Zurich University of Applied Sciences
Department School of Engineering
Institute of Computer Science

Master Thesis

Title

Author:
Caspar Wackerle

Supervisors:
Prof. Dr. Thomas Bohnert
Christof Marti

Submitted on
January 31, 2026

Study program:
Computer Science, M.Sc.

Imprint

Project: Master Thesis
Title: Title
Author: Caspar Wackerle
Date: January 31, 2026
Keywords: energy efficiency, cloud, kubernetes
Copyright: Zurich University of Applied Sciences

Study program:
Computer Science, M.Sc.
Zurich University of Applied Sciences

Supervisor 1:
Prof. Dr. Thomas Bohnert
Zurich University of Applied Sciences
Email: thomas.michael.bohnert@zhaw.ch
Web: Link

Supervisor 2:
Christof Marti
Zurich University of Applied Sciences
Email: christof.marti@zhaw.ch
Web: Link

Abstract

Abstract

The accompanying source code for this thesis, including all deployment and automation scripts, is available in the **PowerStack**[1] repository on GitHub.

Contents

Abstract **iii**

1 Introduction and Context **1**

1.1 System Environment for Development, Build and Debugging 1
1.1.1 Host Environment and Assumptions 1
1.1.2 Build Toolchain 1
1.1.3 Debugging Environment 2
1.1.4 Supporting Tools and Utilities 3
1.1.5 Relevance and Limitations 3
1.2 eBPF-collector-Based CPU Time Attribution 4
1.2.1 Scope and Motivation 4
1.2.2 Baseline and Architecture Overview 4
1.2.3 Kernel Programs and Data Flow 5
1.2.4 Collected Metrics 6
1.2.5 Integration with Energy Measurements 6
1.2.6 Efficiency and Robustness 7
1.2.7 Limitations and Future Work 8
1.3 GPU Collector Integration 8
1.3.1 Introduction and Motivation 8
1.3.2 Architectural Overview 9
1.3.3 Phase-Aware Sampling: Conceptual Overview 10
1.3.4 Phase-Aware Timing Model 11
1.3.5 Event Lifecycle 12
1.3.6 Per-Process Telemetry Window 13
1.3.7 Collected Metrics 14
1.3.8 Configuration Parameters 16
1.3.9 Robustness and Limitations 16
1.4 Redfish Collector Integration 18
1.4.1 Overview and Objectives 18
1.4.2 Baseline in Kepler 18
1.4.3 Refactoring and Tycho Extensions 18
1.4.4 Collected Metrics 20
1.4.5 Integration and Data Flow 21
1.4.6 Accuracy and Robustness Improvements 21
1.4.7 Limitations 21
1.5 Configuration Management 21
1.5.1 Overview and Role in the Architecture 21
1.5.2 Configuration Sources 22
1.5.3 Implementation and Environment Variables 22
1.5.4 Evolution in Newer Kepler Versions 23
1.5.5 Available Parameters 23
1.6 Timing Engine 23
1.6.1 Overview and Motivation 23
1.6.2 Architecture and Design 24
1.6.3 Synchronization and Collector Integration 25
1.6.4 Lifecycle and Configuration 25

1.6.5 Discussion and Limitations 26
1.7 Ring Buffer Implementation 26
1.7.1 Overview 26
1.7.2 Data Model and Sample Types 27
1.7.3 Dynamic Sizing and Spare Capacity 27
1.7.4 Thread Safety and Integration 27

A Appendix Title **28**

Bibliography **29**

Chapter 1

Introduction and Context

1.1 System Environment for Development, Build and Debugging

This section documents the environment used to develop, build, and debug *Tycho*; detailed guides live in [2].

1.1.1 Host Environment and Assumptions

All development and debugging activities for *Tycho* were performed on bare-metal servers rather than virtualized instances. Development matched the evaluation target and preserved access to hardware telemetry such as RAPL, NVML, and BMC Redfish. The host environment consisted of Lenovo ThinkSystem SR530 servers (Xeon Bronze 3104, 64 GB DDR4, SSD+HDD, Redfish-capable BMC).

The systems ran Ubuntu 22.04 with a Linux 5.15 kernel. Full root access was available and required in order to access privileged interfaces such as eBPF. Kubernetes was installed directly on these servers using PowerStack[1], and served as the platform for deploying and testing *Tycho*. Access was via VPN and SSH within the university network.

1.1.2 Build Toolchain

Two complementary workflows are used: a dev path (local build, run directly on a node for interactive debugging) and a deploy path (build a container image, push to GHCR, deploy as a privileged DaemonSet via *PowerStack*).

1.1.2.1 Local builds

The implementation language is Go, using `go version go1.25.1` on `linux/amd64`. The `Makefile` orchestrates routine tasks. The target `make build` compiles the exporter into _output/bin/<os>_<arch>/kepler. Targets for cross builds are available for `linux/amd64` and `linux/arm64`. The build injects version information at link time through `LDFLAGS` including the source version, the revision, the branch, and the build platform. This supports traceability when binaries or images are compared during experiments.

1.1.2.2 Container images

Container builds use Docker Buildx with multi arch output for `linux/amd64` and `linux/arm64`. Images are pushed to the GitHub Container Registry under the project repository. For convenience there are targets that build a base image and optional variants that enable individual software components when required.

1.1.2.3 Continuous integration

GitHub Actions produces deterministic images with an immutable commit-encoded tag, a time stamped dev tag, and a latest for `main`. Builds are triggered on pushes to the main branches and on demand. Buildx cache shortens builds without affecting reproducibility.

1.1.2.4 Versioning and reproducibility

Development proceeds on feature branches with pull requests into `main`. Release images are produced automatically for commits on `main`. Development images are produced for commits on `dev` and for feature branches when needed. Dependency management uses Go modules with a populated `vendor/` directory. The files `go.mod` and `go.sum` pin the module versions, and `go mod vendor` materializes the dependency tree for offline builds.

1.1.3 Debugging Environment

The debugger used for *Tycho* is **Delve** in headless mode with a Debug Adapter Protocol listener. This provides a stable front end for interactive sessions while the debugged process runs on the target node. Delve was selected because it is purpose built for Go, supports remote attach, and integrates reliably with common editors without altering the build configuration beyond standard debug symbols.

1.1.3.1 Remote debugging setup

Debug sessions are executed on a Kubernetes worker node. The exporter binary is started under Delve in headless mode with a DAP listener on a dedicated TCP port. The workstation connects over an authenticated channel. In practice an SSH tunnel is used to forward the listener port from the node to the workstation. This keeps the debugger endpoint inaccessible from the wider network and avoids additional access controls on the cluster. To prevent metric interference the node used for debugging excludes the deployed DaemonSet, so only the debug instance is active on that host.

1.1.3.2 Integration with the editor

The editor is configured to attach through the Debug Adapter Protocol. In practice a minimal launch configuration points the adapter at the forwarded listener. Breakpoints, variable inspection, step control, and log capture work without special handling. No container specific extensions are required because the debugged process runs directly on the node.

The editor attaches over the SSH-forwarded DAP port; the inner loop is build locally with `make`, launch under Delve with a DAP listener, attach via SSH, inspect, adjust, repeat. When the goal is to validate behavior in a cluster setting rather than to step through code, the deploy oriented path is used instead. In that case the image is built and pushed, and observation relies on logs and metrics rather than an attached debugger.

1.1.3.3 Limitations and challenges

Headless remote debugging introduces some constraints. Interactive sessions depend on network reachability and an SSH tunnel, which adds a small amount of latency. The debugged process must retain the privileges needed for eBPF and access to hardware counters, which narrows the choice of where to run sessions on multi tenant systems. Running a second exporter in parallel on the same node would distort measurements, which is why the DaemonSet is excluded on the debug host. Container based debugging is possible but less convenient given the need to coordinate with cluster security policies. For these reasons, most active debugging uses a locally built binary that runs directly on the node, while container based deployments are reserved for integration tests and evaluation runs.

1.1.4 Supporting Tools and Utilities

1.1.4.1 Configuration and local orchestration

A lightweight configuration file `config.yaml` consolidates development toggles that influence local runs and selective deployment. Repository scripts read this file and translate high level options into concrete command line flags and environment variables for the exporter and for auxiliary processes. This keeps day to day operations consistent without editing manifests or code, and aligns with the two workflows in § **??**. Repository scripts map configuration keys to explicit flags for local runs, debug sessions, and ad hoc deploys.

1.1.4.2 Container, cluster, and monitoring utilities

Supporting tools: Docker, kubectl, Helm, k3s, Rancher, Ansible, Prometheus, Grafana. Each is used only where it reduces friction, for example Docker for image builds, kubectl for interaction, and Prometheus/Grafana for observability.

