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(71) Applicant:
**MATSUSHITA ELECTRIC INDUSTRIAL CO., LTD.
Kadoma-shi, Osaka 571-8501 (JP)**

(72) Inventor: **Watanabe, Yoshinobu**
Yokohama-shi, Kanagawa-ken 230-0076 (JP)

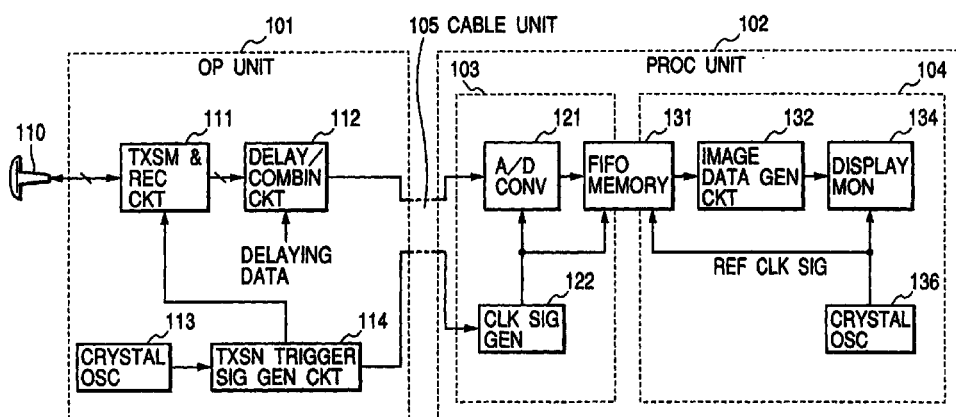
(74) Representative:
Manitz, Finsterwald & Partner
Postfach 22 16 11
80506 München (DE)

(54) **An ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus**

(57) In an ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus, the circuitry is divided into two parts (101,102), which are connected with a cable (105). The first unit (101) includes a trigger signal generation circuit (114) and an ultrasonic wave transmitting and receiving circuit (111) including a probe (110) for transmitting ultrasonic waves in response to the trigger signal and receiving reflected ultrasonic waves to generate a reception signal. The cable (105) transmits the reception signal and the trigger signal. The second unit (102) includes a clock signal

generation circuit (122) for generating a clock signal in response to the trigger signal transmitted through the cable (105), and a/d converter (121) for a/d converting the reception signal in response to the clock signal. Means (235) for detecting a frequency error between the clock signal and a reference frequency signal and means for compensating the ultrasonic diagnostic data may be further provided.

FIG. 1



Description

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0001] This invention relates to an ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus for providing ultrasonic diagnostic image data.

2. Description of the Prior Art

[0002] An ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus for providing ultrasonic image data having independent cases is known. Japanese patent application provisional publication No. 5-228139 and No. 6-225874 disclose the independent case type of ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus.

[0003] Fig. 5 is a block diagram of a prior art ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus disclosed in Japanese patent application provisional publication No. 5-228139. In this ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus, the whole unit is divided into the main body 1 and an operation unit 2 which are electrically connected to each other with connection cables. An operation panel 4 and a display monitor 5 are provided to the operation unit 2 to which an ultrasonic wave probe 3 is connected. The main body 1 and the operation unit 2 can be independently moved.

[0004] Fig. 6 is a block diagram of another prior art ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus disclosed in Japanese patent application provisional publication No. 6-225874. In this ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus, the whole circuitry is divided into two parts. The first case having a compact size is arranged near the person to be diagnosed. On the other hand, the second case having a large scale of circuitry necessary for high performance diagnosis is remotely arranged. Thus, digital data transmission is effected between both cases with a fiber optic cable.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] The aim of the present Invention is to provide a superior ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus.

