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(54) **TEST APPARATUS**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

There is provided a test apparatus including: a test module operable to supply test patterns to the electronic device; a main signal source operable to generate a first timing signal in accordance with a phase of the supplied timing signal and supply it to the test module; and a sub-signal source operable to receive the timing signal from the main signal source, generate a second timing signal for controlling timing at which the test module supplies the test patterns to the electronic device, and supply it to the test module. The sub-signal source includes a phase adjustment circuit that substantially unifies the timing at which the main signal source outputs the first timing signal and the timing at which the sub-signal source outputs the second timing signal by delaying the timing signal received from the main signal source.

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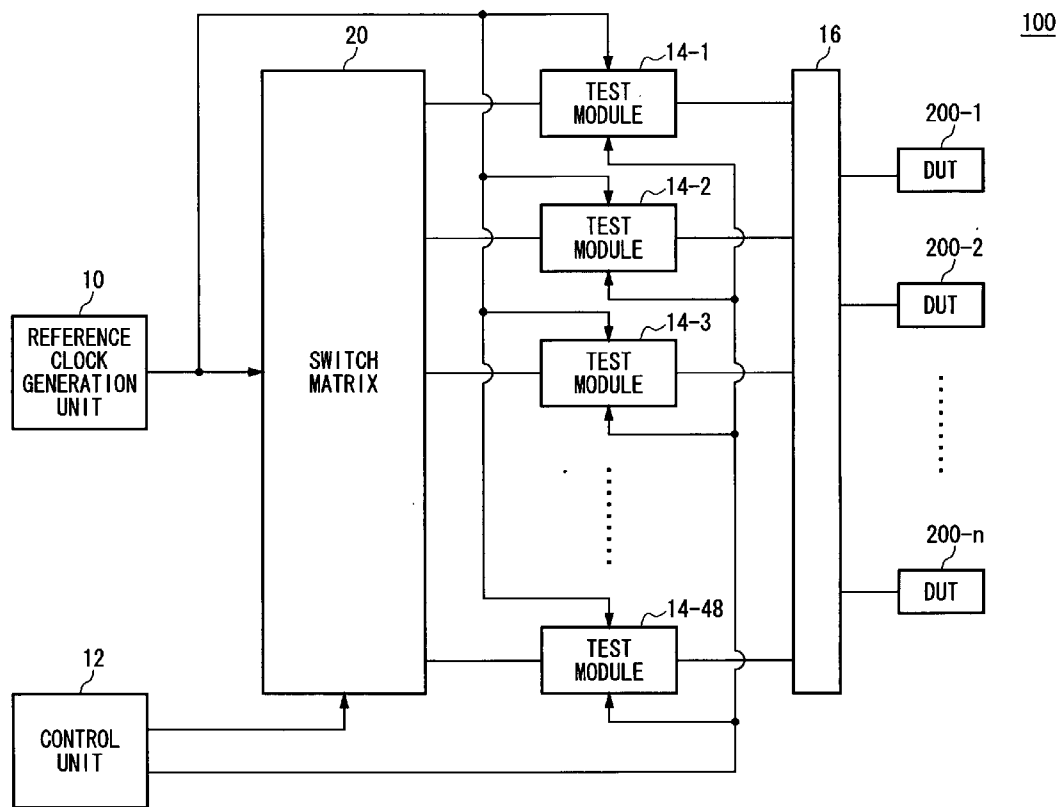
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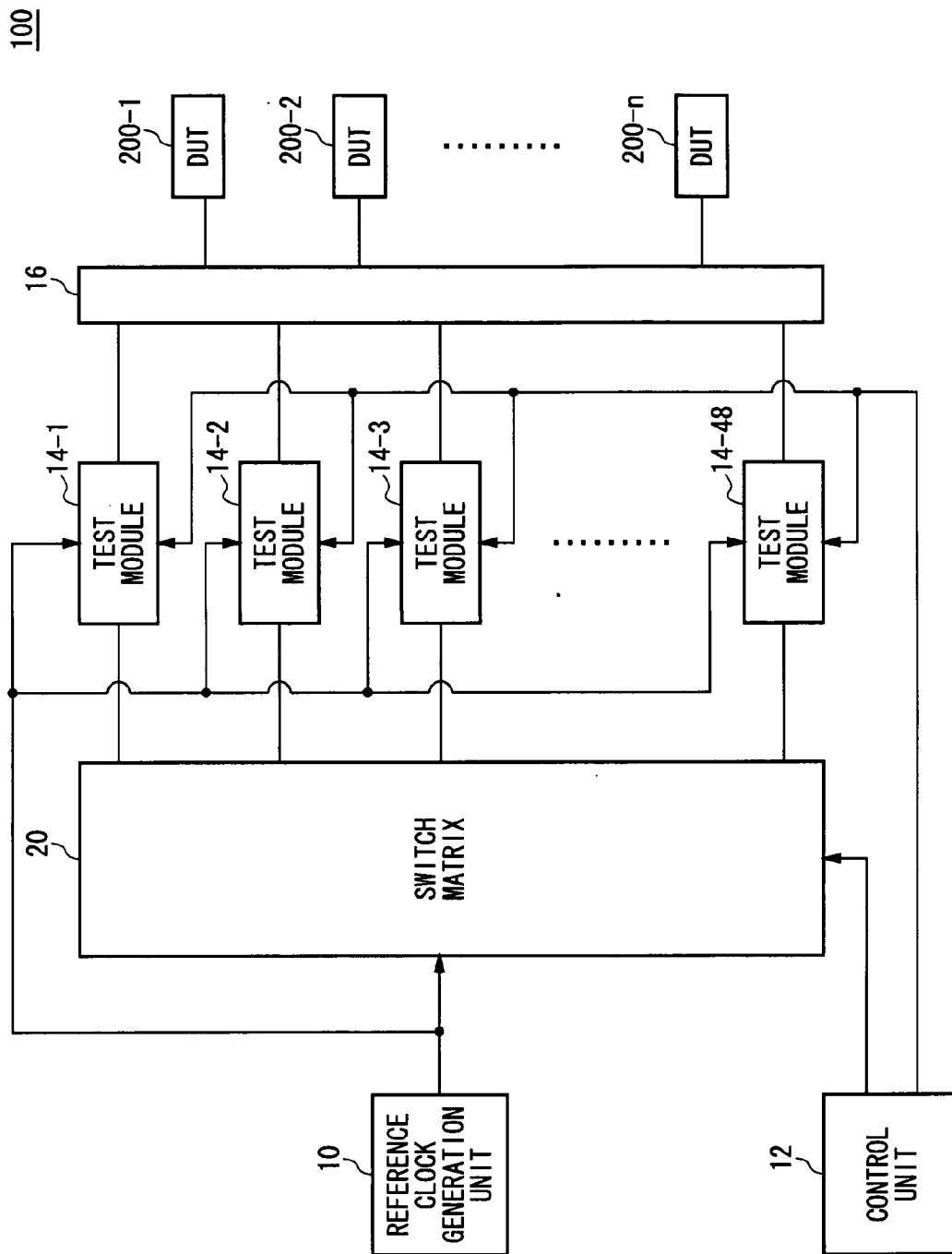