1.1.5 Relevance and Limitations

1.1.5.1 Scope and contribution

The development, build, and debugging environment described in § 1.1.2 and § 1.1.3 is enabling infrastructure rather than a scientific contribution. Its purpose is to make modifications to *Tycho* feasible and to support evaluation, not to advance methodology in software engineering or tooling.

Documenting the environment serves reproducibility and auditability. A reader can verify that results were obtained on bare-metal with access to the required telemetry, and can reconstruct the build pipeline from source to binary and container image. The references to the repository at the start of this section in § 1.1 provide the operational detail that is intentionally omitted from the main text.

1.1.5.2 Boundaries and omissions

Installation steps, editor-specific configuration, system administration, security hardening, and multi tenant policy are out of scope; concrete commands live in the repository. Where concrete commands matter for reproducibility they are available in the repository documentation cited in § 1.1.

1.2 eBPF-collector-Based CPU Time Attribution

1.2.1 Scope and Motivation

The kernel-level `eBPF` subsystem in Tycho provides the foundation for process-level energy attribution. It captures CPU scheduling, interrupt, and performance-counter events directly inside the Linux kernel, translating them into continuous measurements of CPU ownership and activity. All higher-level aggregation and modeling occur in userspace; this section therefore focuses exclusively on the in-kernel instrumentation and the data it exposes.

Kepler's original `eBPF` design offered a coarse but functional basis for collecting CPU time and basic performance metrics. Its `sched_switch` tracepoint recorded process runtime, while hardware performance counters supplied instruction and cache data. However, the sampling cadence and aggregation logic were controlled from userspace, producing irregular collection intervals and temporal misalignment with energy readings. Kepler also treated all CPU time as a single undifferentiated category, omitting explicit representation of idle periods, interrupt handling, and kernel threads. As a result, a portion of the processor's activity (often significant under I/O-heavy workloads) remained unaccounted for in energy attribution.

Tycho addresses these limitations through a refined kernel-level design. New tracepoints capture hard and soft interrupts, while extended per-CPU state tracking distinguishes between user processes, kernel threads, and idle execution. Each CPU maintains resettable bins that accumulate idle and interrupt durations within well-defined time windows, providing temporally bounded activity summaries aligned with energy sampling intervals. Cgroup identifiers are refreshed at every scheduling event to maintain accurate container attribution, even when processes migrate between control groups. The result is a stable, low-overhead data source that describes CPU usage continuously and with sufficient granularity to support fine-grained energy partitioning in the subsequent analysis.

1.2.2 Baseline and Architecture Overview

Kepler's kernel instrumentation consisted of a compact set of `eBPF` programs that sampled process-level CPU activity and a few hardware performance metrics. The core tracepoint, `tp_btf/sched_switch`, captured context switches and estimated per-process runtime by measuring the on-CPU duration between successive events. Complementary probes monitored page cache access and writeback operations, providing coarse indicators of I/O intensity. Hardware performance counters (CPU cycles, instructions, and cache misses) were collected through `perf_event_array` readers, enabling approximate performance characterization at the task level.

While effective for general profiling, this setup lacked the temporal resolution and system coverage required for precise energy correlation. The sampling process was driven entirely from userspace, leading to irregular collection intervals, and idle or interrupt time was never observed directly. Consequently, CPU utilization appeared complete only from a process perspective, leaving kernel and idle phases invisible to the measurement pipeline.

Tycho extends this architecture into a continuous kernel-side monitoring system. Each CPU maintains an independent state structure recording its current task, timestamp, and execution context. This allows uninterrupted accounting of CPU ownership, even between user-space scheduling events. New tracepoints for hard and soft interrupts measure service durations directly in the kernel, ensuring that all processor activity (user, kernel, or idle) is captured. Dedicated per-CPU bins accumulate these times within fixed analysis windows, which the userspace collector periodically reads and resets. Process-level metrics are stored in an LRU hash map, while hardware performance counters remain integrated via existing PMU readers.

In contrast to Kepler's snapshot-based sampling, Tycho's userspace collector consolidates all per-process and per-CPU deltas from the kernel maps once per polling interval into a single tick. This tick-based aggregation provides deterministic timing, reduces memory pressure, and guarantees temporal consistency across heterogeneous metric sources. Data therefore flows linearly from tracepoints to per-CPU maps and onward to the collector, forming a continuous and low-overhead measurement path that supports precise, time-aligned energy attribution.

1.2.3 Kernel Programs and Data Flow

Tycho's `eBPF` subsystem consists of a small set of tracepoints and helper maps that together maintain a continuous record of CPU activity. Each program updates per-CPU or per-task data structures in response to kernel events, ensuring that all processor time is accounted for across user, kernel, and idle contexts. The kernel side is event-driven and self-contained; aggregation into time-bounded ticks occurs later in userspace.

Scheduler Switch The central tracepoint, `tp_btf/sched_switch`, triggers whenever the scheduler replaces one task with another. It computes the elapsed on-CPU time of the outgoing process and updates its entry in the `processes` map, which stores cumulative runtime, hardware-counter deltas, and classification metadata such as `cgroup_id`, `is_kthread`, and command name. Hardware counters for instructions, cycles, and cache misses are read from preconfigured PMU readers at this moment, keeping utilization metrics temporally aligned with task execution. Each CPU also maintains a lightweight `cpu_state` structure that records the last timestamp, currently active PID, and task type. When the idle task (PID 0) is scheduled, this structure accumulates idle time locally, allowing continuous accounting even between user-space collection intervals. At polling time, the userspace collector drains these maps atomically, computing per-process deltas since the previous read and bundling all results into a single tick that represents the complete scheduler activity for that interval.

Interrupt Handlers To capture system activity outside user processes, Tycho introduces tracepoints for hard and soft interrupts. Pairs of entry and exit hooks (`irq_handler_entry,exit` and `softirq_entry,exit`) measure the time spent in each category by recording timestamps in the per-CPU state and adding the resulting deltas to dedicated counters. These durations are aggregated in `cpu_bins`, a resettable per-CPU array that also stores idle time. At each collection cycle, the userspace `bpfCollector` drains and resets these bins, incorporating their totals into the tick structure alongside the per-process deltas. This design maintains continuous coverage of kernel activity while preserving strict temporal alignment between CPU-state transitions and energy sampling.

Page-Cache Probes Kepler's original page-cache hooks (`fexit/mark_page_accessed` and `tp/writeback_dirty_folio`) are preserved. They increment per-process counters for cache hits and writeback operations, serving as indicators of I/O intensity rather than direct power consumption. These counters are read and reset as part of the same tick aggregation that handles scheduler and interrupt data.

Supporting Maps and Flow All high-frequency updates occur in per-CPU or LRU hash maps to avoid contention. `pid_time_map` tracks start timestamps for active threads, enabling precise runtime computation during context switches. `processes` holds per-task aggregates, while `cpu_states` and `cpu_bins` manage temporal accounting per core. PMU event readers for cycles, instructions, and cache misses remain shared with Kepler's implementation. At runtime, data flows from tracepoints to these maps and is drained periodically by the userspace collector, which consolidates the deltas into a single per-tick record before storing it in the ring buffer. This batched extraction forms a deterministic, lock-free telemetry path from kernel to analysis, ensuring high-frequency accuracy without per-event synchronization overhead.

1.2.4 Collected Metrics

The kernel `eBPF` subsystem exports a defined set of metrics describing CPU usage at process and system levels. These values are aggregated in kernel maps and periodically retrieved by the userspace collector for time-aligned energy analysis. Table 1.1 summarizes all metrics grouped by category.

All metrics are aggregated once per polling interval into a single userspace tick that contains per-process and per-CPU deltas. This tick-based representation replaces the former per-sample storage model, ensuring temporal consistency across metrics while retaining the semantics listed above.

Together these metrics form a coherent description of CPU activity. Time-based data quantify ownership of processing resources, hardware counters capture execution intensity, and classification attributes link activity to its origin. This dataset serves as the kernel-level foundation for energy attribution and higher-level modeling in userspace.

1.2.5 Integration with Energy Measurements

The data exported from the kernel define how CPU resources are distributed among processes, kernel threads, interrupts, and idle periods during each observation window. When combined with energy readings obtained over the same interval, these temporal shares provide the basis for proportional energy partitioning. Instead of

Metric	Source hook	Description
Time-based metrics		
Process runtime	tp_btf/sched_switch	Per process. Elapsed on-CPU time accumulated at context switches.
Idle time	Derived from sched_switch	Per CPU. Time with no runnable task (PID 0).
IRQ time	irq_handler_{entry,exit}	Per CPU. Duration spent in hardware interrupt handlers.
SoftIRQ time	softirq_{entry,exit}	Per CPU. Duration spent in deferred kernel work.
Hardware-based metrics		
CPU cycles	PMU (perf_event_array)	Per process. Retired CPU cycle count during task execution.
Instructions	PMU (perf_event_array)	Per process. Retired instruction count.
Cache misses	PMU (perf_event_array)	Per process. Last-level cache misses; indicator of memory intensity.
Classification and enrichment metrics		
Cgroup ID	sched_switch	Per process. Control group identifier for container attribution.
Kernel thread flag	sched_switch	Per process. Marks kernel threads executing in system context.
Page cache hits	mark_page_accessed	Per process. Read or write access to cached pages; proxy for I/O activity.
IRQ vectors	softirq_entry	Per CPU. Frequency of specific soft interrupt vectors.