[0006] In an ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus, the circuitry is divided into two parts, that is, first and second units which are connected with a cable. The first unit includes a trigger signal generation circuit for generating a trigger signal in response to a command signal, an ultrasonic wave transmitting and receiving circuit including a probe for transmitting ultrasonic waves in response to the trigger signal and receiving reflected ultrasonic waves. The cable transmits the received reflected ultrasonic waves and the trigger signal. The second unit includes a clock signal generation circuit for generating a clock signal in response to the trigger signal transmitted through the cable, and an a/d converter for a/d converting (sampling) the received reflected ultrasonic waves in response to the clock signal to out-

put ultrasonic diagnosis data. A frequency difference detection circuit for detecting a frequency error between the clock signal and a reference frequency signal may be further provided. A compensating circuit may compensate the ultrasonic diagnostic data to output compensated ultrasonic diagnostic data.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] The object and features of the present invention will become more readily apparent from the following detailed description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings in which:

Fig. 1 is a block diagram of an ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus according to a first embodiment of this invention;

Figs. 2A to 2C are graphical drawings showing the operation of the ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus according to the first embodiment;

Fig. 3 is a block diagram of an ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus according to a second embodiment of this invention;

Figs. 4A to 4D are graphical drawings showing the operation of the ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus according to the second embodiment;

Fig. 5 is a block diagram of a prior art ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus; and

Fig. 6 is a block diagram of another prior art ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus.

[0008] The same or corresponding elements or parts are designated with like references throughout the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

FIRST EMBODIMENT

[0009] Fig. 1 is a block diagram of an ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus according to a first embodiment of this invention.

[0010] The ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus includes a probe 110, an operation unit 101, a cable unit 105, and a processing unit 102.

[0011] The probe 110 includes a plurality of ultrasonic vibration elements arranged in an array.

[0012] The operation unit 101 is coupled to the processing unit 102 with the cable unit 105 to independently locate the operation unit 101 and the processing unit 102. That is, the operation unit 101 is located adjacent to the human body subjected to the diagnosis. On the other hand, the processing unit 102 can be remotely arranged.

[0013] The operation unit 101 includes a crystal oscillator 113 for generating a first clock signal, a trigger signal generation circuit 114 for generating a trigger signal in response to the first clock signal, a transmitting

and receiving circuit 111 for generating a drive pulse in response to a trigger signal to supply the drive pulse to the probe 110, and a delaying/combining circuit for delaying respective reception components derived from a plurality of ultrasonic vibration elements and combines the delayed reception components to output a combined reception signal.

[0014] The cable unit 105 transmits the combined reception signal and the trigger signal to the processing unit 102.

[0015] The processing unit 102 includes a clock signal generation circuit 122 for generating a second clock signal, an a/d converter 121 for a/d-converting (sampling) the combined reception signal to output a digital reception signal in response to the second clock signal, a FIFO (first-in-first-out) memory 131, a crystal oscillator 136 for generating a reference clock signal, a video data processing circuit 132 for processing the combined reception signal from the FIFO memory 131 to generate display data, and a display monitor 134 for displaying the display data to provide display image for ultrasonic diagnosis to the operator.

[0016] Figs. 2A to 2C are graphical drawings showing the operation of the ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus according to the first embodiment.

[0017] The trigger signal generation circuit 114 generates the trigger signal in response to the first clock signal as shown in Fig. 2B. The first clock signal is periodically generated at a desired cycle of data transmission. The transmitting and receiving circuit 111 generates the drive pulse in response to the trigger signal to supply the drive pulse to at least one of vibration elements of the probe 110. The probe 110 generates (induces) an ultrasonic wave pulse which is transmitted through the human body.

[0018] The reflected ultrasonic waves (echo signal) is received by the probe 110 as shown in Fig. 2A. More specifically, respective vibration elements receive the reflected ultrasonic wave signals (echo signals) to generate reception signals.

[0019] The delaying/combining circuit 112 delays respective reception signals derived from a plurality of ultrasonic vibration elements in accordance with delaying data for a desired directivity and combines the delayed reception signals to output the combined reception signal having the desired directivity.