FIG. 1

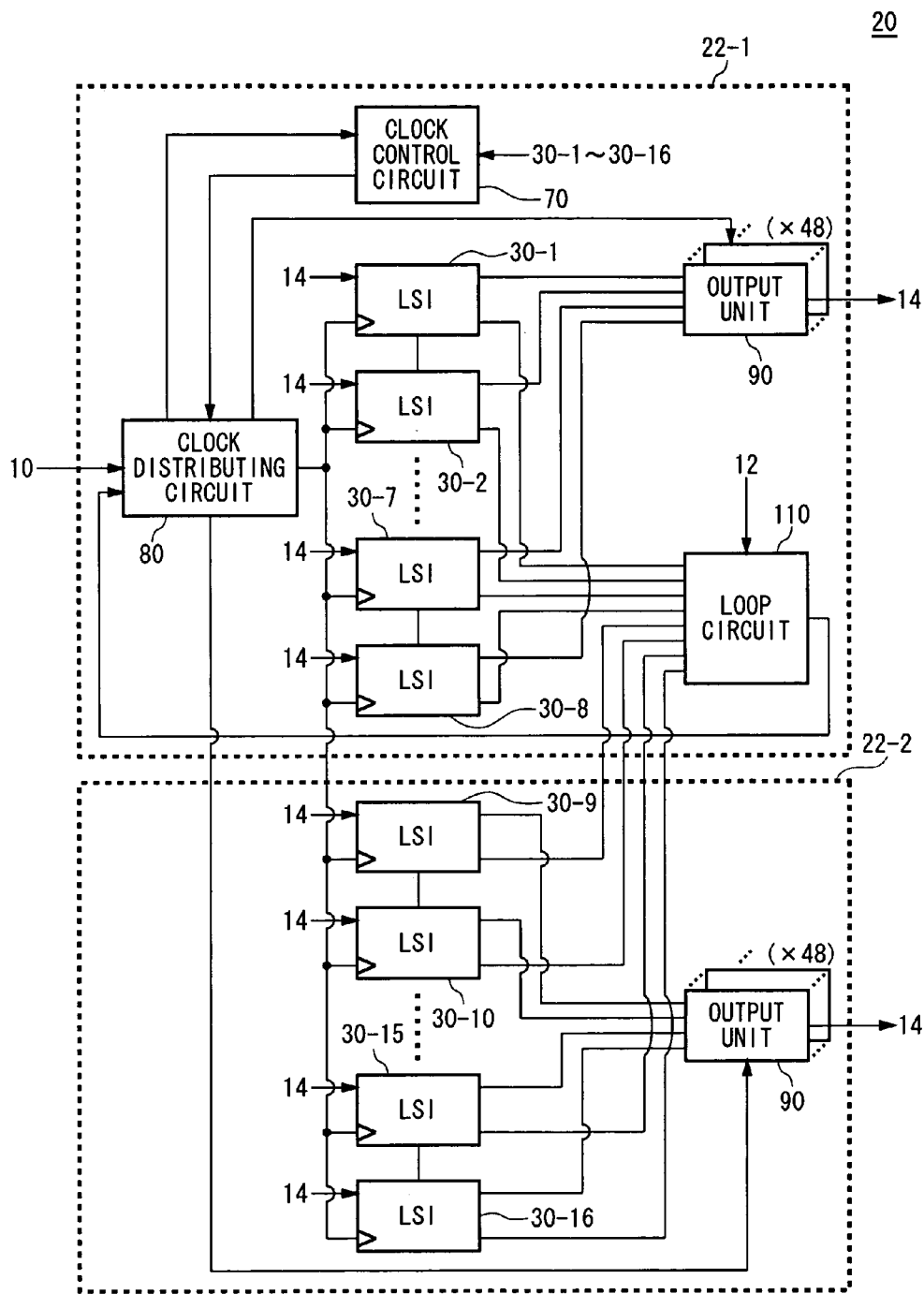


FIG. 2

110

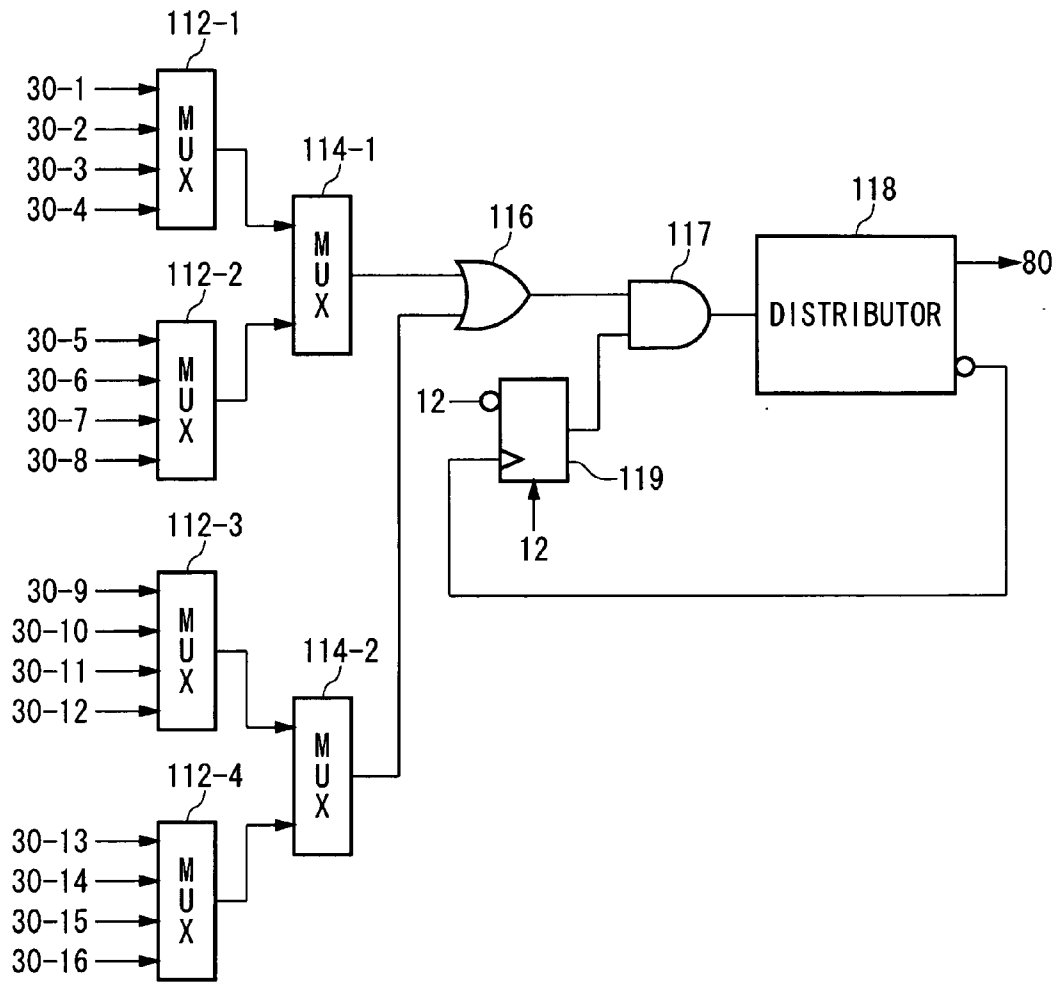


FIG. 4

80

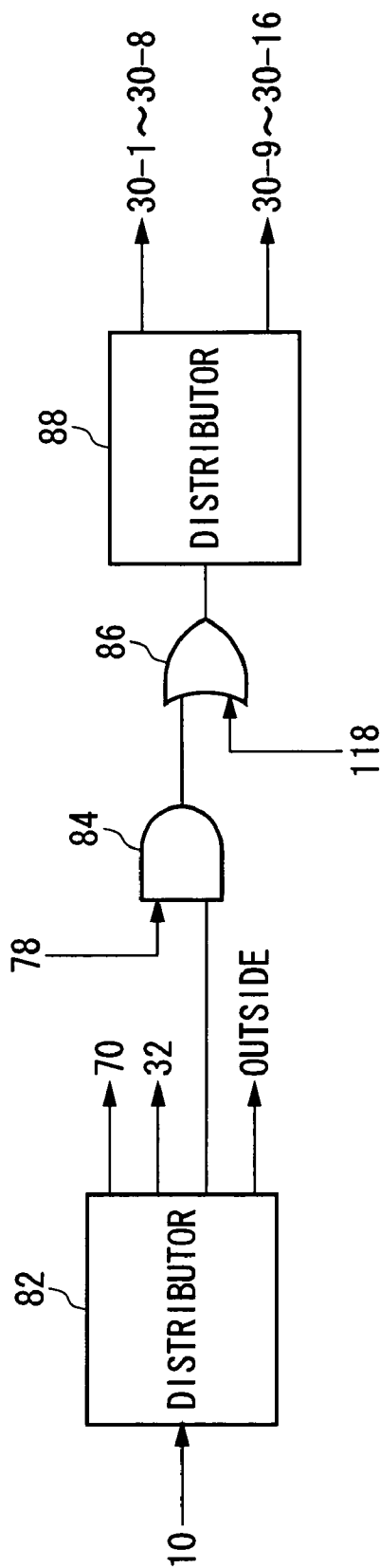


FIG. 5

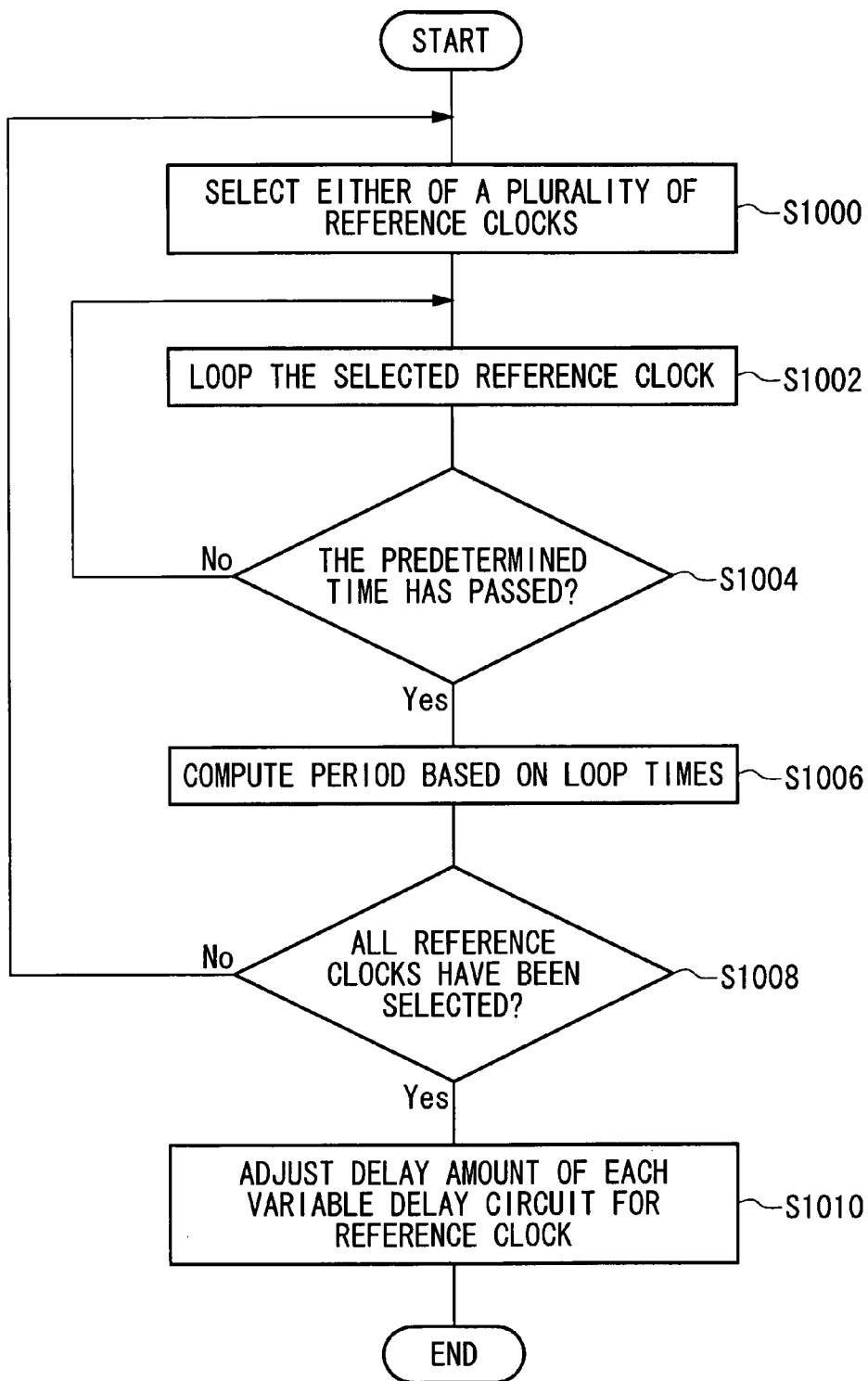


FIG. 6

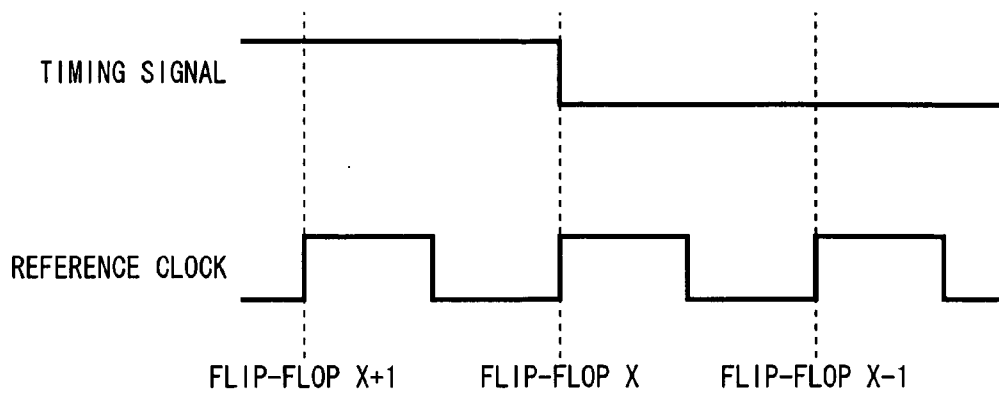


FIG. 7A

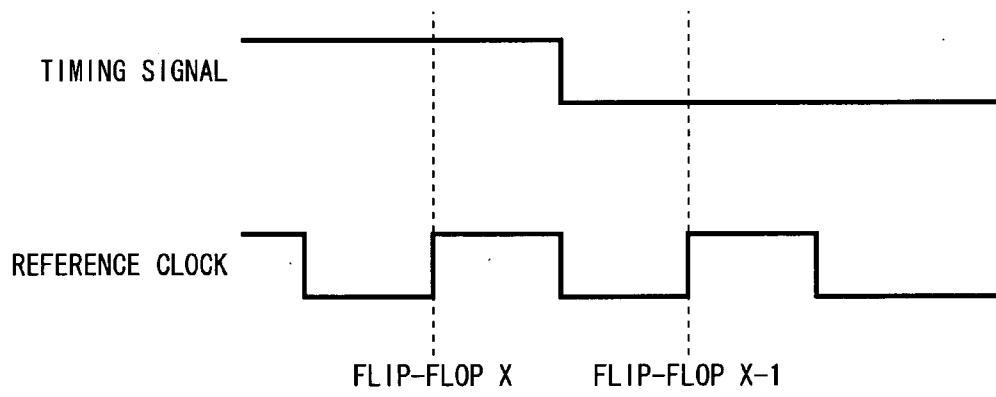