TABLE 1.1: Metrics collected by the kernel eBPF subsystem.

relying on statistical inference or coarse utilization averages, Tycho attributes energy according to directly measured CPU ownership.

Each collection tick consolidates all per-process runtime and performance-counter deltas together with per-CPU idle and interrupt bins. The sum of these components represents the total active time observed by the processor during that tick, matching the energy sample boundaries defined by the timing engine. This strict temporal alignment ensures that every joule of measured energy can be traced to a specific class of activity—user workload, kernel service, or idle baseline. Through this mechanism, the eBPF subsystem provides the precise temporal structure required for fine-grained, container-level energy attribution in the subsequent analysis stages.

1.2.6 Efficiency and Robustness

The kernel instrumentation is designed to operate continuously with negligible system impact while ensuring correctness across kernel versions. All high-frequency data reside in per-CPU maps, eliminating cross-core contention and locking. Each processor updates only its local entries in cpu_states and cpu_bins, while per-task data are stored in a bounded LRU hash that automatically removes inactive entries. Arithmetic within tracepoints is deliberately minimal (timestamp subtraction and counter increments only) so that the added latency per event remains near the measurement noise floor.

Userspace retrieval employs batched `BatchLookupAndDelete` operations, reducing system-call overhead and maintaining constant latency regardless of map size. Hardware counters are accessed through pre-opened `perf_event_array` readers managed by the kernel, avoiding repeated setup costs. Each polling interval consolidates the collected deltas into a single userspace tick, ensuring deterministic timing and consistent aggregation across all CPUs. This architecture allows the subsystem to record thousands of context switches per second while keeping CPU overhead low.

Correctness is maintained through several safeguards. CO-RE (Compile Once, Run Everywhere) field resolution protects the program from kernel-version differences in `task_struct` layouts. Cgroup identifiers are refreshed only for the newly scheduled task, ensuring accurate container labeling even when group membership changes. The idle task (PID 0) and kernel threads are handled explicitly to prevent user-space misattribution, and the resettable bin design enforces strict temporal separation between collection ticks. Together, these measures yield a stable and version-tolerant tracing layer that can run indefinitely without producing inconsistent or overlapping tick data.

1.2.7 Limitations and Future Work

Although the extended `eBPF` subsystem provides comprehensive temporal coverage of CPU activity, several limitations remain. Its precision is ultimately bounded by the granularity of available energy telemetry, as energy readings must be averaged over fixed collection intervals to remain stable. Within shorter ticks, power fluctuations introduce noise that limits the accuracy of direct attribution.

The current implementation also omits processor C-state and frequency information. While idle and active time are distinguished, variations in power state and dynamic frequency scaling are not yet represented in the collected data. Including tracepoints such as `power:cpu_idle` and `power:cpu_frequency` would enable finer correlation between CPU state transitions and power usage. Additionally, very short-lived processes may terminate and be removed from the LRU map before the next tick is collected, leading to a slight underrepresentation of transient workloads.

1.3 GPU Collector Integration

1.3.1 Introduction and Motivation

Accelerators are increasingly responsible for the energy footprint of modern compute workloads. To attribute this consumption to containerized applications with high temporal accuracy, Tycho must incorporate GPU telemetry into the same unified timing model used for RAPL, eBPF, and Redfish domains (§ 1.6). Achieving this integration is challenging: GPU drivers do not expose continuous measurements but publish telemetry at discrete, hardware-dependent intervals. If these intervals are not respected, sampling quickly suffers from aliasing, redundant reads, and temporal drift across subsystems, as well as imprecise timing.

NVIDIA's telemetry interfaces further complicate accurate measurement. The widely used `nvmlDeviceGetPowerUsage` function reports a *one-second trailing average*[3], not the instantaneous power required for sub-second energy attribution. High-frequency power samples are available only through specialised field APIs. Cumulative energy counters (when present) provide authoritative publish boundaries, but they are absent on many devices, including consumer GPUs and MIG configurations. Process-level telemetry is even more restrictive: NVML aggregates utilisation over caller-specified wall-clock windows and provides no information about the device's internal publish cadence.

Because of these structural limitations, fixed polling intervals or naïve periodic sampling are fundamentally insufficient. Accurate attribution requires that Tycho (i) infer the GPU's implicit publish cadence, (ii) align its sampling with this cadence, and (iii) integrate both device- and process-level telemetry into the global measurement timeline without violating the strict monotonic ordering enforced by Tycho's multi-domain ring buffer (§ 1.7.1).

This work introduces two contributions that address these challenges:

- **A phase-aware sampling mechanism** that infers the GPU's hidden publish rhythm and adaptively concentrates polling around predicted update edges. This transforms GPU sampling from periodic polling into a timing-aligned, event-driven process.
- **A unified integration of GPU telemetry** into Tycho's global timebase, producing exactly one `GpuTick` per confirmed hardware update, with timestamps that are directly comparable to all other energy domains.

Together, these mechanisms provide temporally precise, low-latency GPU measurements while respecting the variability and constraints of NVIDIA's telemetry ecosystem. This elevates the GPU subsystem to a first-class energy domain in Tycho and enables accurate container-level attribution in heterogeneous accelerator environments.

1.3.2 Architectural Overview

The GPU collector is organised as a layered subsystem that integrates vendor telemetry, adaptive timing, and unified buffering into a coherent measurement pipeline. Its structure reflects Tycho's core design principles: strict adherence to a monotonic timebase, decoupling of heterogeneous sampling frequencies, and event-driven integration into the platform-wide timing and buffering infrastructure (§ 1.6, § 1.7.1).

At the lowest layer, the collector interfaces with NVIDIA accelerators through a backend abstraction compatible with both `NVML` and `DCGM` ("*Data Center GPU Manager*"). This abstraction handles device enumeration, capability probing, MIG topology inspection, and access to device and process telemetry. The collector does not assume uniform backend capabilities: cumulative energy counters, instantaneous power fields, and process-level utilisation may or may not be available depending on hardware generation and configuration.

Above this backend, the collector exposes two measurement paths:

- **Device path.** Retrieves power, utilisation, frequency, thermal, and memory metrics for all devices and MIG instances. These values describe the instantaneous operational state of the accelerator.

- **Process path.** Aggregates per-process utilisation over a backend-defined wall-clock window. This enables multi-tenant attribution but is inherently retrospective and independent of the device's internal publish cadence.

Both paths feed into a shared sampling layer governed by Tycho's timing engine. The device path is triggered by a *phase-aware scheduler* that aligns its polling activity with the driver's implicit publish cadence. The process path is invoked only when a device update is detected, ensuring temporal alignment between instantaneous device measurements and aggregated process data.

The final integration step mirrors all other Tycho subsystems: each confirmed hardware update is converted into a `GpuTick` structure containing device and (optionally) process snapshots, together with a strictly ordered monotonic timestamp. This tick is emitted into Tycho's multi-domain ring buffer, where it becomes part of the unified energy timeline used for correlation and attribution across eBPF, RAPL, and platform power domains.

Figure 1.1 (later in this section) provides a conceptual overview of this pipeline, illustrating the interaction between the backend interface, the phase-aware sampler, and Tycho's global collection engine.

1.3.3 Phase-Aware Sampling: Conceptual Overview

GPU drivers publish power and utilisation metrics at discrete, device-internal intervals. These updates occur neither continuously nor synchronously with the sampling frequencies required by Tycho's timing engine. Because the driver does not expose its publish cadence directly, a naïve fixed-interval polling strategy risks both *aliasing* (missing updates) and *redundancy* (repeatedly reading identical values). Either effect would distort the temporal alignment of GPU measurements with the rest of Tycho's energy domains.

To avoid this, the GPU collector introduces a *phase-aware sampling* mechanism that infers the driver's implicit publish cadence from observations. The sampler tracks two quantities: an estimated publish period and the phase offset between the device's update rhythm and Tycho's monotonic timebase. By predicting the next likely update moment, the sampler can modulate its polling intensity accordingly:

- **Base mode:** low-frequency polling maintains coarse alignment and detects long-term drift in the publish cadence.

- **Burst mode:** when the current time approaches a predicted update edge, the sampler briefly increases its polling frequency to minimise the latency between the hardware update and Tycho's observation of it.