[0020] The cable unit 105 transmits the combined reception signal and the trigger signal to the processing unit 102.

[0021] The clock signal generation circuit 122 is reset and started in response to the trigger signal transmitted from the operation unit 101 through the cable unit 105 as shown in Fig. 2C.

[0022] The a/d converter 121 a/d-converts the combined reception signal to output a digital reception signal in response to the second clock signal. The FIFO (first-in-first-out) memory 131 stores the digital reception signal. The FIFO memory 131 outputs the stored

digital reception signal in response to the reference clock. The image data generation circuit 132 generates image data for ultrasonic diagnosis from the reception signal from the FIFO memory 131. The display monitor 134 provides a display image for ultrasonic diagnosis to the operator from the image data from the image data generation circuit 132.

[0023] The circuitry in the processing unit 102 is divided into a first block 103 and a second block 104.

The storing side of the FIFO memory 131 is included in the first block 103. On the other hand, the reading side of the FIFO memory 131 is included in the second block 104. The first and second clock signals for respective blocks (including the operation unit) are independently generated. Thus, the necessity of transmitting clock signals through the cable unit 105 is eliminated, so that asynchronous operations at respective blocks are provided.

[0024] As mentioned above, according to the first embodiment, the necessity of a fiber optic cable having a high noise resistivity can be eliminated. Moreover, according to the first embodiment, the necessity of transmitting the clock signal through the cable can be eliminated.

[0025] As mentioned above, according to the first embodiment, the necessity in transmitting a clock signal for synchronous operation between respective blocks is eliminated. Accordingly, it becomes easy to extend the length of the cable.

SECOND EMBODIMENT

[0026] Fig. 3 is a block diagram of an ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus according to a second embodiment of this invention. Figs. 4A to 4D are graphical drawings showing the operation of the ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus according to the second embodiment.

[0027] The structure of the second embodiment is substantially the same as the first embodiment. The difference is that a frequency error detection circuit 235 is further provided. Moreover, an image data generation circuit 132 generates the image data for diagnosis such that a frequency error between clock signals is compensated.

[0028] The clock accuracy detection and compensation circuit 235 detects difference in counts of clock pulses between the second clock signal and the reference clock signal to generate a compensation signal in accordance with the difference in counts, i.e., the frequency error. The compensation signal is supplied to an image data generation circuit 232 to compensate the image data such that error in the image displayed on the display monitor 134 due to difference in frequency between the second clock signal and the reference clock signal is compensated.

[0029] In Fig. 3, the ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus according to the second embodiment includes a probe 210, an operation unit 201, a cable unit 205, and a

processing unit 202.

[0030] The probe 210 includes a plurality of ultrasonic vibration elements arranged in an array.

[0031] The operation unit 201 is coupled to the processing unit 202 with the cable unit 205 to independently locate the operation unit 201 and the processing unit 202. That is, the operation unit 201 is located adjacent to the human body subjected to the diagnosis.

[0032] The operation unit 201 includes a crystal oscillator 213 for generating a first clock signal, a trigger signal generation circuit 214 for generating a trigger signal in response to the first clock signal, a transmitting and receiving circuit 211 for generating a drive pulse in response to a trigger signal to supply the drive pulse to the probe 210 and a delaying/combining circuit for delaying respective reception components derived from a plurality of ultrasonic vibration elements and combines the delayed reception components to output a combined reception signal.

[0033] The cable unit 205 transmits the combined reception signal and the trigger signal to the processing unit 202.

[0034] The processing unit 202 includes a clock signal generation circuit 222 for generating a second clock signal, an a/d converter 221 for a/d-converting the combined reception signal to output a digital reception signal in response to the second clock signal, a FIFO (first-in-first-out) memory 231, a crystal oscillator 236 for generating a reference clock signal, a video data processing circuit 232 for processing the combined reception signal from the FIFO memory 231 to generate display data, and a display monitor 234 for displaying the display data to provide display image for ultrasonic diagnosis to the operator.