FIG. 7B

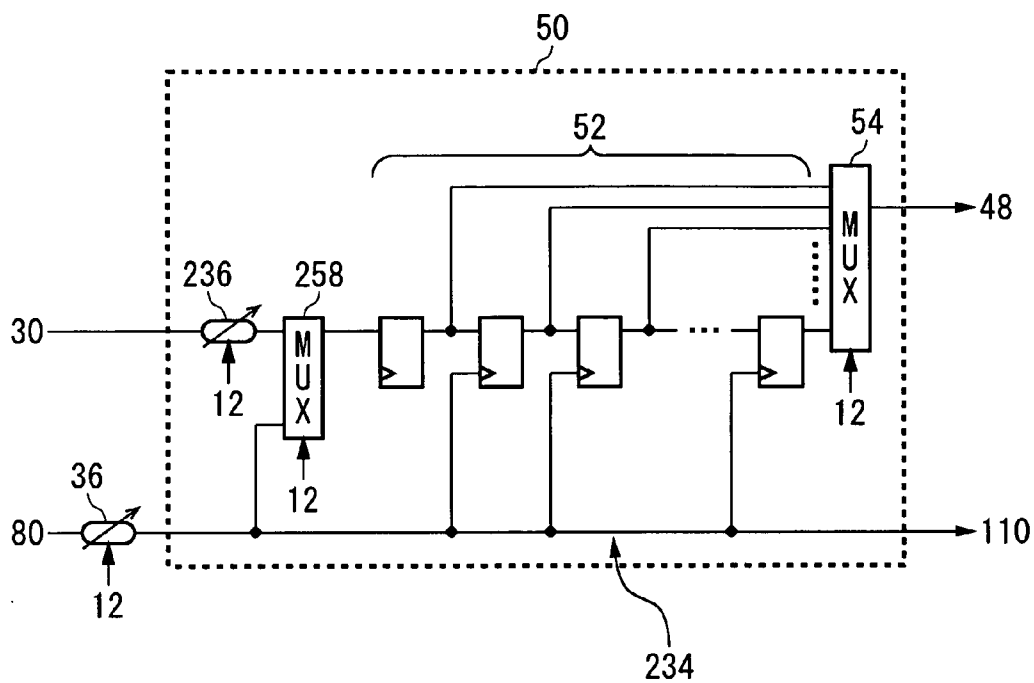


FIG. 8

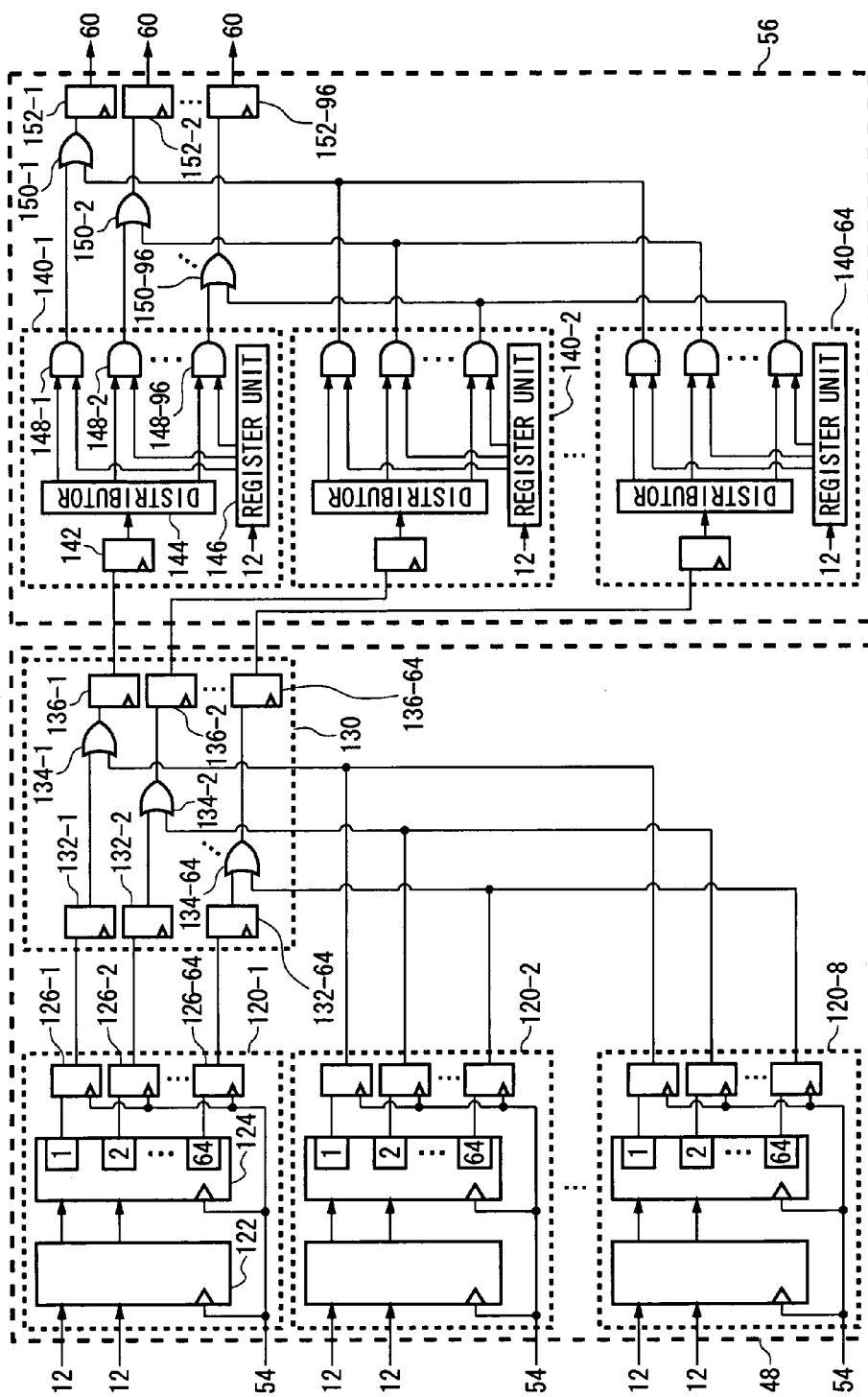


FIG. 9

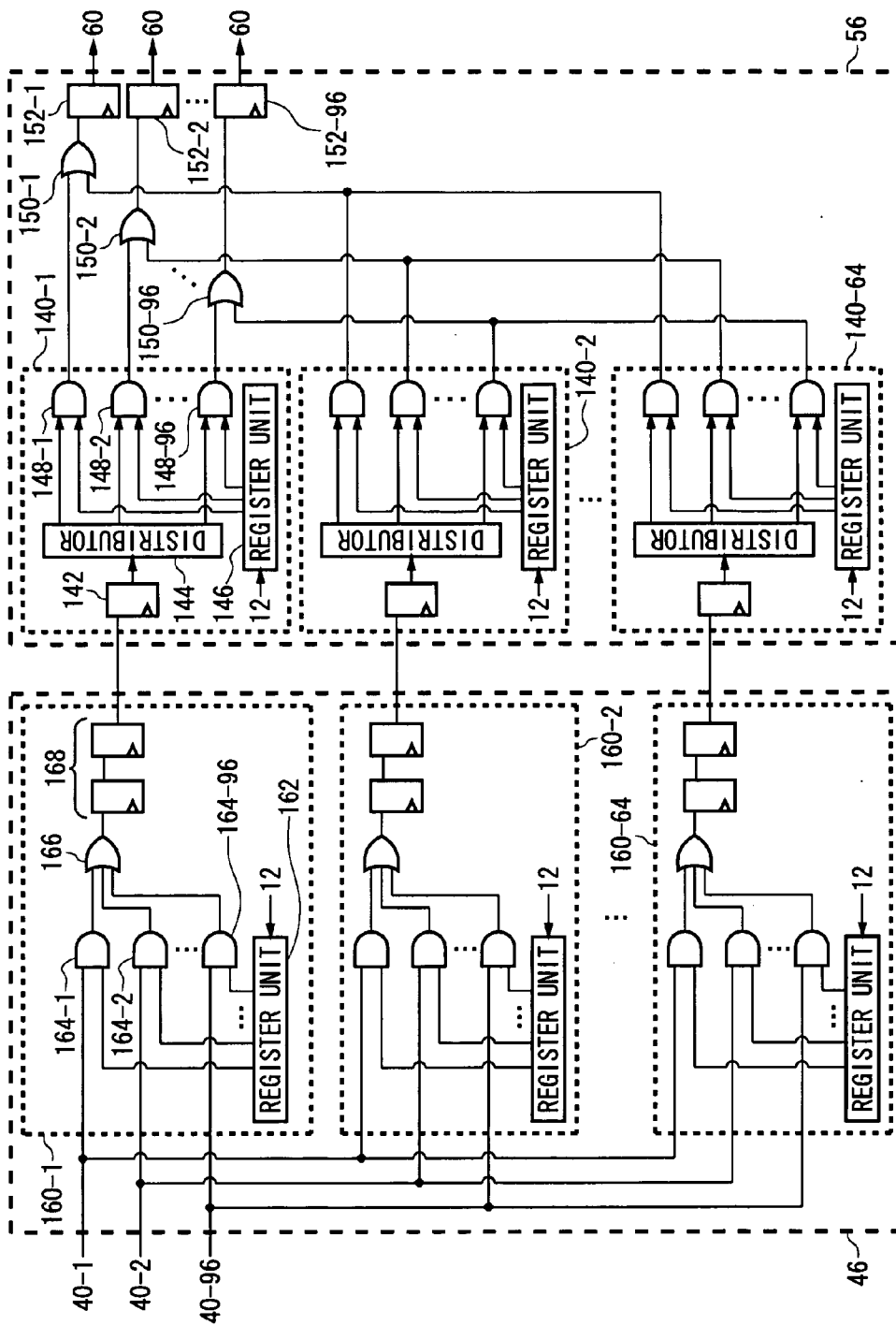
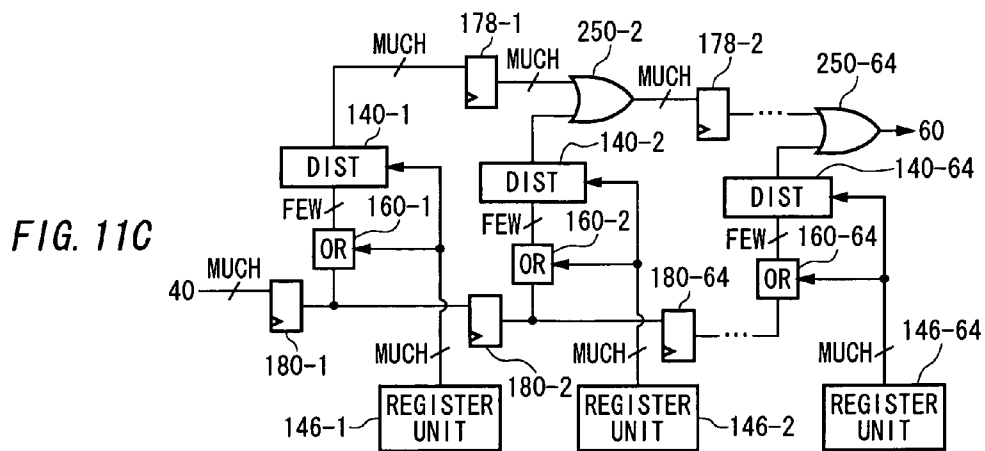
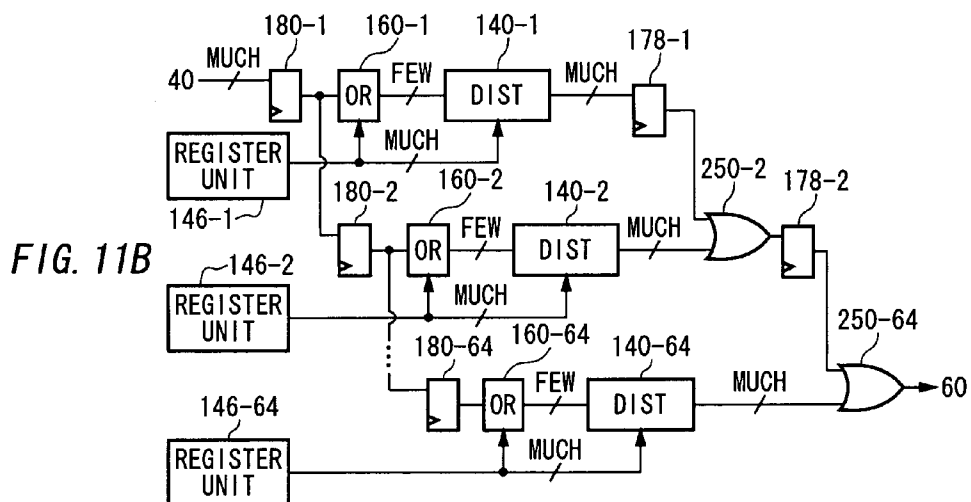
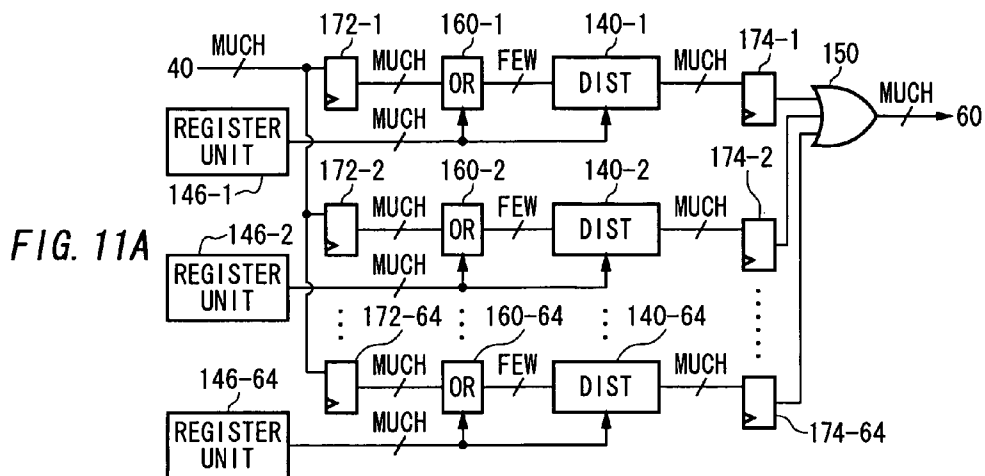