This adaptive strategy ensures that Tycho reads the device only when a fresh publish is likely to be available. Freshness is determined by comparing each snapshot to the most recent confirmed update, preferably via cumulative energy counters when present, or otherwise via power deltas exceeding a configurable threshold. Only when a new publish is detected does the sampler emit an event.

The resulting behaviour is simple but powerful:

> *Each hardware update produces exactly one `GpuTick`, and no tick is emitted unless the device has genuinely updated.*

This one-to-one correspondence is critical for integrating GPU measurements into Tycho's unified energy timeline. It guarantees temporal fidelity, eliminates redundant samples, and ensures that GPU metrics are directly comparable with other measurements obtained under the same timing and buffering semantics.

The next subsection formalises this behaviour by presenting the timing model used to estimate publish periods, track phase offsets, and define the burst window around predicted update edges.

1.3.4 Phase-Aware Timing Model

The timing model enables Tycho to infer the GPU driver's implicit publish cadence and to align sampling with the actual update moments of the hardware. It maintains two quantities derived from confirmed device updates: an estimate of the *publish period* and a *phase offset* relative to Tycho's monotonic clock. This subsection presents the model in a unified mathematical form.

Let $t_{\text{obs},k}$ denote the monotonic timestamp of the k-th confirmed hardware update. From these observations, the sampler derives the period estimate $\hat{T}_k$ and phase estimate $\hat{\phi}_k$.

Period Estimation. Each new inter-update interval

$$\Delta t_k = t_{\text{obs},k} - t_{\text{obs},k-1}$$

provides a direct sample of the device's publish period. To remain robust to jitter caused by DVFS, thermal transitions, or backend noise, the sampler applies an exponential moving average (EMA):

$$\hat{T}_k = (1 - \alpha_T)\, \hat{T}_{k-1} + \alpha_T\, \Delta t_k,$$

with $\alpha_T \in (0, 1)$ controlling the smoothing strength. The resulting estimate is clamped to a stable range derived from Tycho's engine cadence, ensuring predictable behaviour across different GPUs.

Phase Tracking. Given a current period estimate, the expected time of the k-th update is

$$\hat{t}_k = t_{\text{obs},k-1} + \hat{\phi}_{k-1} + \hat{T}_k.$$

The deviation

$$\delta_k = t_{\text{obs},k} - \hat{t}_k$$

represents the phase error. The sampler updates its phase estimate through a second EMA:

$$\hat{\phi}_k = (\hat{\phi}_{k-1} + \alpha_\phi\, \delta_k) \bmod \hat{T}_k,$$

where α_ϕ is a small adaptation constant. This ensures smooth convergence toward the device's true publish rhythm.

Edge Prediction. At an arbitrary time t_{now}, the predicted next update edge is

$$t_{\text{next}} = t_{\text{obs},k} + n \cdot \hat{T}_{k+1} + \hat{\phi}_{k+1},$$

where n is the smallest non-negative integer such that $t_{\text{next}} \geq t_{\text{now}}$. This prediction determines where sampling effort should be concentrated.

Burst Window. To avoid continuous high-frequency polling, the sampler restricts hyperpolling to a narrow window of half-width w around t_{next}:

$$\text{mode}(t_{\text{now}}) = \begin{cases} \text{burst}, & |t_{\text{now}} - t_{\text{next}}| \leq w, \\ \text{base}, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

The width w is expressed as a fraction of the calibrated engine cadence, ensuring proportional behaviour across platforms.

Summary. The phase-aware model enables Tycho to infer the GPU's implicit publish cadence solely from observed updates and to align sampling with the device's true update edges. By combining smooth period estimation, adaptive phase correction, and narrow burst windows around predicted publishes, the sampler detects new hardware updates with low latency and emits exactly one `GpuTick` per publish.

Figure 1.1 visualises the behaviour of the phase-aware sampling model introduced above. The top lane represents the hardware's implicit publish sequence; the middle lane shows Tycho's adaptive polling pattern during both calibration and the phase-locked regime; and the bottom lane shows the resulting GPU ticks, demonstrating the one-to-one mapping between fresh device updates and emitted `GpuTick` events.

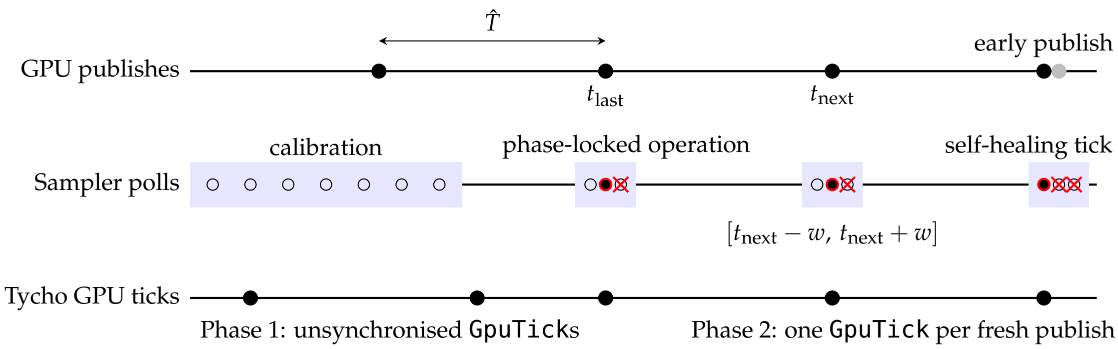

FIGURE 1.1: Phase-aware GPU polling timeline

1.3.5 Event Lifecycle

The GPU collector converts each confirmed hardware update into a monotonically-timestamped `GpuTick` that integrates into Tycho's multi-domain energy timeline. The lifecycle consists of five stages: polling, device acquisition, optional process acquisition, freshness detection, and tick emission.

1. Poll Initiation. Polling is triggered solely by the phase-aware scheduler (§ 1.3.3, § 1.3.4). Base-mode polls track long-term cadence drift; burst-mode polls densely probe the vicinity of predicted update edges. Each poll receives a monotonic timestamp t_{now} that anchors the resulting event.

2. Device Snapshot Acquisition. A poll retrieves device-level telemetry for all GPUs and MIG instances, capturing power, utilisation, clocks, thermals, and memory state. All values reflect the device's instantaneous condition at t_{now} and form a consistent cross-device snapshot of the accelerator subsystem.

3. Optional Process Snapshot Acquisition. If available, process-level telemetry is sampled over a backend-defined wall-clock window (§ 1.3.6). Although retrospective, these samples are associated with the same monotonic timestamp as the device snapshot, ensuring that device and process data remain correlated without temporal ambiguity.

4. Freshness Determination. The collector compares the new device snapshot with the most recent confirmed update. Cumulative energy counters, when available, serve as the authoritative freshness signal; otherwise Tycho uses a power-delta threshold to avoid counting noise as updates. Only fresh snapshots update the period and phase estimators and proceed to the next stage.

5. Tick Emission. A fresh observation is converted into a `GpuTick` containing device and (optional) process snapshots and the timestamp t_{now}. The tick is then delivered to Tycho's multi-domain ring buffer (§ 1.7.1). If no fresh update is detected, the poll produces no tick, ensuring that the GPU timeline faithfully reflects the hardware's publish cadence.

Summary. The event lifecycle ensures that GPU telemetry is sampled only when meaningful, timestamped consistently with Tycho's timebase, and integrated without blocking or duplication. Each hardware update generates exactly one `GpuTick`, providing a precise, causally ordered input to Tycho's cross-domain energy attribution pipeline.

1.3.6 Per-Process Telemetry Window

Device-level metrics describe the instantaneous state of each GPU, but many applications require attributing accelerator activity to individual processes or containers. NVIDIA's interfaces provide such information only in the form of *aggregated utilisation over a caller-specified time window*. Correctly selecting and interpreting this window is essential for obtaining meaningful per-process data and for aligning process-level records with the device-level timeline maintained by Tycho.

Wall-Clock Semantics. Unlike device publishes, which occur on the GPU's internal cadence, NVIDIA's per-process APIs integrate utilisation over a duration supplied by the caller. These interfaces expect a *wall-clock* interval, expressed in milliseconds, rather than a duration derived from Tycho's monotonic timebase. The distinction is crucial: Tycho's monotonic clock operates on an internal quantum chosen to support high-resolution scheduling (§ 1.6), but this quantum has no defined relationship to real elapsed time. Using monotonic differences directly would produce windows that are several orders of magnitude too short, yielding incomplete utilisation samples.

For this reason, Tycho maintains a separate wall-clock origin for each GPU or MIG instance. Whenever process telemetry is requested, the duration since the last successful query is computed using wall-clock time, ensuring that the backend receives a true real-time interval.