[0035] Figs. 4A to 4D are graphical drawings showing the operation of the ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus according to the second embodiment.

[0036] The trigger signal generation circuit 214 generates the trigger signal in response to the first clock signal as shown in Fig. 4B. The transmitting and receiving circuit 211 generates the drive pulse in response to the trigger signal to supply the drive pulse to the probe 210. The probe 210 induces an ultrasonic pulse in the human body or the like.

[0037] The reflected ultrasonic waves (echo signal) is received by the probe 210 as shown in Fig. 4A. More specifically, respective vibration elements receive the reflected ultrasonic wave signals (echo signals) to generate reception signals.

[0038] The delaying/combining circuit 212 delays respective reception signals derived from a plurality of ultrasonic vibration elements in accordance with delaying data to have a desired directivity and combines the delayed reception signals to output the combined reception signal having the desired directivity.

[0039] The cable unit 205 transmits the combined reception signal and the trigger signal to the processing unit 202.

[0040] The clock signal generation circuit 222 is reset and started in response to the trigger signal transmitted from the operation unit 201 through the cable unit 205 as shown in Fig. 4C.

[0041] The a/d converter 221 a/d-converts the combined reception signal to output a digital reception signal in response to the second clock signal. The FIFO (first-in-first-out) memory 231 stores the digital reception signal. The FIFO memory 231 outputs the stored digital reception signal in response to the reference clock.

[0042] The frequency error detection circuit 235 detects a frequency error of the second clock signal (f1) from the reference clock signal (f2) as shown in Figs. 4C and 4D. That is, the frequency error detection circuit 235 counts M pulses (cycles) in the reference clock signal from the crystal oscillator 236 and counts the pulses (N) of the second clock signal. The frequency error detection circuit 235 calculates the actual frequency as follows:

$$f1 = f2 \times N/M \quad (1)$$

[0043] In this process, there may be two counts of error between the second clock signal and the reference clock signal, the maximum frequency error is given by:

$$\Delta f = 2/N \quad (2)$$

[0044] Accordingly, it is assumed that the compensation error should be suppressed below 0.1%. M is determined such that the value N is made more than 2000.

[0045] The image data generation circuit 232 generates the image data such that error in the image data due to the frequency difference between the second clock signal and the reference signal is compensated.

[0046] The display monitor 234 displays a display image for ultrasonic diagnosis from the image data from the image data generation circuit 232 of which error due to the frequency difference is compensated.

[0047] As mentioned above, according to the second embodiment, the necessity in transmitting a clock signal for synchronous operation between respective blocks is eliminated. That is, asynchronous operation every block is provided. Accordingly, a high noise resistivity is not required in the communication cable. Moreover it becomes possible to extend the length of the cable. Moreover, it is possible to select the optimum frequency for each block, so that this eliminates the necessity of high speed responsive ICs. Moreover, the image data generation circuit 232 generates image data to draw a display image on the display monitor 234 in accordance with the frequency difference data (compensation data), so that if clock frequencies at respective clocks are different from each other, the displayed image is free from the frequency errors. In other words, the clock signal generator 222 can be structured with a

simple self-oscillation circuit, so that miniaturization can be provided and reduction in the cost is also provided.

[0048] According to the second embodiment, the necessity of using clock signals having the same frequency and the same phase between respective blocks 5 can be eliminated.

Claims

1. An ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus comprising: 10

a first unit including:

trigger signal generation means for generating a trigger signal in response to a command signal; and 15
ultrasonic wave transmitting and receiving means including a probe for including ultrasonic waves in a human body in response to said trigger signal and receiving reflected ultrasonic waves to generate a reception signal; 20

transmitting means for transmitting said reception signal and said trigger signal; and 25
a second unit including:

clock signal generation means for generating a clock signal in response to said trigger signal from said transmitting means; 30
and
sampling means for sampling said reception signal from said transmitting means in response to said clock signal to output ultrasonic diagnosis data. 35