FIG. 10



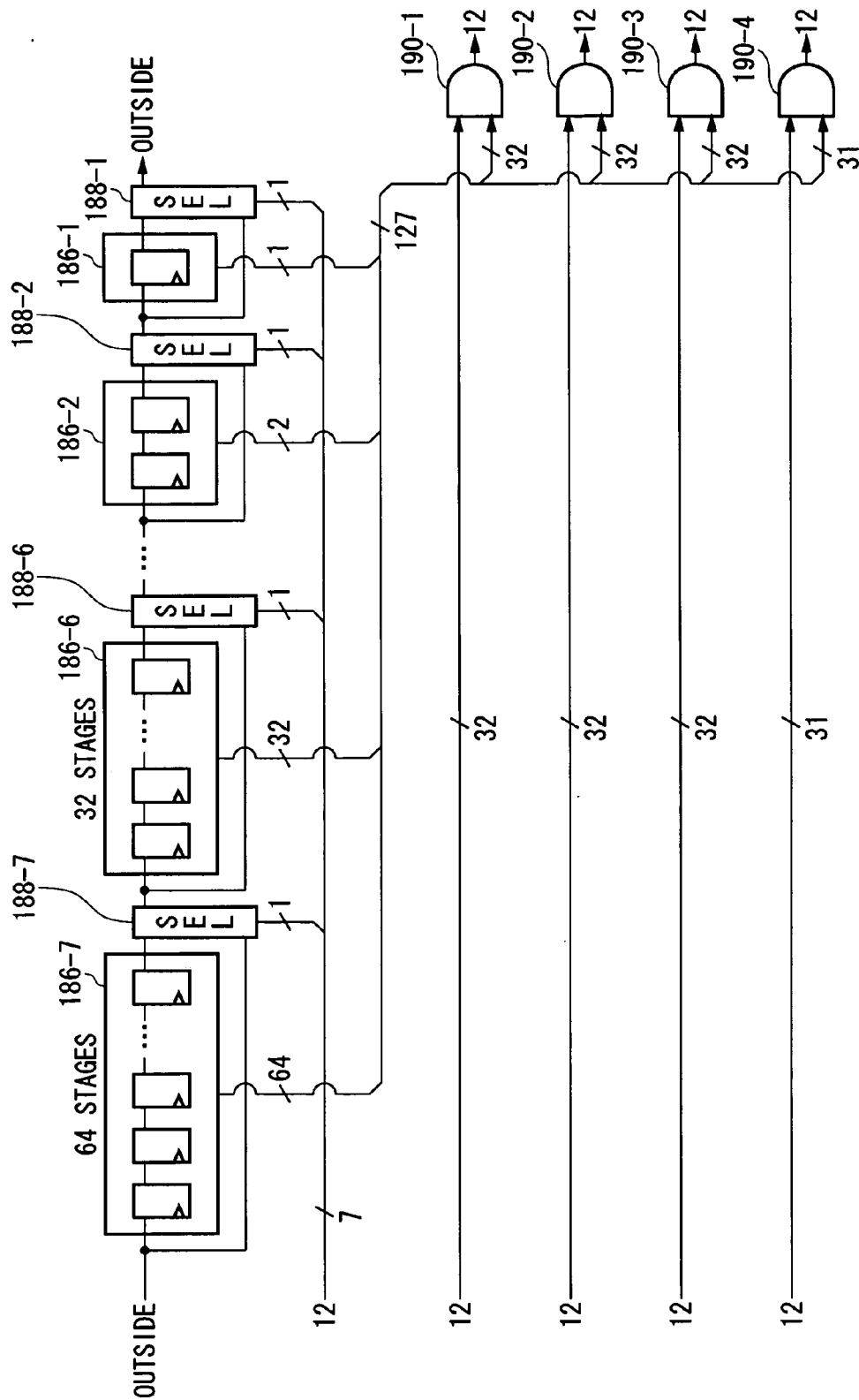


FIG. 12

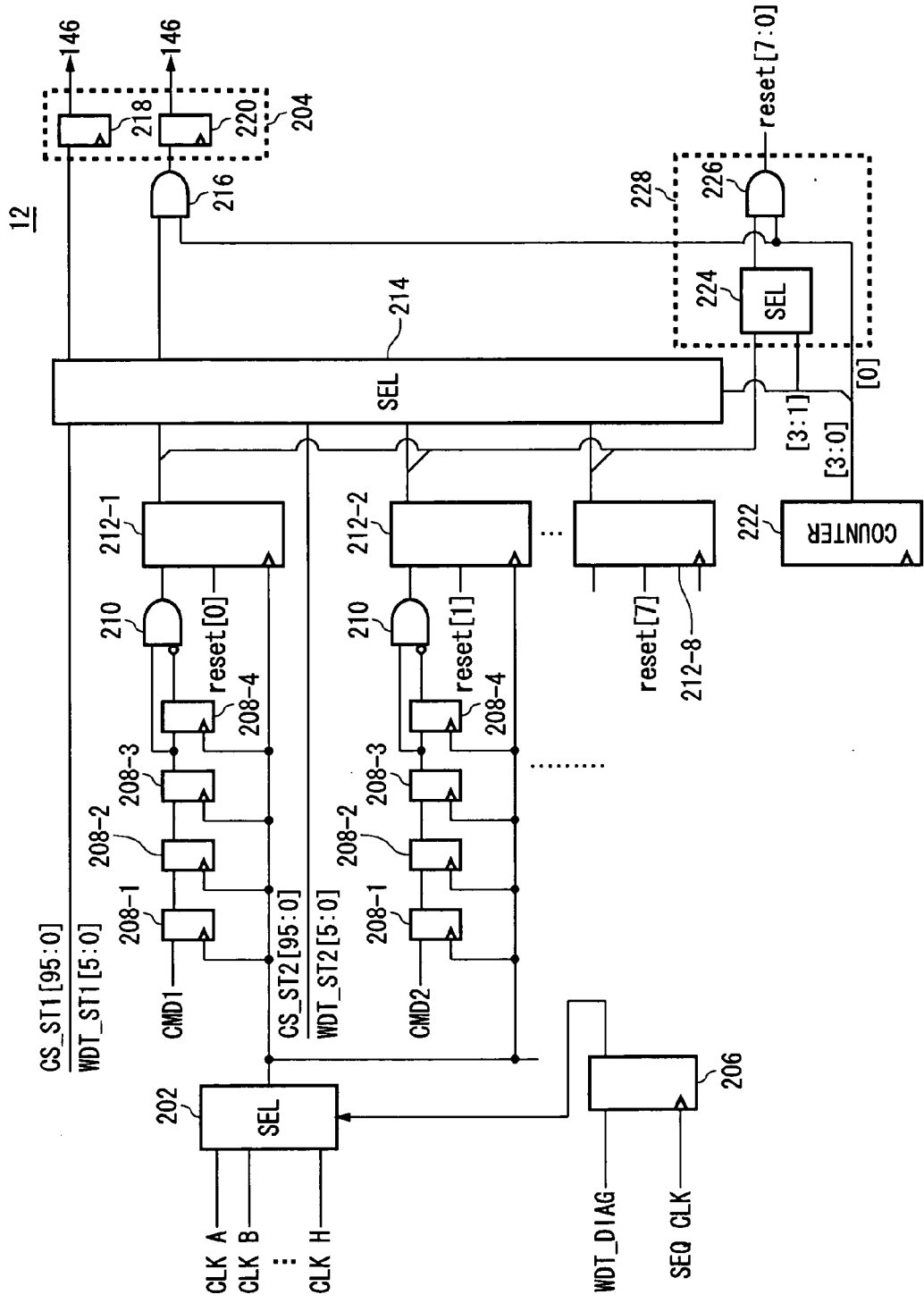


FIG. 13

TEST APPARATUS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0001] 1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The present invention relates to a test apparatus for testing an electronic device. This patent application claims priority from a Japanese Patent Application No. 2003-322094 filed on Sep. 12, 2003, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

[0003] 2. Description of Related Art

[0004] Conventionally, a test apparatus for testing an electronic device, such as a semiconductor circuit, tests the electronic device by applying a predetermined pattern to the electronic device. The test apparatus includes a test module that applies the predetermined pattern or a test rate to the electronic device, and a timing control module that controls a timing at which the test module applies a pattern or the like to the electronic device.

[0005] A plurality of test modules is provided in accordance with the number of pins of an electric device to be tested, and a plurality of timing control modules is provided like a module for generating a timing of a test start, a module for generating a timing of a pattern application and so on. Conventionally, the timing control modules are respectively configured in accordance with their functions. Since no patent document related to the present invention has been founded, the explanation regarding such a document will be omitted.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] Problems to be Solved by the Invention

[0007] As described above, since the timing control modules are configured in accordance with their functions conventionally, it is necessary to produce a plurality of kinds of timing control modules that raises the manufacturing cost. In addition, each timing control module has low versatility, thereby decreasing efficiency of a test of an electronic device. In order to solve such a problem, it is contemplated that the configuration that can realize all functions is provided in each module so that the function of each module is interchangeable. Thereby, the electronic device can be tested only by the module of the same kind.

[0008] However, since many functions are required to test the electronic device and consequently it is required a lot of pins to realize the functions, it is not realistic to realize all functions by single module. For this reason, it is considered that all functions are realized by a plurality of modules having the same configuration as one another. However, in this case, there is a problem that each module must be synchronized with one another.

[0009] In addition, since characteristics, e.g., timing from input to output of signals, may be different between test modules manufactured by different manufacturers, there is another problem that these test modules cannot be used simultaneously. Furthermore, there are some cases that a timing control module respectively receives fail data from the plurality of test modules and distributes plural data summarized by logical operation of the plural fail data to the plural test modules. Even in these cases, the summarization process and the distribution process have to be synchronized

with each other, respectively. As described above, when a test apparatus tests the electric device using a plurality of signal sources **30** and a plurality of test modules **14**, it is necessary to synchronize the signal transfer between them.

[0010] Additionally, since the summarization process and the distribution process by a plurality of host computers require a plurality of registers, a circuit scale or a manufacturing cost increases. For this reason, it is necessary to reduce the number of registers. Moreover, the summarization process and the distribution process require a plurality of signal lines. Therefore, it is necessary to consider circuit layout when a plurality of signal lines are formed on a semiconductor substrate.

[0011] Means for Achieving the Objects

[0012] To solve the above problems, according to the present invention, there is provided a test apparatus that tests an electronic device. The test apparatus includes: a test module operable to supply test patterns used for a test of the electronic device to the electronic device; a main signal source operable to generate a first timing signal for controlling timing at which the test module supplies the test patterns to the electronic device and supply the first timing signal to one or more predetermined pin(s) of the test module; and a sub-signal source operable to receive the timing signal from the main signal source, generate a second timing signal for controlling timing at which the test module supplies the test patterns to the electronic device in accordance with a phase of the timing signal received from the main signal source, and supply the second timing signal to one or more pin(s) different from the pin(s) of the main signal source among the pins of the test module, wherein the sub-signal source may include a phase adjustment circuit that substantially uniform the timing at which the main signal source outputs the first timing signal and the timing at which the sub-signal source outputs the second timing signal by delaying the timing signal received from the main signal source.

[0013] The test apparatus may further include a reference clock generation unit operable to generate reference clock, and the phase adjustment circuit may further include: a plurality of cascaded flip-flops that receives the timing signals from the main signal source and sequentially transfers the timing signals according to the reference clock generated from the reference clock generation unit; and a timing selection unit that receives the timing signals output from each of the flip-flops, selects either of the plurality of received timing signals, and supplies the selected signal as the second timing signal, and the test apparatus may further include a control unit operable to control whether the timing selection unit selects either of the timing signals so that the timing at which the main signal source outputs the first timing signal and the timing at which the sub-signal source outputs the second timing signal are substantially the same as one other.

[0014] The phase adjustment circuit may further include a variable delay circuit for phase adjustment for delaying the timing signal received from the main signal source, and the control unit may sequentially change a delay amount of the variable delay circuit for phase adjustment, detect the delay amount of the variable delay circuit for phase adjustment by which the timing at which the value of the timing signal is changed is substantially equal to the timing at which either of the plurality of flip-flops receives the value of the timing

signal, and set the delay amount of the variable delay circuit for phase adjustment to a delay amount deviated from the detected delay amount by substantially half a period of the reference clock.

[0015] The control unit may generate the timing signal, the main signal source and the sub-signal source may have the same configuration, the main signal source and the sub-signal source may include a master and slave selection unit that selects whether either of the timing signal delayed by the variable delay circuit for phase adjustment or the timing signal generated from the control unit is supplied to the plurality of flip-flops, and the control unit may control the master and slave selection unit to select either of the timing signals based on whether each of the main signal source and the sub-signal source functions as either of the main signal source or the sub-signal source.

[0016] The control unit may cause the timing selection unit of the main signal source to select the timing signal output from the predetermined flip-flop as the first timing signal, and control whether the timing selection unit of the sub-signal source selects either of the timing signals so that the timing at which the main signal source outputs the first timing signal and the timing at which the sub-signal source outputs the second timing signal are substantially the same as one other.

[0017] The control unit may cause the timing selection unit of the main signal source to select the timing signals output from the flip-flop provided in the substantially central area among the plurality of cascaded flip-flops as the first timing signal.

[0018] The summary of the invention does not necessarily describe all necessary features of the present invention. The present invention may also be a sub-combination of the features described above.

[0019] Effects of the Invention

[0020] According to the present invention, when the test apparatus includes a master signal source that output a first timing signal in accordance with a given timing signal and a slave signal source that output a second timing signal in accordance with a timing signal supplied from the master signal source, it is possible to adjust variations of the phase of the timing signal supplied to each of the signal sources.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0021] FIG. 1 is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of a test apparatus 100 according to an embodiment of the present invention.

[0022] FIG. 2 is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of a switch matrix 20.

[0023] FIG. 3 is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of a signal source 30 and a clock control circuit 70.

[0024] FIG. 4 is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of a loop circuit 110.

[0025] FIG. 5 is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of a reference clock distributing circuit 80.

[0026] FIG. 6 is a flowchart exemplary showing a timing adjusting method in which a plurality of signal sources 30 outputs timing signals, explained in FIGS. 3 to 5.

[0027] FIG. 7A is a drawing exemplary showing a case where a delay amount of a variable delay circuit for reference clock 36 is not adjusted, and FIG. 7B is a drawing exemplary showing a case where a delay amount of the variable delay circuit for reference clock 36 is adjusted.

[0028] FIG. 8 is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of a phase adjustment circuit 50.

[0029] FIG. 9 is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of a generation circuit 48 and a timing signal distributing circuit 56.

[0030] FIG. 10 is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of a summarizing circuit 46 and the timing signal distributing circuit 56.

[0031] FIGS. 11A to 11C are drawings exemplary showing an arrangement of a plurality of summarizing units 160 and a plurality of distributing units 140 on a semiconductor substrate, respectively.

[0032] FIG. 12 is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of a plurality of flip-flop units 186 and a plurality of selection units 188.

[0033] FIG. 13 is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of a writing control circuit that controls a plurality of register units 146 and is provided in a control unit 12.

DENOTATION OF REFERENCE NUMERALS

[0034] 10 . . . reference clock generation unit, 12 . . . control unit, 14 . . . test module, 16 . . . device contact unit, 20 . . . switch matrix, 30 . . . signal source, 32 . . . counter unit, 34 . . . variable delay circuit for return circuit, 36 . . . variable delay circuit for reference clock, 38 . . . flip-flop, 40 . . . return circuit, 42 . . . a plurality of flip-flops, 44 . . . return signal selection unit, 46 . . . summarizing circuit, 48 . . . generation circuit, 50 . . . phase adjustment circuit, 52 . . . a plurality of flip-flops, 54 . . . clock selection unit, 56 . . . timing signal distributing circuit, 60 . . . timing source, 62 . . . a plurality of flip-flops, 64 . . . timing signal selection unit, 66 . . . synchronous circuit, 70 . . . clock control circuit, 72 . . . flip-flop, 74 . . . selection unit, 76 . . . counter, 78 . . . logic circuit, 80 . . . clock distributing circuit, 82 . . . distributor, 84 . . . AND circuit, 86 . . . OR circuit, 88 . . . distributor, 90 . . . output unit, 100 . . . test apparatus, 110 . . . loop circuit, 112 . . . reference clock selection unit, 114 . . . reference clock selection unit, 116 . . . OR circuit, 117 . . . AND circuit, 118 . . . distributor, 119 . . . flip-flop, 120 . . . bus, 122 . . . flip-flop, 124 . . . distributing circuit, 126 . . . flip-flop, 130 . . . operating circuit, 132 . . . flip-flop, 134 . . . OR circuit, 136 . . . flip-flop, 140 . . . distributing unit, 142 . . . flip-flop, 144 . . . distributor, 146 . . . register unit, 148 . . . AND circuit, 150 . . . OR circuit, 152 . . . flip-flop, 160 . . . summarizing unit, 162 . . . register unit, 164 . . . AND circuit, 166 . . . OR circuit, 168 . . . shift register unit, 172 . . . flip-flop, 174 . . . flip-flop, 178 . . . flip-flop, 180 . . . flip-flop, 186 . . . flip-flop unit, 188 . . . selection unit, 190 . . . AND circuit, 200 . . . electronic device, 202 . . . selector, 204 . . . writing unit, 206 . . . flip-flop, 208 . . . flip-flop, 210 . . . AND circuit, 212 . . . request signal storing unit, 214 . . . host selection unit, 216 . . . AND circuit, 218 . . . flip-flop, 220 . . . flip-flop, 222 . . . counter, 224 . . . selector, 226 . . . AND circuit, 230 . . . the first distribution point, 232 . . . the second distribution point, 234 . . . reference clock passage path, 236

. . . variable delay circuit for phase adjustment, **250** . . . OR circuit, **258** . . . master and slave selection unit.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0035] The invention will now be described based on the preferred embodiments, which do not intend to limit the scope of the present invention, but exemplify the invention. All of the features and the combinations thereof described in the embodiment are not necessarily essential to the invention.