Window Derivation. For each owner (physical GPU or MIG instance), Tycho records the timestamp $t_{\text{last}}^{(i)}$ of the most recent successful process query. When a new query occurs at time $t_{\text{now}}^{(i)}$, the raw duration

$$\Delta t_{\text{raw}}^{(i)} = t_{\text{now}}^{(i)} - t_{\text{last}}^{(i)}$$

is transformed according to backend expectations:

1. *Clamping.* The duration is restricted to a safe range $\Delta t_{\min} \leq \Delta t^{(i)} \leq \Delta t_{\max}$ to avoid zero-length or excessively long sampling windows.

2. *Millisecond granularity.* NVIDIA's process APIs accept durations in whole milliseconds. Tycho therefore rounds the clamped value up to the next full millisecond to prevent systematic underestimation of utilisation.

After a successful query, the wall-clock origin is updated to $t_{\text{last}}^{(i)} \leftarrow t_{\text{now}}^{(i)}$, establishing continuity across successive sampling windows.

Temporal Alignment with Device Updates. Even though per-process telemetry describes accumulated activity rather than a snapshot, Tycho ensures that all process samples remain aligned with the device timeline. Each process record is associated with the device-level timestamp of the poll that triggered the query. If a device has never produced a fresh update, the collector uses the timestamp of the most recent device tick as the initial origin for its process window. This guarantees that device and process metrics are linked to the same global temporal reference and can be fused without interpolation.

Backend Variability and Robustness. Process-level support varies widely across NVIDIA hardware and software stacks. DCGM-capable systems typically expose high-quality, high-resolution utilisation data, whereas NVML-only systems (particularly consumer GPUs) may provide limited or noisy information. Tycho's design accommodates these differences gracefully: when a process query fails, the wall-clock origin is still advanced to prevent tight retry loops, and device-level sampling proceeds unaffected. This ensures stable behaviour even in mixed configurations where only a subset of devices expose meaningful per-process telemetry.

Summary. By separating wall-clock process windows from monotonic device timestamps and carefully aligning both within Tycho's timing architecture, the GPU collector provides process-level telemetry that is semantically correct, temporally consistent, and robust to backend limitations. This separation of concerns is essential for accurate multi-tenant attribution in heterogeneous accelerator environments.

1.3.7 Collected Metrics

The GPU collector reports two complementary categories of telemetry that together describe both the instantaneous state of each accelerator and the distribution of GPU activity across processes. All metrics are incorporated into a unified `GpuTick` structure and timestamped under Tycho's monotonic timebase, ensuring direct comparability with other domains.

Device-Level Metrics. Device and MIG-level metrics capture the operational state of the accelerator at the moment Tycho detects a fresh hardware update. These values include power, utilisation, memory usage, thermal data, and clock frequencies, along with backend-specific fields such as instantaneous power samples or cumulative energy counters. Cumulative energy, when available, is used as the authoritative indicator of publish boundaries and therefore plays a central role in the timing model and freshness detection. Due to a tendency of NVIDIA GPUs to still produce (invalid) values when queried for cumulative energy, the actual availability of correct cumulative energy-metrics is verified during the initial calibration.

Process-Level Metrics. Process-level metrics describe the aggregated utilisation of individual processes over the backend-defined wall-clock window (§ 1.3.6). They enable multi-tenant attribution by associating GPU activity with specific applications, containers, or pods. Because these values represent accumulated work rather than an instantaneous snapshot, they are paired with the device-level timestamp of the triggering poll, ensuring temporal consistency within Tycho's unified timeline.

Tables 1.2 and 1.3 summarise the metrics collected at both levels.

Metric	**Unit**	**Description**
Utilisation metrics		
`SMUtilPct`	%	Streaming multiprocessor (SM) utilisation.
`MemUtilPct`	%	Memory controller utilisation.
`EncUtilPct`	%	Hardware video encoder utilisation.
`DecUtilPct`	%	Hardware video decoder utilisation.
Energy and thermal metrics		
`PowerMilliW`	mW	Instantaneous power via NVML/DCGM (1s average).
`InstantPowerMilliW`	mW	High-frequency instantaneous power from NVIDIA field APIs.
`CumEnergyMilliJ`	mJ	Cumulative energy counter (preferred freshness signal).
`TempC`	°C	GPU temperature.
Memory and frequency metrics		
`MemUsedBytes`	bytes	Allocated framebuffer memory.
`MemTotalBytes`	bytes	Total framebuffer memory.
`SMClockMHz`	MHz	SM clock frequency.
`MemClockMHz`	MHz	Memory clock frequency.
Topology and metadata		
`DeviceIndex`	–	Numeric device identifier.
`UUID`	–	Stable device UUID.
`PCIBusID`	–	PCI bus identifier.
`IsMIG`	–	Indicates a MIG instance.
`MIGParentID`	–	Parent device index for MIG instances.
`Backend`	–	Backend type (`NVML` or `DCGM`).

TABLE 1.2: Device- and MIG-level metrics collected by the GPU subsystem.

Metric	Unit	Description
`Pid`	–	Process identifier.
`ComputeUtil`	%	Per-process SM utilisation aggregated over the query window.
`MemUtil`	%	Per-process memory controller utilisation.
`EncUtil`	%	Per-process encoder utilisation.
`DecUtil`	%	Per-process decoder utilisation.
`GpuIndex`	–	Device or MIG instance to which the sample belongs.
`GpuUUID`	–	Corresponding device UUID.
`TimeStampUS`	µs	Backend timestamp associated with the utilisation record.
MIG metadata (when applicable)		
`GpuInstanceID`	–	MIG GPU instance identifier.
`ComputeInstanceID`	–	MIG compute-instance identifier.

TABLE 1.3: Process-level metrics collected over a backend-defined time window.

1.3.8 Configuration Parameters

The GPU collector exposes only a minimal set of configuration parameters. In contrast to traditional monitoring systems that require hand-tuned polling intervals, Tycho derives the parameters of the phase-aware sampler directly from the engine cadence calibrated during system startup (§ 1.6). This ensures that GPU sampling inherits the same temporal consistency as all other energy domains and remains robust across heterogeneous hardware.

The configuration governs three tightly coupled aspects of the sampling mechanism:

- **Cadence bounds.** The initial estimate of the GPU publish period, as well as its minimum and maximum permissible values, are expressed as simple fractions of the engine cadence. This constrains the period estimator to a stable range without relying on device-specific heuristics.

- **Polling intervals.** Both base-mode and burst-mode polling frequencies are derived from fixed ratios of the engine cadence. As a result, Tycho polls aggressively only when a publish is predicted without requiring manual tuning.

- **Burst-window width.** The half-width of the burst window around t_{next} is likewise tied to the engine cadence. This determines how narrowly the sampler focuses its hyperpolling effort around predicted publish edges.

Because all parameters scale with the calibrated cadence, the sampler adapts automatically to different GPU generations, backend behaviours, and platform timing characteristics. No user-facing configuration is required; temporal correctness follows directly from Tycho's system-wide timing model.

1.3.9 Robustness and Limitations

The GPU collector is designed to operate reliably across heterogeneous hardware, backend capabilities, and driver behaviours. Its phase-aware sampling, decoupled event queue, and unified timebase ensure that GPU telemetry integrates cleanly with

Tycho's multi-domain measurement framework. Nevertheless, several structural constraints in NVIDIA's telemetry ecosystem define the practical limits of what can be inferred and with what temporal precision.

Backend Variability. The capabilities of `NVML` and `DCGM` differ significantly across GPU generations and product classes. Datacenter GPUs typically expose cumulative energy counters, high-frequency instant power fields, and stable process-level utilisation, while consumer GPUs often lack cumulative energy and provide only coarse utilisation metrics. Tycho handles these differences gracefully (sampling continues even when certain fields are missing) but the quality of the resulting attribution reflects the capabilities of the underlying hardware.

Power Measurement Limitations. The widely used `nvmlDeviceGetPowerUsage` call provides a *one-second trailing average*, which is unsuitable as a high-frequency power signal. Tycho therefore relies on instantaneous power fields (e.g. field 186) when available, and uses cumulative energy counters as the authoritative freshness indicator. On devices lacking both instantaneous fields and cumulative energy, power-based freshness detection becomes less precise, increasing uncertainty in the inferred publish cadence.

Process Attribution Constraints. Process-level utilisation is inherently aggregated over a wall-clock window, since NVIDIA provides no access to per-process instantaneous state. This retrospective design imposes two limitations: (i) spikes shorter than the sampling window may be attenuated, and (ii) per-process values cannot be aligned to the exact moment of a device publish. Tycho addresses this by using the device-level timestamp to anchor all process records, but the granularity of attribution ultimately depends on backend resolution.

Cadence Inference and Jitter. Because the driver does not expose its publish cadence, Tycho must infer it indirectly. Under conditions of high load, thermal transitions, or DVFS-induced jitter, publish intervals may vary, introducing uncertainty into edge prediction. Tycho's EMA-based estimators maintain stability under such variability, but prediction accuracy is inherently bounded by the noisiness of the underlying telemetry.

