscale processes is crucial for developing nanomaterials, nanoelectronics, and nanomedicine. Sierra's contributions to materials science and nanotechnology have spurred innovations in material engineering and nanoscale technologies, with far-reaching implications for multiple industries.

* + 1. **Astrophysics and Cosmology**

Astrophysicists and cosmologists have harnessed Sierra's power to explore the mysteries of the universe. Sierra's simulations enable researchers to model galaxy formation, dark matter distributions, and cosmic evolution with unprecedented detail. By running large-scale cosmological simulations, scientists gain valuable insights into the origins and evolution of the cosmos.

Through Sierra, researchers can test theoretical models against observational data, deepening our understanding of fundamental astrophysical phenomena. Sierra's contributions to astrophysics and cosmology have expanded our knowledge of the universe, enriching our perspective on cosmic structures, dark matter, and the cosmic web.

* + 1. **Fusion Energy and Nuclear Physics**

Sierra has made significant contributions to fusion energy research, particularly in the field of inertial confinement fusion (ICF). Scientists utilize Sierra's simulations to model the behavior of plasma in fusion reactors, optimizing the conditions required for controlled nuclear fusion. These simulations aid in developing strategies for achieving sustainable fusion energy, a clean and abundant energy source.

# 

Conclusion

## Summary of Findings

Throughout this research paper, we have embarked on a journey to explore the astounding capabilities and impact of Sierra, a supercomputer at the forefront of high-performance computing. Our investigation has revealed the following key findings:

Sierra's Advanced Architecture: Sierra boasts an advanced architecture equipped with cutting-edge hardware components, including state-of-the-art processors, vast memory capacity, and high-speed interconnectivity. These features work in unison to deliver unmatched computational power and efficiency.

Significance in Scientific Research: Sierra's exceptional computing prowess has revolutionized scientific research and innovation. Its ability to handle complex and computationally-intensive problems has opened new avenues for researchers in various domains.

Software Environment and Programming Models: The software environment of Sierra is optimized to leverage its capabilities efficiently. Researchers can harness parallel processing and utilize specialized programming models to fully exploit Sierra's immense potential.

Benchmark Results and Performance Metrics: Sierra has been subjected to rigorous benchmarking, and its performance metrics speak volumes about its computing power and efficiency. It consistently outperforms traditional computing systems, making it a vital tool for data-intensive tasks.

Impact on Scientific Discoveries: Sierra's unparalleled capabilities have led to groundbreaking research projects and significant scientific breakthroughs. From climate modeling to astrophysics, Sierra has accelerated the pace of discovery and expanded the frontiers of human knowledge.

Future Advancements: As technology advances, Sierra continues to evolve. Researchers and engineers are continuously working on enhancements to push Sierra's computing power to new heights, promising even more remarkable scientific achievements.

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# Appendix A

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# Appendix B

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# References

| [1] | D. A. Patterson and J. L. Hennessy, Computer Architecture: A Quantitative Approach, Morgan Kaufmann, 2011. |
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