[0036] **FIG. 1** shows an example of a configuration of a test apparatus **100** according to an embodiment of the present invention. The test apparatus **100** tests a plurality of electronic devices (**200-1** to **200-n**, hereinafter referred to as **200**). The test apparatus **100** includes a reference clock generation unit **10**, a control unit **12**, a plurality of test modules (**14-1** to **14-48**, hereinafter referred to as **14**), a device contact unit **16**, and a switch matrix **20**.

[0037] The device contact unit **16** is, for example, a test head on which the plurality of electronic devices **200** is mounted which electrically connects the plurality of test modules **14** and the plurality of electronic devices **200**. Each test module **14** is electrically connected to one or a plurality of electronic devices **200**. In addition, each electronic device **200** electrically connects with one or a plurality of test modules **14**. For example, the test modules **14** and the electronic devices **200** have the predetermined number of I/O pins, respectively, and the test modules **14** and the electronic devices **200** are connected to each other in accordance with the number of pins.

[0038] In addition, the test module **14** may be a module that supplies a given test pattern to the corresponding electronic device **200**. In this example, each test module **14** receives a test pattern from the control unit **12** in advance, and the test pattern is supplied to the electronic devices **200** at the timing corresponding to timing signals that are respectively given from the switch matrix **20**. In addition, the test modules **14** may determine the acceptability of the electronic devices **200** based on the signals output from the electronic devices **200**. In this case, the test modules **14** may have a fail memory storing fail data of the electronic devices **200** and may supply the fail data to the control unit **12**.

[0039] Additionally, when the fail data has returned from the electric device **200** to either of the plurality of test modules **14**, the test module **14** may supply the fail data to the switch matrix **20** in order to distribute the fail data to the plurality of other test modules **14**. In this case, the switch matrix **20** distributes the fail data to the desired one or a plurality of test modules **14**.

[0040] The reference clock generation unit **10** generates a reference clock having a predetermined frequency. Each element of the test apparatus **100** operates in accordance with the reference clock. The switch matrix **20** generates a plurality of timing signals having different phases and supplies these signals to each test module **14** based on the reference clock. In other words, the switch matrix **20** supplies the timing signals to the test modules **14** to control timing at which each test module **14** operates.

[0041] The control unit **12** controls of which phase angle the switch matrix **20** supplies a timing signal to each test

module **14**. In addition, the control unit **12** supplies the test pattern to each test module **14** in advance. The control unit **12** may be a host computer such as a workstation. Alternatively, the control unit **12** may have a plurality of host computers. In this case, each of the electronic devices **200** to be tested is assigned to each host computer, and each host computer controls the test modules **14** connected to the assigned electronic devices **200** and a phase of timing signals supplied to the test modules **14**.

[0042] **FIG. 2** shows an example of a configuration of the switch matrix **20**. The switch matrix **20** includes a plurality of testing boards (**22-1**, **22-2**, hereinafter referred to as **22**). The testing boards **22** include a reference clock distributing circuit **80**, a clock control circuit **70**, a plurality of signal sources (**30-1** to **30-16**, hereinafter referred to as **30**), a plurality of output units **90**, and a loop circuit **110**. The configuration and operation of the loop circuit **110** and the clock control circuit **70** will be described with reference to **FIG. 3**.

[0043] The reference clock distributing circuit **80** receives the reference clock generated by the reference clock generation unit **10**, distributing it to each element of the switch matrix **20**. The signal sources **30** output signals for testing the electronic devices **200** based on the reference clock that is input as an input signal. For example, the signal sources **30** supply a timing signal to indicate timing at which the test pattern is applied to the electronic devices **200**, a timing signal to indicate timing at which a test of the electronic devices **200** starts, a timing signal to indicate timing at which the test of the electronic devices **200** stops, a timing signal to indicate timing at which fail data of the electronic devices **200** is received, etc. to the test modules **14** via the output units **90**.

[0044] In this example, each signal source **30** generates a plurality of timing signals having different phase as the output signals described the above based on the input reference clock. The control unit **12** switches which timing signal among the plurality of timing signals generated by the signal sources **30** is to be supplied to each test module **14** in each of the signal sources **30**. In this way, for example, each test module **14** can control timing at which the test pattern is supplied to the electronic devices **200**. In addition, the signal sources **30** output the reference clock used in the generation of the timing signals, which is synchronized with the timing signals.

[0045] The plurality of signal sources **30** are previously assigned with the functions such as the control of timing at which the test pattern is applied to the electronic devices **200**, the control of timing at which a test of the electronic devices **200** starts, the control of timing at which the test of the electronic devices **200** stops, the control of timing at which fail data of the electronic devices **200** is received, etc. In addition, the signal sources **30** are integrated circuits having the same configurations with one another, having the circuit configuration that carries out all the functions described previously by switching operation modes. The operation modes are controlled by signal level supplied to a test board **22**. In this manner, it is possible to improve the versatility of the signal sources **30** by causing each signal source **30** to have the same configuration.

[0046] In some cases, when the circuit configuration capable of carrying out all the functions described previ-

ously is included in one signal source **30**, the number of I/O pins of the signal source **30** may be insufficient. In this case, the shortage of the I/O pins is compensated by combining the plurality of signal sources **30**. For example, as shown in **FIG. 2**, the test apparatus **100** causes the signal source **30-1** and the signal source **30-2** to operate by combining them. In this example, the control unit **12** causes the combination of each of the signal sources **30** to operate by assigning either of the functions described the above to the combination of the signal sources **30**.

[**0047**] The plurality of output units **90** is provided corresponding to the plurality of test modules **14**. The plurality of output units **90** receive the timing signals from either of the plurality of signal sources **30** and supply the received timing signals to the corresponding test modules **14**. The control unit **12** controls whether the timing signal from a certain signal source **30** is supplied to each output unit **90** in accordance with the function of each test module **14** and the function of each signal source **30**.

[**0048**] Since the test apparatus **100** tests the electronic device **200** using the plurality of signal sources **30** and the plurality of test modules **14**, it is preferable that the synchronized signals are sent and received therebetween. The test apparatus **100** in this example does the following adjustments.

[**0049**] (1) Adjustment of timing at which the plurality of signal sources **30** output the timing signals.

[**0050**] (2) Adjustment of a phase of the timing signals in accordance with a characteristic of the test modules **14**.

[**0051**] (3) Adjustment of a phase of the reference clock being given to each signal source **30** when combining the plurality of signal sources **30**.

[**0052**] First, the adjustment of timing at which the plurality of signal sources **30** outputs the timing signals will be described with reference to **FIGS. 3** to **6**.

[**0053**] **FIG. 3** is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of the signal source **30** and the clock control circuit **70**. The signal source **30** includes a timing signal distributing circuit **56**, a summarizing circuit **46**, a generation circuit **48**, a plurality of return circuits **40**, a plurality of timing sources **60**, a phase adjustment circuit **50**, a variable delay circuit for reference clock **36**, a flip-flop **38**, a counter unit **32**, and a reference clock passage path **234**. In addition, the clock control circuit **70** includes a flip-flop **72**, a selection unit **74**, a counter **76**, and a logic circuit **78**.

[**0054**] The reference clock passage path **234** receives a reference clock from the reference clock generation unit **10** through the reference clock distributing circuit **80**, and outputs the reference clock to the loop circuit **110**. The reference clock passage path **234** has a plurality of distribution points to distribute the received reference clock to each block of the signal source **30**. The flip-flop or the like provided in the signal source **30** operates in accordance with the reference clock.

[**0055**] The variable delay circuit for reference clock **36** is provided in the reference clock passage path **234** for delaying the reference clock. Preferably, the variable delay circuit for reference clock **36** is provided above the plurality of distribution points on the reference clock passage path **234**.

The reference clock that passed the reference clock passage path **234** is input into the loop circuit **110**.

[**0056**] The loop circuit **110** returns the reference clock output from each signal source **30**, thereby inputting the reference clock as an input signal to each signal source **30** that has output the reference clock via the reference clock distributing circuit **80**. Preferably, the loop circuit **110** returns each reference clock, which is selected sequentially, via the substantially same pass to input it into the signal sources **30**. The test apparatus **100** detects a variation of timing at which each signal source **30** outputs timing signals by measuring the period of the loop. Even if the timing signals are supplied from the plurality of signal sources **30** to the plurality of test modules **14**, it is possible to synchronize the plurality of test modules **14** with each other by adjusting timing at which each signal source **30** outputs timing signals.

[**0057**] **FIG. 4** is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of the loop circuit **110**. The loop circuit **110** includes a plurality of reference clock selection unit (**112-1** to **112-4**, **114-1** to **114-2**), an OR circuit **116**, an AND circuit **117**, a flip-flop **119**, and a distributor **118**. The loop circuit **110** receives the reference clock output from the plurality of signal sources **30**, sequentially selecting and looping the received reference clock.

[**0058**] In this example, the plurality of reference clock selection unit (**112-1** to **112-4**, **114-1** to **114-2**) and the OR circuit **116** select one reference clock among the plurality of reference clocks. The AND circuit **117** outputs a logical product of the selected reference clock and a signal output from the flip-flop **119** to the distributor **118**. The flip-flop **119** controls whether a loop of the reference clock is realized. A signal for controlling whether a loop of the reference clock is realized is supplied from the control unit **12** to the flip-flop **119**, with the flip-flop **119** outputting that signal in accordance with an inversion signal of the reference clock given from the distributor **118**. The distributor **118** loops the reference clock output from the AND circuit **117** to the reference clock distributing circuit **80**. The loop circuit **110** returns each reference clock selected sequentially to the reference clock distributing circuit **80** via the same path. In this way, it is possible to reduce a measurement error of the period of each signal source **30**.

[**0059**] **FIG. 5** is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of the reference clock distributing circuit **80**. The reference clock distributing circuit **80** includes a distributor **82**, an AND circuit **84**, an OR circuit **86**, and a distributor **88**. The distributor **82** receives a reference clock from the reference clock generation unit **10**, distributing the reference clock to the elements that is to operate in accordance with the reference clock. The AND circuit **84** receives the reference clock from the distributor **82**, outputting a logical product of a signal supplied from the clock control circuit **70** described below and the reference clock. In other words, the AND circuit **84** chooses whether the reference clock is passed based on the signal supplied from the clock control circuit **70**.

[**0060**] The OR circuit **86** outputs a logical sum of the reference clock received from the AND circuit **84** and the reference clock looped from the loop circuit **110**. When measuring a period of the loop, the clock control circuit **70** inputs a logic L into the AND circuit **84** and controls so as

not to pass the reference clock being supplied from the reference clock generation region 10. When not measuring the period of the loop, the clock control circuit 70 inputs a logic H into the AND circuit 84. The distributor 88 supplies the reference clock output from the OR circuit 86 to the plurality of signal sources 30. When measuring the period of the loop, the distributor 88 supplies the received reference clock to the signal source 30 that is measuring the period of the loop.

[0061] In addition, it is preferable that the loop circuit 110 continuously loops the reference clock received from one of the signal sources 30. In other words, it is preferable to loop each reference clock within a predetermined time for multiple times. The counter unit 32 (see FIG. 3) counts how many times the reference clock is looped within a predetermined time, measuring a period for the signal source 30 corresponding to the reference clock that is sequentially looped by the loop circuit 110 based on the counted result.

[0062] For example, the counter unit 32 receives the reference clock from the distributor 82, counting how many times the loop circuit 110 loops the reference clock while counting a pulse of the reference clock by a predetermined times. In this case, the reference clock looped by the loop circuit 110 is input into the counter unit 32.

[0063] The counter unit 32 measures a period from input of the input signal (the reference clock) to input of the loop signal (the reference clock) with respect to each of the signal sources 30 based on these counted results. By looping the reference clock more than once, it is possible to measure the period for each of the signal sources 30 with high precision. For example, it is preferable that the loop circuit 110 loops each reference clock around 4000 times.

[0064] The control unit 12 controls delay time of the variable delay circuit for reference clock 36 provided in each of the signal sources 30 based on the period for each of the signal sources 30 measured by the counter unit 32 so that the periods of the signal sources 30 are substantially the same as one another. By such a control, it is possible to reduce a misalignment of the output timing of the timing signals that are generated by a variation between the plurality of signal sources 30.

[0065] In addition, the generation circuit 48 of the signal source 30 receives the timing signal output from the phase adjustment circuit 50, and generates a plurality of timing signals having different phases based on the received timing signal. In this example, the generation circuit 48 generates a plurality of timing signals having different phases by the phase resolution equal to the period of the reference clock.

[0066] The timing signal distributing circuit 56 selects either timing signal out of the plurality of timing signals generated from the generation circuit 48 with respect to every timing source 60, supplying the selected timing signal to each of the timing sources 60. The plurality of timing sources 60 is provided corresponding to one output unit 90 per two timing sources 60, supplying the timing signal to the corresponding output unit 90. The reference clock is distributed from the second distribution point 232 provided most downstream on the reference clock passage path 234 to each of the timing sources 60. Each of the timing sources 60 includes a synchronous circuit 66 that outputs the timing signal selected by the timing signal distributing circuit 56 in synchronization with the distributed reference clock.