Mixed and MIG Configurations. Systems combining MIG and non-MIG devices, or devices with partial telemetry support, may expose inconsistent field availability across accelerators. Cumulative energy counters may exist for some instances but not others; process information may be available only at the parent-device level. Tycho handles these cases through per-device fallbacks and independent cadence models, but the precision of multi-GPU attribution varies with the fidelity of each device's telemetry.

Vendor support scope. The current GPU collector supports only NVIDIA-based accelerators, following the design of Kepler. While this excludes other vendors, it is justifiable: according to market research[4], NVIDIA captured approximately 93% of the server GPU revenue in 2024. Given this dominant share, focusing on NVIDIA hardware is acceptable for the majority of data-centre GPU deployments.

1.4 Redfish Collector Integration

The Redfish collector retrieves node-level power data from the server's Baseboard Management Controller (BMC) via the Redfish API. As an out-of-band source, it complements in-band interfaces such as RAPL by providing an external, hardware-validated view of total system power. Tycho integrates this telemetry into its synchronized measurement framework, ensuring consistent timing and comparability across collectors.

1.4.1 Overview and Objectives

Redfish power metrics are vendor-defined and updated asynchronously, with variable latency and precision. The Tycho implementation therefore focuses on reliability, timing control, and consistent timestamping. All polling, freshness tracking, and temporal alignment are managed centrally by Tycho, allowing Redfish samples to be merged with other data sources for later workload-level energy attribution.

1.4.2 Baseline in Kepler

In Kepler, the Redfish implementation provided a minimal wrapper around the BMC's `/redfish/v1/Chassis/*/Power` endpoint. Its sole purpose was to retrieve aggregated chassis power at a fixed interval and expose it through the node-level energy interface used by the power model. The default polling frequency was set to 60 seconds, adequate for coarse monitoring but too infrequent for detailed analysis.

At such long intervals, issues like repeated values or timing drift were largely masked by the coarse sampling period. However, the design offered no mechanisms to detect new versus stale data, to associate samples with BMC timestamps, or to align readings precisely with other metrics. The internal background ticker operated independently of other Kepler collectors, providing no unified notion of time or freshness. Kepler's Redfish integration was therefore sufficient for low-resolution system energy reporting, but not designed for higher measurement intervals or fine-grained temporal correlation.

1.4.3 Refactoring and Tycho Extensions

1.4.3.1 Timing Ownership and Polling Control

Tycho removes Kepler's internal ticker and delegates all Redfish polling to its centralized timing engine. To account for the unpredictable nature of BMC update cycles, Tycho introduces an optional adaptive mode governed by `TYCHO_REDFISH_POLL_AUTOTUNE`. When enabled, the collector dynamically infers a suitable polling interval from observed publication gaps, learning the effective refresh frequency of the specific Redfish implementation. When disabled, Tycho performs fixed-interval polling strictly at the user-defined cadence, preserving deterministic operation.

By externalizing timing control, the collector decouples sampling from Redfish's internal pacing, enabling reproducible experiments and consistent temporal correlation with other measurement sources.

1.4.3.2 Header-Based Newness and Sequence Tracking

When polled at higher frequencies, Redfish endpoints often repeat identical payloads until the BMC updates its internal sensors. To avoid redundant samples, Tycho introduces a lightweight newness detection mechanism combining HTTP headers and value comparison.

Each response is inspected for the `ETag` and `Date` headers. If an `ETag` differs from the previously stored value, or if the `Date` timestamp is newer, the sample is treated as fresh. If no header change is observed, Tycho falls back to value-based detection by comparing the reported power against the previous reading. A monotonically increasing `seq` counter is maintained per chassis to mark every distinct update, allowing downstream components to identify repeated or skipped readings unambiguously.

This design provides consistent differentiation between new and stale measurements without requiring vendor-specific heuristics. It also ensures that timestamp alignment and freshness analysis remain reliable even when Redfish responses arrive irregularly or contain repeated values.

1.4.3.3 Heartbeat Mechanism and Freshness Metric

Because Redfish publication intervals can vary considerably between BMC implementations, Tycho introduces a heartbeat mechanism to ensure continuous sample availability. If no new data are received within a configurable timeout, defined by `TYCHO_REDFISH_HEARTBEAT_MAX_GAP_MS`, the collector emits a heartbeat sample that reuses the last known power value. This prevents temporal gaps in the time series and maintains a consistent data flow for later energy integration.

Each emitted sample also carries a *freshness* metric, representing the time difference between the Redfish-reported `Date` header (if present) and the local collection timestamp. This value quantifies the staleness of a reading and allows the analysis layer to account for delayed or buffered updates. In practice, freshness remains below one second on well-behaved BMCs but can increase significantly under heavy load or poor firmware timing.

Together, the heartbeat and freshness metric allow Tycho to stabilize asynchronous Redfish data streams and provide temporal confidence estimates for each sample.

1.4.3.4 Fixed vs Auto Polling Mode

Tycho supports two complementary Redfish polling strategies, selectable via `TYCHO_REDFISH_POLL_AUTOTUNE`. In *fixed mode* (`false`), polling occurs strictly at the user-defined cadence `TYCHO_REDFISH_POLL_MS`. This mode guarantees deterministic timing and is suited for controlled experiments where Redfish irregularities are tolerable or where timing synchronization with other collectors is critical.

When *auto mode* (`true`) is enabled, the collector dynamically adjusts its internal expectations to match the observed publication rhythm of the BMC. It derives the median inter-arrival time of new Redfish samples and adapts the expected heartbeat gap accordingly. This allows the collector to align its emission behavior with the actual update frequency of the hardware, minimizing redundant polls and improving temporal coherence between samples.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

THIS SECTION NEEDS TO BE UPDATED UPON CALIBRATION PACKAGE COMPLETION
A future calibration module will further refine `POLL_MS` and related delay parameters based on startup profiling, but this mechanism remains outside the collector itself. Within Tycho, the auto mode provides a self-stabilizing behavior that balances responsiveness with measurement overhead, while the fixed mode ensures reproducibility for benchmark-oriented studies. XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

1.4.4 Collected Metrics

The Redfish collector retrieves instantaneous power readings from the BMC for each physical chassis. Unlike software-based collectors, it provides direct hardware telemetry at node level and does not expose component-level breakdowns. All readings are timestamped, aligned to Tycho's global monotonic clock, and supplemented with freshness and sequence metadata to support temporal correlation. Table 1.4 lists the collected fields.

Metric	Unit	Description
Primary power metrics		
`PowerWatts`	W	Instantaneous chassis power draw reported by the BMC via `/redfish/v1/Chassis/*/Power`.
`EnergyMilliJ`	mJ	Integrated node energy derived from consecutive power samples (computed downstream).
Temporal and identity metadata		
`ChassisID`	-	Identifier of the chassis or enclosure corresponding to the Redfish endpoint.
`Seq`	-	Incremental counter marking each new reading as determined by header or value changes.
`SourceTime`	s	Original BMC timestamp parsed from the HTTP `Date` header, if available.
`CollectorTime`	s	Local collection time according to Tycho's monotonic clock.
`FreshnessMs`	ms	Time difference between `SourceTime` and `CollectorTime`, indicating sample latency.
Operational context		
`Heartbeat`	flag	Marks a repeated emission when no new BMC data were available within the configured heartbeat interval.
`PollMode`	enum	Indicates whether fixed or auto polling mode was active during sampling.

TABLE 1.4: Metrics collected by the Redfish collector.

These metrics provide a coherent node-level view of power consumption with explicit temporal context, forming the hardware baseline for higher-level attribution in later stages of the Tycho pipeline.

1.4.5 Integration and Data Flow

The Redfish collector operates as a passive data source within Tycho's unified collection framework. It queries the BMC through the Redfish API, extracts instantaneous chassis power, and writes each result into a synchronized ring buffer shared with the central engine. Each record carries both system- and collection-time metadata, enabling later temporal alignment during analysis.

This integration layer is deliberately lightweight: the collector's responsibility ends once valid samples are obtained and buffered. All subsequent processing is handled by Tycho's analysis modules. This separation keeps the collector simple, minimizes coupling to higher layers, and isolates potential BMC irregularities from the rest of the system.

1.4.6 Accuracy and Robustness Improvements

Tycho introduces several measures to improve the precision and reliability of Redfish telemetry compared to Kepler. Header-based newness detection ensures that only genuinely updated readings are processed, reducing redundant samples caused by repeated BMC responses. Each reading carries a freshness metric that quantifies its temporal distance from the BMC's internal timestamp, providing explicit visibility into data latency. A lightweight heartbeat mechanism compensates for occasional gaps or stalls in BMC reporting, maintaining continuity in the power time series without fabricating new information.