[0067] The loop circuit 110 receives the reference clock that has passed the second distribution point 232 in order to loop the received reference clock. Since the control unit 12 controls an amount of delay of the variable delay circuit for reference clock 36, timings at which the reference clock is distributed to the synchronous circuits 66 of the plurality of signal sources 30 may become substantially the same as one another. For this reason, the plurality of signal sources 30 can output timing signals with substantially the same timing as one another.

[0068] In addition, it is preferable that the reference clock passage path 234 has the second distribution point 232, which is located most downstream among a plurality of distribution points. In addition, it is preferable that each of the signal sources 30 outputs the reference clock from the neighborhood of the second distribution point 232 to the loop circuit 110 in a semiconductor substrate on which the signal sources 30 are formed. By measuring a period of the loop of the reference clock after shortening the path from the second distribution point 232 to the loop circuit 110, it is possible to reduce a misalignment of phases between the reference clock received by the loop circuit 110 and the timing signal output from the signal source 30 outputs. For this reason, it is possible to reduce a misalignment of timing at which each of the signal sources 30 outputs the timing signals.

[0069] In addition, the test apparatus 100 can supply a test pattern from the plurality of test modules 14 to one electronic device 200. The control unit 12 may control an amount of delay of each variable delay circuit for reference clock 36 so that the periods for the signal sources 30 that supply the timing signals to the plurality of test modules 14 for supplying the test pattern to one electronic device 200 may become substantially the same as one another.

[0070] FIG. 6 is a flowchart showing an example of a timing adjusting method in which the plurality of signal sources 30 outputs the timing signals, explained in FIGS. 3 to 5. At first, in the step S1000, the loop circuit 110 selects either of the plurality of reference clocks output from the plurality of signal sources 30. Next, in the step S1002, the loop circuit 110 loops the selected reference clock, inputting the looped signal into the signal source 30 that has output that reference clock.

[0071] In the step S1004, the counter unit 32 determines whether a predetermined time has elapsed, and when the predetermined time has not elapsed, it continues to loop the reference clock. When the predetermined time has elapsed, the period for that signal source 30 is computed based on the number of loops of the reference clock in the step S1006. Next, in the step S1008, it is determined whether all reference clocks output from the plurality of signal sources 30 have been selected. When all reference clocks have not been selected, the next reference clock (S1000) is selected and the processes of the steps S1002 to S1006 are repeated.

[0072] When all the reference clocks are selected and the periods for all the signal sources 30 are computed, in the step S1010, the delay amount of the variable delay circuit for reference clock 36 of each of the signal sources 30 is adjusted, the timing at which each signal source 30 outputs the timing signals is uniformed, and the adjustment is finished.

[0073] Next, the adjustment of the phase of the timing signals according to characteristics of the test modules 14 is

described using **FIGS. 3 and 7**. As described above, the plurality of timing sources **60** of the signal source **30** is provided corresponding to the plurality of test modules **14**. However, in each test module **14**, it is not necessary that the time intervals from the reception of the timing signals to the output of the test patterns are the same as one another. For example, the time intervals have a variation according to characteristics of each of the test modules **14**. For this reason, although the timing signals are simultaneously input into the plurality of test modules **14**, the test patterns are not simultaneously input into the electronic devices **200** in some cases. The test apparatus **100** in this example adjusts the phase of the timing signals that each signal source **30** outputs in order to compensate for the variation.

[0074] As shown in **FIG. 3**, each timing source **60** includes a plurality of flip-flops **62**, a timing signal selection unit **64**, and a synchronous circuit **66** in series. In addition, each timing source **60** is provided corresponding to the plurality of test modules **14**, receiving the timing signals from the timing signal distributing circuit **56** and supplying the timing signals to the corresponding test modules **14**.

[0075] The generation circuit **48** generates a timing signal having only one falling edge or only one rising edge in the predetermined time, supplying it to the timing signal distributing circuit **56**. It is preferable that the predetermined time is sufficiently longer than the period of the reference clock. The plurality of flip-flops **62** receives the timing signal from the timing signal distributing circuit **56**, sequentially transferring the timing signal to the flip-flop of the next stage based on the reference clock distributed from the reference clock passage path **234**. In other words, each flip-flop of the plurality of flip-flops **62** transfers a value of the timing signal to the flip-flop of the next stage in accordance with the reference clock.

[0076] A timing signal selection unit **64** receives the timing signals output from each flip-flop of the plurality of flip-flops **62**, supplying either of the received timing signals to the test module in order to adjust the phase of the timing signal being supplied to the test module.

[0077] The control unit **12** controls the phase of the timing signals that are supplied by the plurality of timing sources **60** to each of the test modules **14**. In this example, the control unit **12** controls which timing signal the timing signal selection unit **64** selects among the plurality of timing signals, so that the timings at which each test module **14** outputs the test pattern based on the timing signal become substantially equal. Preferably, the test apparatus **100** has means for detecting the timing at which the test module **14** outputs the test pattern.

[0078] In this example, the plurality of return circuits **40** detects the timing at which the test module **14** outputs the test pattern. The plurality of return circuits **40** are provided corresponding to the plurality of test modules **14** similarly to the plurality of timing sources **60**. The test module **14** inputs a signal having a value being changed by the timing at which the test pattern is output into the corresponding return circuit **40**. The return circuit **40** includes a plurality of flip-flops **42** in series. Each flip-flop of the plurality of flip-flops **42** sequentially transfers the signals input from the test modules **14** to the flip-flop of the next stage in accordance with the reference clock.

[0079] The control unit **12** reads the values stored on the plurality of flip-flops **42**, detecting the timing at which the

test modules **14** output the test patterns based on whether the value of the flip-flop of a certain stage varies. In addition, the phase of the timing signal to be supplied to each test module **14** may be previously given to the control unit **12** based on a specification of each test module **14**.

[0080] **FIGS. 7A and 7B** are drawings showing a relationship between the timing signal and the reference clock. That is, **FIG. 7A** is a drawing exemplary showing a case where a delay amount of the variable delay circuit for reference clock **36** is not adjusted and **FIG. 7B** is a drawing exemplary showing a case where a delay amount of the variable delay circuit for reference clock **36** is adjusted.

[0081] When the delay amount of the variable delay circuit for reference clock **36** is not adjusted, as shown in **FIG. 7A**, the value of the timing signal can be received at the timing at which the value of the timing signal is changed in some cases when either flip-flop of the plurality of flip-flops **62** receives the value of the timing signal in accordance with the reference clock. In this case, it is not possible that the flip-flop stably receives the value of timing signal.

[0082] For this reason, the control unit **12**, in this example, adjusts the delay amount of the variable delay circuit for reference clock **36** as described above, so that the timing at which the flip-flop receives the value of the timing signal and the timing at which the value of the timing signal varies are deviated from each other as shown in **FIG. 7B**.

[0083] In addition, each return circuit **40** receives the signals such as fail timing signals to indicate the timing at which the fail occurs in the output patterns output from the electric devices **200** from the plurality of corresponding test modules **14**, supplying the fail timing signals to the timing sources **60** via the summarizing circuit **46** and the timing signal distributing circuit **56**. At this time, the fail timing signals of each return circuit **40** can have phase lag by a characteristic of each test module **14** in some cases. In other words, there is a case where the time interval from the generation of the fail timing signals to the supply to each return circuit **40** is different depending on the test modules **14**.

[0084] When the test apparatus **100** detects a fail, for example, at either of the test modules **14**, the test apparatus **100** can control the operations of the plurality of test modules **14** based on the signals supplied from the test modules **14** to the signal sources **30** so as to stop the application of the test patterns in the plurality of test modules **14**, for example. In this case, when the time interval from the generation of the fail timing signals to the supply to each return circuit **40** is different depending on the test modules **14**, it is not possible to synchronize the plurality of test modules **14** with each other. The control circuit **12** controls the plurality of return circuits **40** to compensate the lag so that the timing at which each return circuit **40** outputs the fail timing signals is substantially identical.

[0085] In this example, each return circuit **40** includes the plurality of flip-flops **42**, a variable delay circuit for return circuit **34**, and a return signal selection unit **44**. Each flip-flop of the plurality of flip-flops **42** receives the fail timing signals and transfers the fail timing signals to the flip-flop of the next stage in accordance with the reference clock distributed from the reference clock passage path **234**.

[0086] The return signal selection unit 44 receives the fail timing signals output from each flip-flop of the plurality of flip-flops 42, selecting either of the plurality of received fail timing signals. The return signal selection unit 44 controls the timing at which the fail timing signals are supplied to the timing sources 60 by supplying the selected fail timing signal to the timing sources 60 via the summarizing circuit 46 and the timing signal distributing circuit 56.

[0087] The control unit 12 controls the phase of the fail timing signal that the plurality of return circuit 40 supplies to each of the timing sources 60. In this example, the control unit 12 controls which of the plurality of fail timing signals is to be selected by the return signal selection unit 44. In this example, a control unit 12 reads the value stored on the plurality of flip-flops 42, and detects at what number of the flip-flop the value is changed. Then, according to the difference in each return system circuit 40 of the detected number of flip-flop, it controls which fail timing signal the return signal selection unit 44 is made to choose.

[0088] In addition, the variable delay circuit for return circuit 34 is provided between the test module 14 and the plurality of flip-flops 42, supplying the delayed fail timing signal to the plurality of flip-flops 42. The control circuit 12 sequentially changes a delay amount of the variable delay circuit for return circuit 34, detects the delay amount of the variable delay circuit for return circuit 34 by which the timing at which the value of the fail timing signal is changed is substantially identical with the timing at which either of the plurality of flip-flops 42 receives the value of the fail timing signal, and sets the delay amount of the variable delay circuit for return circuit 34 to a delay amount deviated from the detected delay amount by half a period of the reference clock.

[0089] In addition, when the value stored on each flip-flop of the plurality of flip-flops (42, 52, 62) is detected, it is preferable to stop the reference clock supplied from the reference clock distributing circuit 80 and to stop operations of the plurality of flip-flops (42, 52, 62). In this example, the clock control circuit 70 supplies a signal to stop the reference clock to the reference clock distributing circuit 80.

[0090] The clock control circuit 70 has the flip-flop 72, the selection unit 74, the counter 76, and the logic circuit 78. The flip-flop 72 receives the timing signals output from the plurality of signal sources 30, supplying them to the selection unit 74. The selection unit 74 selects the timing signal output from the signal source 30 in which the timing or the phase is adjusted among the plurality of timing signals received from the flip-flop 72, supplying it to the counter 76. The counter 76 starts to count the reference clock when the value of the received timing signal is varied and outputs a signal to indicate the stop of the reference clock to the logic circuit 78 when the counted value becomes the predetermined number. The logic circuit 78 supplies the signal received from the counter 76 to the AND circuit 84 of the reference clock distributing circuit 80, stopping the reference clock being supplied to the signal source 30.

[0091] The control unit 12 sets a predetermined number to the counter 76, counting the timing to stop the reference clock. For example, the control unit 12 controls the counter 76 so that the flip-flop, which is provided in the substantially central area, among the plurality of flip-flops 42 detects the change of the values of the fail timing signals.

[0092] In addition, the plurality of return circuits 40 supplies the fail timing signals to each test module 14 via the summarizing circuit 46, the timing signal distributing circuit 56, and the timing sources 60. The summarizing circuit 46 receives the fail timing signals output from the plurality of return circuits 40, performs a plurality of types of logical operation based on the plurality of fail timing signals, and supplies each operation result to the timing signal distributing circuit 56. The timing signal distributing circuit 56 supplies each of the received operation results to any one or the plurality of timing sources 60. The configuration of the summarizing circuit 46 and the timing signal distributing circuit 56 will be described below with reference to FIGS. 8 and 9.

[0093] Next, when combining the plurality of signal sources 30, the adjustment of the phase of the reference clock given to each of the signal sources 30 will be described using FIGS. 3 and 8. When combining the plurality of signal sources 30, either of the combined signal sources 30 functions as a main signal source that generates a first timing signal for controlling the timing at which the test module 14 supplies the test pattern to the electronic device 200 in accordance with the supplied timing signal and supplies it to predetermined one or plural pins of the test module 14. In addition, another signal source 30 functions as a sub-signal source that receives the timing signal from the main signal source, generates a second timing signal for controlling the timing at which the test module 14 supplies the test pattern to the electronic device 200 in accordance with the phase of the received reference clock, and supplies it to one or plural pins different from the main signal source among the pins of the test module 14. In this example, it will be described about a case where the signal source 30-1 functions as the main signal source and the signal source 30-2 functions as the sub-signal source.

[0094] When the signal source 30 functions as the sub-signal source 30, each of the signal sources 30 includes the phase adjustment circuit 50 to delay the timing signal received from the main signal source 30. In the phase adjustment circuit 50, the timing signal generated from the control unit 12 is supplied via the main signal source 30, and the reference clock is distributed from the reference clock passage path 234.

[0095] Furthermore, the phase adjustment circuit 50 supplies the timing signal received from the control unit 12 to the phase adjustment circuit 50 of the sub-signal source when the signal source 30 functions as the main signal source. Each signal source 30 includes the flip-flop 38 for supplying the timing signal to the sub-signal source when the signal source 30 functions as the main signal source. The flip-flop 38 supplies the received timing signal to the sub-signal source.

[0096] In addition, when the signal source 30 functions as the sub-signal source, the phase adjustment circuit 50 receives the timing signal from the flip-flop 38 of the main signal source. The phase adjustment circuit 50 adjusts the phase of the received timing signal to supply it to the generation circuit 48. The generation circuit 48, the timing signal distributing circuit 56, and the timing source 60 generate the timing generating signals based on the phase of the received timing signal, supplying them to the test modules 14. Here, the phase adjustment circuit 50 of the sub-

signal source substantially unifies the timing at which the main signal source outputs the first timing signal and the timing at which the sub-signal source outputs the second timing signal by delaying the timing signal received from the main signal source.

[0097] FIG. 8 is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of the phase adjustment circuit 50. The phase adjustment circuit 50 includes a variable delay circuit for phase adjustment 236, a plurality of cascaded flip-flops 52, a master and slave selection unit 258, and a clock selection unit 54. The variable delay circuit for phase adjustment 236 receives a timing signal from the main signal source 30, and delays the timing signal by a predetermined delay amount to supply the delayed signal to the master and slave selection unit 258. The master and slave selection unit 258 selects whether either of the timing signal delayed by the variable delay circuit for phase adjustment 236 or the timing signal received from the control unit 12 is to be supplied to the plurality of flip-flops 52.

[0098] The control unit 12 controls which timing signal is selected by the master and slave selection unit 258 based on whether the signal source 30 functions as either the main signal source or the sub-signal source. In other words, when the signal source 30 functions as the main signal source, the master and slave selection unit 258 selects the timing signal received from the control unit 12, and when the signal source 30 functions as the sub-signal source, the master and slave selection unit 258 selects the timing signal delayed by the variable delay circuit for phase adjustment 236.

[0099] The plurality of flip-flops 52 receives the timing signal selected by the master and slave selection unit 258, sequentially transferring the received timing signal in accordance with the reference clock generated from the reference clock generation unit 10 and distributed by the reference clock passage path 234. The clock selection unit 54 receives the timing signals output from each flip-flop of the plurality of flip-flops 52, selecting either of the plurality of received timing signals to output the selected timing signal as the second timing signal via the generation circuit 48, the timing signal distributing circuit 56, and the timing source 60.

[0100] The control unit 12 controls whether the timing selection unit 54 selects either of the timing signals, and thus unifies the timing at which the main signal source outputs the first timing signal and the timing at which the sub-signal source outputs the second timing signal. For example, the control unit 12 causes the timing selection unit 54 of the main signal source to select the timing signal output from the predetermined flip-flop, controlling whether the timing selection unit 54 of the sub-signal source selects either of the timing signals in order to unify the timing at which the main signal source outputs the first timing signal and the timing at which the sub-signal source outputs the second timing signal. In this case, it is preferable that the control unit 12 causes the timing selection unit 54 of the main signal source to select the timing signal output from the flip-flop, which is provided in the substantially central area, among the plurality of cascaded flip-flops 52.

[0101] By such a configuration, it is possible to adjust a variation of the phases of the timing signals supplied to each signal source 30 when the plurality of signal sources 30 is combined together.

[0102] Next, the adjustment method of the phase of the timing signal realized in the main signal source and the

sub-signal source would be described. (1) At first, the clock control circuit 70 stops the reference clock supplied from the reference clock distributing circuit 80 to the main signal source and the sub-signal source at a predetermined timing so that the timing signal received from the control unit 12 can be held on the plurality of flip-flop 52 in the main signal source and the sub-signal source.

[0103] (2) At this time, the control unit 12 supplies the timing signal to the main signal source, and detects which flip-flop among the plurality of flip-flop 52 in the main signal source has the changed value of the timing signal and which flip-flop among the plurality of flip-flop 52 in the sub-signal source has the changed value of the timing signal received through the variable delay circuit for phase adjustment 236. It is preferable that the control unit 12 has means for detecting the value of the timing signal stored on each of the plurality of flip-flops 52.

[0104] (3) The control unit 12 detects a delay amount when the timing, at which the value of the timing signal is changed, is substantially the same as the timing at which either of the plurality of flip-flop 52 receives the value of the timing signal while sequentially changing the delay amount of the variable delay circuit for phase adjustment 236 in the sub-signal source. That is, whenever the delay amount of the variable delay circuit for phase adjustment 236 is changed, the control unit 12 repeats the above (2) and detects the delay amount by which the value held in the plurality of flip-flop 52 shifts. The control unit 12 sets the delay amount of the variable delay circuit for the phase adjustment 236 in the sub-signal source to a delay amount deviated from the detected delay amount by half a period of the reference clock. By such a control, it is possible to perform the timing adjustment with the value less than one period of the reference clock.

[0105] (4) Next, after setting the delay amount of the variable delay circuit for phase adjustment 236, as described in (2), the control unit 12 detects which flip-flop among the plurality of flip-flop 52 in the main signal source has the changed value of the timing signal and which flip-flop among the plurality of flip-flop 52 in the sub-signal source has the changed value of the timing signal received through the variable delay circuit for the phase adjustment 236. When the value of the timing signal is changed at either of the plurality of flip-flops 52 in the main signal source and the sub-signal source, the difference absorbed by adjusting the flip-flop selected by each of the timing selection units 54. By such a control, it is possible to perform the timing adjustment with integral multiple of the period of the reference clock.

[0106] As described in FIGS. 3 to 8, according to the test apparatus 100 of this example, the adjustment of the timing at which the plurality of signal sources 30 outputs the timing signals, the adjustment of the phase of the timing signal in accordance with characteristics of the test modules 14, and the adjustment of the phase of the timing signal supplied to each of the signal sources 30 when the plurality of signal sources 30 is combined can be performed. Furthermore, it is possible to test the electronic device 200 with high precision by operating the plurality of test modules 14 in synchronization with each other.

[0107] FIG. 9 is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of the generation circuit 48 and the timing signal

distributing circuit 56. The generation circuit 48 includes a plurality of buses (120-1 to 120-8, hereinafter referred to as 120) and an operating circuit 130.

[0108] The plurality of buses 120 is provided corresponding to a plurality of host computers of the control unit 12, and is controlled by each corresponding host computer. The bus 120 has a flip-flop 122, a distributing circuit 124, and a plurality of flip-flops (126-1 to 126-64, hereinafter referred to as 126).

[0109] The distributing circuit 124 has 64 output ports, outputting the rate signals that are supplied from the control unit 12 via the flip-flop 122 to one or more output port(s) among 64 output ports in accordance with the reference clock supplied from the phase adjustment circuit 50. In addition, the control signal for controlling from which output port the rate signal is to be output is supplied from the control unit 12 via the flip-flop 122 to the distributing circuit 124. For example, the rate signal is a signal indicating the logic H. The plurality of timing signals having different phases can be generated and output by sequentially changing the output ports through which the distributing circuit 124 outputs the rate signals in accordance with the reference clock. For example, by sequentially changing the output port through which the distributing circuit 124 outputs the rate signal from 1 to 64 according to the reference clock, 64 kinds of timing signals, of which the phase resolution is equal to the period of the reference clock while the phases are different with one another. In addition, it is possible to generate any period of timing signal by selecting each output port with a desired period. For example, a plurality of timing signals, of which the periods are different with one another, may be generated for each of the plurality of buses 120 by changing the period for selecting an output port for each of the plurality of buses 120. The period to select the output port can be easily changed by changing the period of the control signal given from the control unit 12.

[0110] The operating circuit 130 includes a plurality of flip-flops (132-1 to 132-64, hereinafter referred to as 132), a plurality of OR circuits (134-1 to 134-64, hereinafter referred to as 134), and a plurality of flip-flops (136-1 to 136-64, hereinafter referred to as 136).

[0111] The plurality of flip-flops 132, the plurality of OR circuits 134, and the plurality of flip-flops 136 are provided corresponding to the output ports of the distributing circuit 124, and receive the timing signals output from the corresponding output ports. The OR circuits 134 receive the timing signals output from the corresponding output ports of the distributing circuit 124 of each of the plurality of buses 120, outputting a logical sum of each of the received timing signals. The control unit 12 exclusively controls each of the distributing circuits 124 so that the plurality of distributing circuits 124 does not output the timing signal from the same output port simultaneously. For example, the plurality of host computers is previously assigned which output port among the output ports 1-64 of the distributing circuit 124 is to be controlled. Each host computer selects the output port that outputs the timing signal among the assigned output ports in the distributing circuit 124 of the corresponding bus 120. In addition, the plurality of flip-flops 136 synchronizes the timing signals with one another to supply them to the timing signal distributing circuit 56.

[0112] The timing signal distributing circuit 56 includes a plurality of distributing units (140-1 to 140-64, hereinafter

referred to as 140), a plurality of OR circuits (150-1 to 150-96, hereinafter referred to as 150), and a plurality of flip-flops (152-1 to 152-96, hereinafter referred to as 152).

[0113] The plurality of distributing unit 140 is provided corresponding to the plurality of output ports of the distributing circuit 124, and receives the timing signals output from the corresponding output ports. Each distributing unit 140 includes a flip-flop 142, a distributor 144, a register unit 146, and a plurality of AND circuits (148-1 to 148-96, hereinafter referred to as 148).

[0114] The distributor 144 receives the timing signal via the flip-flop 142, distributing the timing signal to each of the plurality of AND circuits 148. The plurality of AND circuits 148 is provided corresponding to the plurality of timing sources 60, outputting a logical product of the received timing signal and a signal given from the register unit 146.

[0115] The register unit 146 stores command data to indicate which timing source 60 is supplied with the timing signal. In this example, the register unit 146 stores a plurality of bits of command data in which each bit is corresponding to either of the plurality of timing sources 60. This command data is given from the control unit 12 to the register unit 146. The control unit 12 stores the command data that the bit corresponding to the timing source 60 that should supply the timing signal is set to the logic H in the register unit 146.

[0116] In addition, the plurality of OR circuits 150 is provided corresponding to the plurality of AND circuits 148, outputting a logical sum of the timing signals output from the corresponding AND circuits 148 in the plurality of distributing units 140. The control unit 12 stores the command data in each register unit 146 so that the AND circuits 148 corresponding to the same timing sources 60 do not output the timing signals simultaneously in each of the distributing units 140. In other words, in the command data stored on each of the registers unit 146, each of the registers unit 146 is supplied with the command data so that the same bits do not show the logic H simultaneously.

[0117] The plurality of flip-flops 152 is provided corresponding to the plurality of OR circuits 150, synchronizing the timing signals output from the plurality of OR circuits 150 with each other in order to supply them to the corresponding timing sources 60.

[0118] As described above, according to the generation circuit 48 in this example, it is possible to generate the plurality of timing signals having resolution identical with the period of the reference clock and capable of optionally setting the phase and frequency. In addition, according to the timing signal distributing circuit 56, it is possible to optionally select and generate either of the plurality of timing signals generated by the generation circuit 48 to each of the timing sources 60.

[0119] FIG. 10 is a drawing exemplary showing a configuration of the summarizing circuit 46 and the timing signal distributing circuit 56. In this example, the timing signal distributing circuit 56 has the same configuration as that of the timing signal distributing circuit 56 explained in FIG. 9.

[0120] The summarizing circuit 46 includes a plurality of summarizing unit (160-1 to 160-64, hereinafter referred to as 160). The plurality of summarizing unit 160 is provided

corresponding to the plurality of distributing unit 140. Each of the summarizing units 160 includes a register 162, a plurality of AND circuits (164-1 to 164-96, hereinafter referred to as 164), an OR circuit 166, and a shift register unit 168, receiving the fail timing signals output from the plurality of return circuits 40 and outputting a logical sum of two or more fail timing signals among the plurality of fail timing signals. In addition, the plurality of distributing units 140 is provided corresponding to the plurality of summarizing units 160, distributing a result of an operation of the plurality of summarizing units 160 to the plurality of test modules 14.

[0121] The plurality of AND circuits 164 is provided corresponding to the plurality of return circuits 40, receiving the fail timing signals or the like output from the corresponding return circuits 40. The plurality of AND circuits 164 outputs a logical product of the received fail timing signals and the signals given from the register 162. The OR circuit 166 outputs a logical sum of the fail timing signals output from the plurality of AND circuits 164.

[0122] The register 162 stores command data to indicate that the logical sum of either of the plurality of fail timing signals is output to the OR circuit 166. In this example, the register 162 stores a plurality of bits of command data in which each bit is corresponding to either of the plurality of return circuits 40. This command data is supplied from the control unit 12 to the register 162. The control unit 12 stores the command data, in which the bit corresponding to the fail timing signal that is to be supplied to the OR circuit 166 is set to the logic H, on the register 162.

[0123] In this example, the control unit 12 stores the command data, which is the same as the command data stored on the register unit 146 of each of the distributing units 140, on the register 162 of the summarizing unit 160 corresponding to each of the distributing units 140. That is, when either of the plurality of test modules 14 that are grouped by the command data stored on the register unit 146 has generated the fail timing signal, the control unit 12 supplies the timing signal based on that fail timing signal to all of the plurality of test modules 14.

[0124] In addition, the corresponding distributing unit 140 and summarizing unit 160 may have a common register. For example, the summarizing unit 160 may receive the command data from the register unit 146 of the corresponding distributing unit 140. In this way, it is possible to reduce the number of the register elements of the test apparatus 100.

[0125] FIGS. 11A to 11C are drawings exemplary showing arrangement of the plurality of summarizing units 160 and the plurality of distributing units 140 on the semiconductor substrate (not shown) respectively.

[0126] As shown in FIG. 11A, a plurality of combination of the summarizing units 160 and the distributing units 140 are provided on the semiconductor substrate in parallel. In addition, the summarizing circuit 46 further includes a plurality of flip-flops (172-1 to 172-64, hereinafter referred to as 172) that are provided corresponding to the plurality of summarizing units 160. The plurality of flip-flops 172 supplies the plurality of fail timing signals received from the return circuit 40 to the plurality of summarizing circuits 46, the signals being synchronized with one another.

[0127] In addition, the timing signal distributing circuit 56 further includes a plurality of flip-flops (174-1 to 174-64,

hereinafter referred to as 174) that are provided corresponding to the plurality of distributing units 140. The plurality of flip-flops 174 supply the plurality of fail timing signals received from the corresponding distributing units 140 to the OR circuit 150 in synchronization with each other. By such a configuration, it is possible to synchronize each of the summarizing units 160 and the distributing units 140 with one another and to process in a pipelining method.