These measures collectively enhance stability across heterogeneous Redfish implementations and ensure that all retained samples are both valid and chronologically consistent.

1.4.7 Limitations

Despite its improved design, the Redfish collector remains constrained by the capabilities and responsiveness of the underlying BMC. Sampling frequency is typically limited to one or two seconds, and the precision of reported timestamps varies widely across vendors. No component-level breakdown is available (only total chassis power), restricting fine-grained attribution to software-based collectors such as RAPL or eBPF.

1.5 Configuration Management

1.5.1 Overview and Role in the Architecture

Tycho adopts a simple, centralized configuration layer that is initialized during exporter startup and made globally accessible through typed structures. This layer defines all runtime parameters controlling timing, collection, and analysis behaviour. It serves as the interface between user-defined settings and the internal scheduling and buffering logic described in § **??**.

The configuration is loaded once at startup, combining defaults, environment variables, and optional overrides passed through Helm or local flags. Its purpose is not to support dynamic reconfiguration, but to provide deterministic, reproducible operation across (experimental) runs. No backward compatibility with previous Kepler versions is maintained.

1.5.2 Configuration Sources

Configuration values can be provided in three ways: first, through a `values.yml` file during Helm installation, second, as command-line flags for local or debugging builds, and third, via predefined environment variables that act as defaults.

During startup, Tycho sequentially evaluates these sources in fixed order— defaults are loaded first, then environment variables, followed by any user-supplied overrides. The resulting configuration is stored in memory and printed once for verification. After initialization, all components reference the same in-memory configuration, ensuring consistent behaviour across collectors and analysis modules.

1.5.3 Implementation and Environment Variables

The configuration implementation in Tycho closely follows the approach used in Kepler v0.9.0. Each configuration key is mapped to an environment variable, which is resolved at startup through dedicated lookup functions. If no variable is set, the corresponding default value is applied. This mechanism enables flexible configuration without external dependencies or complex parsing logic. All variables are read once during initialization, after which they are cached in typed configuration structures. This guarantees consistent operation even if environment variables change later, since Tycho is not designed for live reconfiguration. The configuration layer is invoked before the collectors and timing engine are instantiated, ensuring that parameters such as polling intervals, buffer sizes, or analysis triggers are available to all components from the first cycle onward.

1.5.3.1 Validation and Normalization at Startup

During initialization, Tycho validates all user inputs and normalizes them to a consistent, safe configuration. First, basic bounds are enforced: the global timebase quantum must be positive, non-negative values are required for all periods and delays, and missing essentials fall back to minimal defaults. Trigger coherence is then checked. If `redfish` is selected while the Redfish collector is disabled, Tycho switches to the timer trigger and ensures a valid interval. Unknown triggers default to `timer`.

All periods and delays are aligned to the global quantum so that scheduling, buffering, and analysis operate on a common time grid. The analysis wait `DelayAfterMs` is raised if needed to cover the longest enabled per-source delay. Buffer sizing is derived from the slowest effective acquisition path (poll period plus delay) and the analysis wait, with a small safety margin. If Redfish is enabled, its heartbeat requirement is included to guarantee coverage. Sanity checks also ensure plausible Redfish cadence and warn if no collectors are enabled. Non-fatal environment hints (for example the RAPL powercap path) are reported at low verbosity.

The result is a single, internally consistent configuration snapshot. Adjustments are announced once at startup to aid reproducibility while avoiding log noise.

1.5.4 Evolution in Newer Kepler Versions

Subsequent Kepler releases (v0.10.0 and later) have replaced the environment-variable system with a unified configuration interface based on CLI flags and YAML files. This modernized approach simplifies configuration management and aligns better with Kubernetes conventions, providing clearer defaults and validation at startup.

Tycho intentionally retains the v0.9.0 model to maintain structural continuity with its experimental foundation. Since configuration handling is not a research focus, adopting the newer scheme would add complexity without scientific benefit. Nevertheless, the newer Kepler design confirms that Tycho's configuration logic can be migrated with minimal effort if long-term maintainability becomes a requirement.

1.5.5 Available Parameters

All parameters are read at startup and remain constant throughout execution. The following table 1.5 summarizes the user-facing configuration variables with their default values and functional scope. Internal or experimental parameters are omitted for clarity.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
CHECK THIS TABLE BEFORE HANDIN, THIS NEEDS CLEANUP
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Variable	**Default**	**Description**
Collector enable flags		
`TYCHO_COLLECTOR_ENABLE_BPF`	`true`	Enables eBPF-based process metric collection.
`TYCHO_COLLECTOR_ENABLE_RAPL`	`true`	Enables RAPL energy counter collection.
`TYCHO_COLLECTOR_ENABLE_GPU`	`true`	Enables GPU power telemetry collection.
`TYCHO_COLLECTOR_ENABLE_REDFISH`	`true`	Enables Redfish-based BMC power collection.
Timing and delays		
`TYCHO_TIMEBASE_QUANTUM_MS`	`1`	Base system quantum (ms) defining the global monotonic time grid.
`TYCHO_RAPL_POLL_MS`	`50`	RAPL polling interval (ms).
`TYCHO_GPU_POLL_MS`	`200`	GPU telemetry polling interval (ms).
`TYCHO_REDFISH_POLL_MS`	`1000`	Redfish polling interval (ms); should be below BMC publish cadence.
`TYCHO_RAPL_DELAY_MS`	`0`	Expected delay between workload change and RAPL visibility (ms).
`TYCHO_GPU_DELAY_MS`	`200`	Expected delay between workload change and GPU visibility (ms).
`TYCHO_REDFISH_DELAY_MS`	`0`	Expected delay between workload change and Redfish visibility (ms).
`TYCHO_REDFISH_HEARTBEAT_MAX_GAP_MS`	`3000`	Maximum tolerated gap between consecutive Redfish samples (ms).
Autotuning controls		
`TYCHO_RAPL_POLL_AUTOTUNE`	`true`	Enables automatic calibration of RAPL polling interval.
`TYCHO_RAPL_DELAY_AUTOTUNE`	`true`	Enables automatic calibration of RAPL delay.
`TYCHO_GPU_POLL_AUTOTUNE`	`true`	Enables automatic calibration of GPU polling interval.
`TYCHO_GPU_DELAY_AUTOTUNE`	`true`	Enables automatic calibration of GPU delay.
`TYCHO_REDFISH_POLL_AUTOTUNE`	`true`	Enables automatic calibration of Redfish polling interval.
`TYCHO_REDFISH_DELAY_AUTOTUNE`	`true`	Enables automatic calibration of Redfish delay.
Analysis parameters		
`TYCHO_ANALYSIS_TRIGGER`	`"timer"`	Defines analysis trigger: `redfish` or `timer`.
`TYCHO_ANALYSIS_EVERY_SEC`	`15`	Interval for timer-based analysis (s).
`TYCHO_ANALYSIS_DETECT_LONGEST_DELAY`	`false`	Enables detection of the longest observed metric delay.

TABLE 1.5: User-facing configuration variables available in Tycho.

1.6 Timing Engine

1.6.1 Overview and Motivation

Tycho introduces a dedicated timing engine that replaces the synchronous update loop used in Kepler with an event-driven, per-metric scheduling layer. While the conceptual motivation for this change was discussed in § **??**, its practical purpose is straightforward: to decouple the collection frequencies of heterogeneous telemetry sources and to establish a common temporal reference for subsequent analysis.

Each collector in Tycho (e.g., RAPL, eBPF, GPU, Redfish) operates under its own polling interval and is triggered by an aligned ticker maintained by the timing engine. All tickers share a single epoch (base timestamp) and are aligned to a configurable time quantum, ensuring deterministic phase relationships and bounded drift across all metrics. This architecture allows high-frequency sources to capture fine-grained temporal variation while preserving coherence with slower metrics.

The timing engine thus provides the temporal backbone of Tycho: it defines *when* each collector produces samples and ensures that all samples can later be correlated on a unified, monotonic timeline. Collected samples are pushed immediately into per-metric ring buffers, described in § 1.7, which retain recent histories for downstream integration and attribution.

1.6.2 Architecture and Design

The timing engine is implemented in the `engine.Manager` module. It acts as a lightweight scheduler that governs the execution of all metric collectors through independent, phase-aligned tickers. During initialization, each collector registers its callback function, polling interval, and enable flag with the manager. Once started, the manager creates one aligned ticker per enabled registration and launches each collector in a dedicated goroutine. All tickers share a single epoch, captured at startup, to guarantee deterministic alignment across collectors.

This design contrasts sharply with the global ticker used in Kepler, where a single update loop refreshed all metrics at a fixed interval. In Tycho, each ticker operates at its own cadence, determined by the configured polling period of the respective collector. For instance, RAPL may poll every 50 ms, GPU metrics every 200 ms, and Redfish telemetry every second, yet all remain phase-aligned through the shared epoch.