[0128] In addition, as shown in FIG. 11B, the summarizing circuit 46 may have a plurality of flip-flops (180-1 to 180-64, hereinafter referred to as 180) that is provided corresponding to the plurality of summarizing units 160. The plurality of flip-flops 180 is cascaded, sequentially supplying the fail timing signals to the corresponding summarizing circuits 46. In other words, the fail timing signals are supplied to each of the summarizing circuits 46 by different timings.

[0129] In addition, as shown in FIG. 11B, in place of the OR circuit 150, there may be provided a plurality of OR circuits (250-2 to 250-64, hereinafter referred to as 250). The plurality of OR circuits 250 is provided corresponding to the plurality of distributing units (140-2 to 140-64). Each of the OR circuits 250 is cascaded, and the OR circuit 250-2 outputs a logical sum of the fail timing signals output from the distributing unit 140-1 and the distributing unit 140-2. In addition, another OR circuit 250 outputs a logical sum of the logical sum output from the OR circuit 250 of the preceding stage and the fail timing signal output from the corresponding distributing unit 140. By such a configuration, it is possible to reduce a delay of operations of the plurality of summarizing circuits 46 and the plurality of timing signal distributing circuits 56.

[0130] In addition, the summarizing unit 160 and the corresponding distributing unit 140 are connected in series in the first direction on the semiconductor substrate. In FIG. 10, the register 162 and the register unit 146 are respectively provided in the summarizing unit 160 and the distributing unit 140. However, in this example, the common register unit 146 is provided in the outside.

[0131] The plurality of register units 146 is provided corresponding to the plurality of summarizing units 160 and the plurality of distributing units 140. The plurality of register units 146 supply control signals having a plurality of bits to the corresponding summarizing units 160 and the distributing units 140. Here, the control signals having a plurality of bits control whether to perform a logical operation using either of the plurality of fail timing signals in the summarizing units 160 and whether to distribute the result of the logical operation to either of the plurality of test modules 14 in the distributing units 140. As shown in FIG. 11B, it is preferable that each of the register units 146, and the corresponding summarizing units 160 and the distributing units 140 are connected in the first direction.

[0132] In addition, as shown in FIG. 11C, it is preferable that at least a part of a wiring for connecting the summarizing unit 160 with the test module 14, that is, a wiring for connecting the summarizing unit 160 with the return circuit 40, is provided on the semiconductor substrate along the second direction perpendicular to the first direction. In addition, it is preferable that at least a part of a wiring for connecting the distributing unit 140 with the test module 14, i.e., a wiring for connecting the distributing unit 140 with the

timing source **60**, is provided on the semiconductor substrate along the second direction perpendicular to the first direction.

[0133] By such a configuration, it is possible to prevent the wiring having a lot of signal lines from slanting on the semiconductor substrate in a transverse direction or in a longitudinal direction. On the semiconductor substrate, the number of signal lines having the same direction is limited to a fixed number. However, according to the configuration of this example, it is possible to efficiently distribute the signal lines in a transverse direction and in a longitudinal direction.

[0134] FIG. 12 shows an example of a configuration of a plurality of flip-flop units (**186-1** to **186-7**, hereinafter referred to as **186**) and a plurality of selection units (**188-1** to **188-7**, hereinafter referred to as **188**). Each of the plurality of flip-flops (**42**, **52**, **62**) described with reference to FIG. 3 may have the same configuration as that of the plurality of flip-flop units **186** to be described with reference to FIG. 12, and each of the clock selection unit **54**, the return signal selection unit **44**. Moreover, the timing signal selection unit **64** described with reference to FIG. 3 may have the same configuration as that of the plurality of selection units **188** to be described with reference to FIG. 12.

[0135] The plurality of flip-flop units **186** is cascaded, and each of the flip-flop units **186** has the cascaded flip-flops. The flip-flop unit **186** receives the input reference clock, the timing signal, the fail timing signal, etc., and the cascaded flip-flops sequentially transfer the received signal to the flip-flops of the next stages in accordance with the reference clock.

[0136] In addition, it is preferable that the number of the cascaded flip-flops in each of flip-flop units **186** is different from the other. For example, each of the flip-flop units **186-m** has the flip-flops cascaded by $2m-1$ stages. The plurality of selection units **188** is provided corresponding to the plurality of flip-flop units **186**, selecting either of a signal input into the corresponding flip-flop unit **186** or a signal that the corresponding flip-flop unit **186** outputs in order to supply the flip-flop unit **186** of the next stage. It is controlled by the control unit **12** which signal each selection unit **188** selects. By such a configuration, it is possible to easily control the reference clock, the timing signal, the fail timing signal, etc., so as to pass through the desired number of flip-flops.

[0137] In addition, it is preferable that the return circuit **40**, the phase adjustment circuit **50**, and the timing source **60** further include means for reading the value stored on each of the plurality of flip-flops (**42**, **52**, **62**). For example, as shown in FIG. 12, they may further include a plurality of AND circuits **190**. The plurality of AND circuits **190** receives the value stored on each flip-flop, supplying the value stored on each flip-flop to the control unit **12** in accordance with the control signal given from the control unit **12**.

[0138] FIG. 13 shows an example of a configuration of a writing control circuit that controls the plurality of register units **146** and is provided in the control unit **12**. The writing control circuit includes a plurality of request signal storing units (**212-1** to **212-8**, hereinafter referred to as **212**), a selector **202**, a flip-flop **206**, a plurality of flip-flops (**208-1**

to **208-4**, hereinafter referred to as **208**), a plurality of AND circuits **210**, a counter **222**, a reset unit **228**, an AND circuit **216**, and a writing unit **204**.

[0139] The selector **202** is provided to be able to select internal clocks (CLKA to CLKH) of the plurality of host computers provided in the control unit **12**, selects either of the internal clocks, and uses it as a clock for a writing control circuit. A selection control signal is supplied from the flip-flop **206** to the selector **202**, selecting either of the clocks in accordance with the selection control signal.

[0140] The flip-flop **206** holds the selection control signal. The selection control signal is a signal that selects either of the internal clocks being supplied from the host computer to selector **202**.

[0141] The plurality of request signal storing unit **212** is provided corresponding to the plurality of host computers, storing the writing request signals from the corresponding host computers. In this example, the writing request signal is a signal of the logic H to indicate to change command data of either of the register units **146**. Each of the request signal storing units **212** receives the writing request signal through the plurality of flip-flops **208** and the AND circuit **210**. The plurality of flip-flops (**208-1** to **208-3**) removes meta-stable that is generated due to mismatching between the clock synchronized with the writing request signal and the clock for the writing control circuit. Therefore, it is requested that the period of the writing request signal being input should be longer than the period of the internal clocks (CLKA to CLKH).

[0142] In addition, the flip-flop **208-4** and the AND circuit **210** are provided to supply the writing control signal to the corresponding request signal storing units **212** during only one cycle of the selected internal clock from a rising edge of the given writing control signal.

[0143] The host selection unit **214** sequentially selects the plurality of request signal storing units **212**, receiving and outputting the stored data stored on the selected request signal storing unit **212**. The counter **222** sequentially generates a plurality of host specification signals to indicate the plurality of request signal storing units **212** in order to supply them to the host selection unit **214**, and the host selection unit **214** sequentially selects the request signal storing units **212** specified by the host specification signals received sequentially. The counter **222** sequentially generates binary numbers, for example, from zero to number of two times of number of the plurality of request signal storing units **212**, outputting the data, in which the least significant bit from the generated binary number is removed, as the host specification signal. In this example, the writing control circuit has eight request signal storing units **212**, the counter **222** sequentially generates a binary number of 0000 to 1111 in an ascending order.

[0144] In addition, the host selection unit **214** receives command data (CS_ST1 to CS_ST8) that is to be written in response to the writing request signal and register unit specification data (WDT_ST1 to WDT_ST8) for specifying the register units **146** that is to write the command data from each of the host computers, supplying the command data and the register unit specification data received from the host computer corresponding to the selected request signal storing unit **212**.

[0145] The writing unit 204 receives the storing data output from the that host selection unit 214, the command data that is to be written in the register unit 146, and the register unit specification data to specify the register unit 146 that is to write the command data, writing the command data in the register unit 146 specified by the register unit specification data when the received storing data is the writing request signal. The writing unit 204 has the flip-flop 218 and the flip-flop 220. The flip-flop 218 supplies the command data to the register unit 146 specified by the register unit specification data, and the flip-flop 220 outputs a write enable signal to admit a writing to the register unit 146.

[0146] The reset unit 228 resets the writing request signal stored on the request signal storing unit 212 selected by the host selection unit 214 when the storing data received by the host selection unit 214 is the writing request signal. For example, the reset unit 228 receives the plurality of storing data stored on the plurality of request signal storing units 212 and the host specification signal generated by the counter unit, resetting the writing request signal stored on the request signal storing unit 212 specified by the host specification signal when the storing data stored on the request signal storing unit 212 according to the host specification signal is the writing request signal.

[0147] The reset unit 228 has the selector 224 and the AND circuit 226. The selector 224 receives an eight-bit signal of which each bit is the storing data stored on the plurality of request signal storing units 212, when a bit specified by the host specification signal in the received signal is a logic H, supplying the reset signal in which only that bit is processed as the logic H to the AND circuit 226. The AND circuit 226 receives the least significant bit of the binary number generated from the counter 222, when the least significant bit of the binary number generated from the counter 222 is the logic H, supplying the reset signal to the request signal storing unit 212 and resetting the request signal storing unit 212 according to a bit position of the reset signal to indicate the logic H.

[0148] In addition, the AND circuit 216 supplies the storing data output from the host selection unit 214 to the flip-flop 220 of the writing unit 204 when the least significant bit of the binary number generated from the counter 222 shows the logic H.

[0149] According to the writing control circuit in this example, it is possible to efficiently change the command data in each of the register units 146. In addition, since the command data in the register units 146 can be also changed by any of the plurality of host computers, it is possible to share the register units 146 using the plurality of host computers. For example, each register unit 146 can be assigned based on which host computer is used for every testing. Therefore, it is possible to reduce the number of the register elements of the test apparatus 100.

[0150] Although the present invention has been described by way of an exemplary embodiment, it should be understood that those skilled in the art might make many changes and substitutions without departing from the spirit and the scope of the present invention. It is obvious from the definition of the appended claims that embodiments with such modifications also belong to the scope of the present invention.

[0151] Industrial Applicability

[0152] According to the present invention, when the test apparatus includes a master signal source that output a first timing signal in accordance with a given timing signal and a slave signal source that output a second timing signal in accordance with a timing signal supplied from the master signal source, it is possible to adjust variations of the phase of the timing signal supplied to each of the signal sources.

What is claimed is:

1. A test apparatus that tests an electronic device, comprising:

a test module operable to supply test patterns used for a test of the electronic device to the electronic device;

a main signal source operable to generate a first timing signal for controlling timing at which said test module supplies the test patterns to the electronic device and supply the first timing signal to one or more predetermined pin(s) of said test module; and

a sub-signal source operable to receive the timing signal from said main signal source, generate a second timing signal for controlling timing at which said test module supplies the test patterns to the electronic device in accordance with a phase of the timing signal received from said main signal source, and supply the second timing signal to one or more pin(s) different from the pin(s) of said main signal source among the pins of said test module, wherein

said sub-signal source comprises a phase adjustment circuit that substantially uniform the timing at which the main signal source outputs the first timing signal and the timing at which the sub-signal source outputs the second timing signal by delaying the timing signal received from the main signal source.

2. A test apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a reference clock generation unit operable to generate reference clock, wherein

the phase adjustment circuit further comprises:

a plurality of cascaded flip-flops that receives the timing signals from said main signal source and sequentially transfers the timing signals according to the reference clock generated from said reference clock generation unit; and

a timing selection unit that receives the timing signals output from each of the flip-flops, selects either of the plurality of received timing signals, and supplies the selected signal as the second timing signal, and

said test apparatus further comprises a control unit operable to control whether the timing selection unit selects either of the timing signals so that the timing at which said main signal source outputs the first timing signal and the timing at which said sub-signal source outputs the second timing signal are substantially the same as each other.

3. A test apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein the phase adjustment circuit further comprises a variable delay circuit for phase adjustment for delaying the timing signal received from said main signal source, and

said control unit sequentially changes a delay amount of the variable delay circuit for phase adjustment, detects

the delay amount of the variable delay circuit for phase adjustment by which the timing at which the value of the timing signal is changed is substantially equal to the timing at which either of the plurality of flip-flops receives the value of the timing signal, and sets the delay amount of the variable delay circuit for phase adjustment to a delay amount deviated from the detected delay amount by substantially half a period of the reference clock.

4. A test apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein said control unit generates the timing signal,

said main signal source and said sub-signal source have the same configuration as each other,

said main signal source and said sub-signal source comprises a master and slave selection unit that selects whether either of the timing signal delayed by the variable delay circuit for phase adjustment or the timing signal generated from said control unit is supplied to the plurality of flip-flops, and

said control unit controls the master and slave selection unit to select either of the timing signals based on

whether each of said main signal source and said sub-signal source functions as either of said main signal source or said sub-signal source.

5. A test apparatus as claimed in claim 4, wherein said control unit causes the timing selection unit of said main signal source to select the timing signal output from the predetermined flip-flop as the first timing signal, and controls whether the timing selection unit of said sub-signal source selects either of the timing signals so that the timing at which said main signal source outputs the first timing signal and the timing at which said sub-signal source outputs the second timing signal are substantially the same as each other.

6. A test apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein said control unit causes the timing selection unit of said main signal source to select the timing signals output from the flip-flop provided in the substantially central area among the plurality of cascaded flip-flops as the first timing signal.

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