To maintain temporal consistency, the timing engine relies on the `clock` package, which defines both the aligned ticker and a monotonic timeline abstraction. The aligned ticker computes the initial delay to the next multiple of the polling period and then emits ticks at strictly periodic intervals. Each emitted epoch is converted into Tycho's internal time representation using the `Mono` clock, which maps wall-clock time to discrete quantum indices. The quantum defines the global temporal resolution (default: 1 ms) and guarantees strictly non-decreasing tick values, even under concurrency or system jitter.

The engine imposes minimal constraints on collector behavior: callbacks are expected to perform non-blocking work, typically pushing samples into the respective ring buffer, and to return immediately. This ensures low scheduling jitter and prevents slow collectors from influencing others. Lifecycle control is context-driven: when the execution context is cancelled, all ticker goroutines stop gracefully, and the manager waits for their completion before shutdown.

1.6.3 Synchronization and Collector Integration

All collectors in Tycho are synchronized through a shared temporal reference established at engine startup. The `Manager` captures a single epoch and provides it to every aligned ticker, ensuring that all collectors operate on the same epoch even if their polling intervals differ by several orders of magnitude. As a result, each collector's tick sequence can be expressed as a deterministic multiple of the global epoch, allowing later correlation between independently sampled metrics without interpolation artefacts.

Collectors register themselves before the timing engine is started. Each registration includes the collector's name, polling period, enable flag, and a `collect()` callback that executes whenever the corresponding ticker emits a tick. This callback receives both the current execution context and the aligned epoch, which is immediately converted into Tycho's internal monotonic time representation via the `Mono.From()` function. The collector then packages its raw measurements into a typed sample and pushes it to its corresponding ring buffer.

Because all collectors share the same monotonic clock and quantization step, the resulting sample streams can be merged and compared without further time normalization. Fast sources, such as RAPL or eBPF, provide dense sequences of measurements at fine granularity, while slower sources such as Redfish or GPU telemetry produce sparser but phase-aligned data points. This synchronization model eliminates the implicit coupling between sources that existed in Kepler and replaces it with a deterministic, time-driven coordination layer suitable for high-frequency, heterogeneous metrics.

1.6.4 Lifecycle and Configuration

The timing engine is initialized during Tycho's startup phase, after the metric collectors and buffer managers have been constructed. Before activation, each collector registers its collection parameters with the `Manager`, including polling intervals, enable flags, and callback references. Once registration is complete, the engine locks its configuration and starts the aligned tickers. Further modifications are prevented to guarantee a stable scheduling environment during runtime.

At startup, all timing parameters are validated and normalized. Invalid or negative values are rejected or normalized to safe defaults, and the global quantum is verified to be strictly positive. Polling intervals and buffer windows are cross-checked to ensure consistency across collectors, and derived values such as buffer sizes are recomputed from the validated configuration. This guarantees deterministic timing behavior even under partial or malformed configuration files.

The configuration layer also provides flexible control over measurement cadence. Polling periods for individual collectors can be adjusted independently, allowing users to balance temporal precision against system overhead. The default parameters represent a high-frequency but safe baseline: 50 ms for RAPL, 50 ms for eBPF, 200 ms for GPU, and 1 s for Redfish telemetry. All tickers are aligned to the global epoch defined by the monotonic clock, ensuring that these differences in cadence do not lead to drift over time.

Engine termination is context-driven: cancellation of the parent context signals all tickers to stop, after which the manager waits for all goroutines to complete. This unified shutdown mechanism ensures a clean and deterministic teardown sequence without leaving residual workers or buffers in undefined states.

1.6.5 Discussion and Limitations

The timing engine establishes the foundation for Tycho's decoupled and fine-grained metric collection. By aligning all collectors to a shared epoch while allowing individual polling intervals, it eliminates the rigid synchronization that limited Kepler's temporal accuracy. This design provides a lightweight yet deterministic coordination layer, enabling heterogeneous telemetry sources to contribute time-consistent samples at their native cadence.

The engine's strengths lie in its simplicity and extensibility. Each collector operates independently, governed by its own aligned ticker, while context-driven lifecycle control ensures deterministic startup and shutdown. Because callbacks perform minimal, non-blocking work, jitter remains bounded even at high polling frequencies. This structure scales naturally with the number of collectors and provides a separation between timing logic, collection routines, and subsequent analysis stages.

Nevertheless, several practical limitations remain. The current implementation assumes a stable system clock and does not compensate for jitter introduced by the Go runtime or external scheduling delays. Collectors are expected to execute quickly; long-running or blocking operations may distort effective sampling intervals. Moreover, the engine's alignment is restricted to a single node and does not extend to multi-host synchronization, which would require external clock coordination. At very high sampling rates, the cumulative scheduling overhead may also become non-negligible on resource-constrained systems.

Despite these constraints, the timing engine represents a decisive architectural improvement over Kepler's fixed-interval model. It provides the temporal backbone for Tycho's data collection pipeline and enables accurate, high-resolution correlation across diverse telemetry sources. The following section, § 1.7, describes how these samples are buffered and retained for subsequent analysis, completing the temporal layer that underpins Tycho's measurement and attribution framework.

1.7 Ring Buffer Implementation

1.7.1 Overview

Tycho employs a per-metric ring buffer to store recent collection ticks produced by the individual collectors. Each collector owns a dedicated buffer that maintains a fixed number of entries, replacing the oldest values once full. This approach provides predictable memory usage and allows fast, allocation-free access to recent measurement histories. All ticks are stored in chronological order and include a monotonic epoch, ensuring consistent temporal alignment with the timing engine. The buffers are primarily used as transient storage for downstream analysis, enabling energy and utilization data to be correlated across metrics without incurring synchronization overhead.

1.7.2 Data Model and Sample Types

Each ring buffer is strongly typed and holds a single metric-specific tick structure. These tick types encapsulate all data collected during one polling interval and embed the `SampleMeta` structure, which records Tycho's monotonic epoch. Depending on the metric, a tick may contain simple scalar values (e.g., total node power) or collections of per-entity deltas (e.g., per-process counters, per-GPU readings, or per-domain energy data). For example, a `RaplTick` stores per-socket energy deltas across all domains, while a `BpfTick` aggregates process-level counters and hardware event deltas observed during that tick. This typed approach simplifies access and ensures that all metric data (regardless of complexity) can be correlated on a uniform temporal axis defined by the timing engine.

1.7.3 Dynamic Sizing and Spare Capacity

The capacity of each ring buffer is determined dynamically at startup from the configured buffer window and the polling interval of the corresponding collector. This calculation is performed by the `SizeForWindow()` function, which estimates the number of ticks required to represent the desired time window and adds a small margin of spare capacity to tolerate irregular sampling or short bursts of delayed polls. As a result, each buffer maintains a stable temporal horizon while avoiding premature overwrites during transient load variations. If configuration changes occur, buffers can be resized at runtime, preserving the most recent entries to ensure data continuity across reinitializations.

1.7.4 Thread Safety and Integration

Each ring buffer can be wrapped in a synchronized variant to ensure safe concurrent access between collectors and analysis routines. The synchronized type, `Sync[T]`, extends the basic ring with a read-write mutex, allowing simultaneous readers while protecting write operations during tick insertion. In practice, collectors append new ticks concurrently to their respective synchronized buffers, while downstream components such as the analysis engine or exporters read snapshots asynchronously. A central `Manager` maintains references to all buffers, handling creation, resizing, and typed access. This design provides deterministic retention and thread safety without introducing locking overhead into the collectors themselves, keeping the critical path lightweight and predictable.

Appendix A

Appendix Title

Bibliography

[1] Caspar Wackerle. *PowerStack: Automated Kubernetes Deployment for Energy Efficiency Analysis*. GitHub repository. 2025. URL: https://github.com/casparwackerle/PowerStack.

[2] Caspar Wackerle. *Tycho: an accuracy-first container-level energy consumption exporter for Kubernetes (based on Kepler v0.9)*. GitHub repository. 2025. URL: https://github.com/casparwackerle/tycho-energy.

[3] NVIDIA Corporation. *NVML API Reference Guide*. Function `nvmlDeviceGetPowerUsage`: retrieves GPU power usage in milliwatts. 2024. URL: https://docs.nvidia.com/deploy/pdf/NVML_API_Reference_Guide.pdf (visited on 11/13/2025).

[4] Yole Group. *Data Center Semiconductor Trends 2025: Artificial Intelligence Reshapes Compute and Memory Markets*. Press Release. https://www.yolegroup.com/press-release/data-center-semiconductor-trends-2025-artificial-intelligence-reshapes-compute-and-memory-markets/. 2025. URL: https://www.yolegroup.com/press-release/data-center-semiconductor-trends-2025-artificial-intelligence-reshapes-compute-and-memory-markets/.