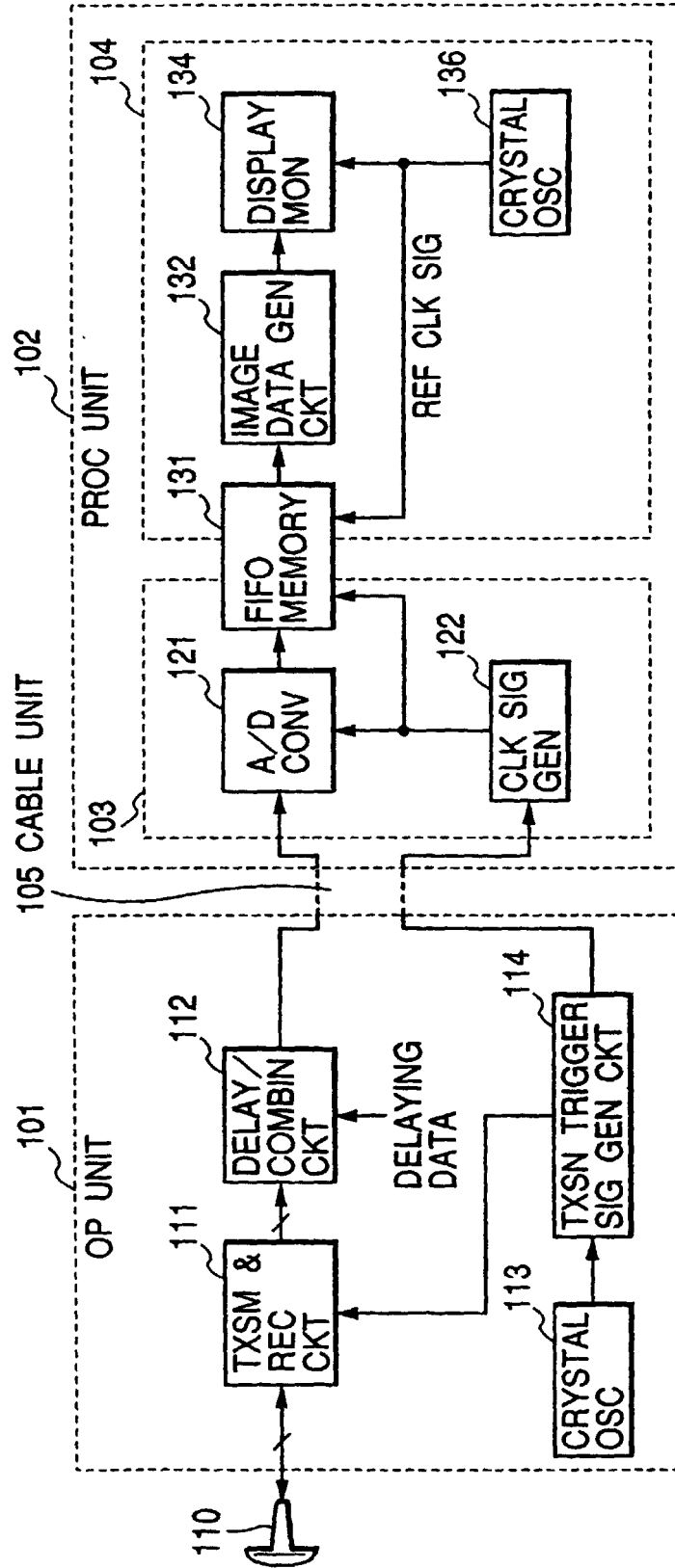
2. An ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising frequency difference detection means for detecting a frequency difference between said clock signal and a reference frequency signal used for processing said ultrasonic diagnosis data. 40

3. An ultrasonic diagnosis apparatus as claimed in claim 2, further comprising compensating means 45
for compensating said ultrasonic diagnostic data in accordance with said detected frequency difference to output compensated ultrasonic diagnostic data.

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FIG. 1



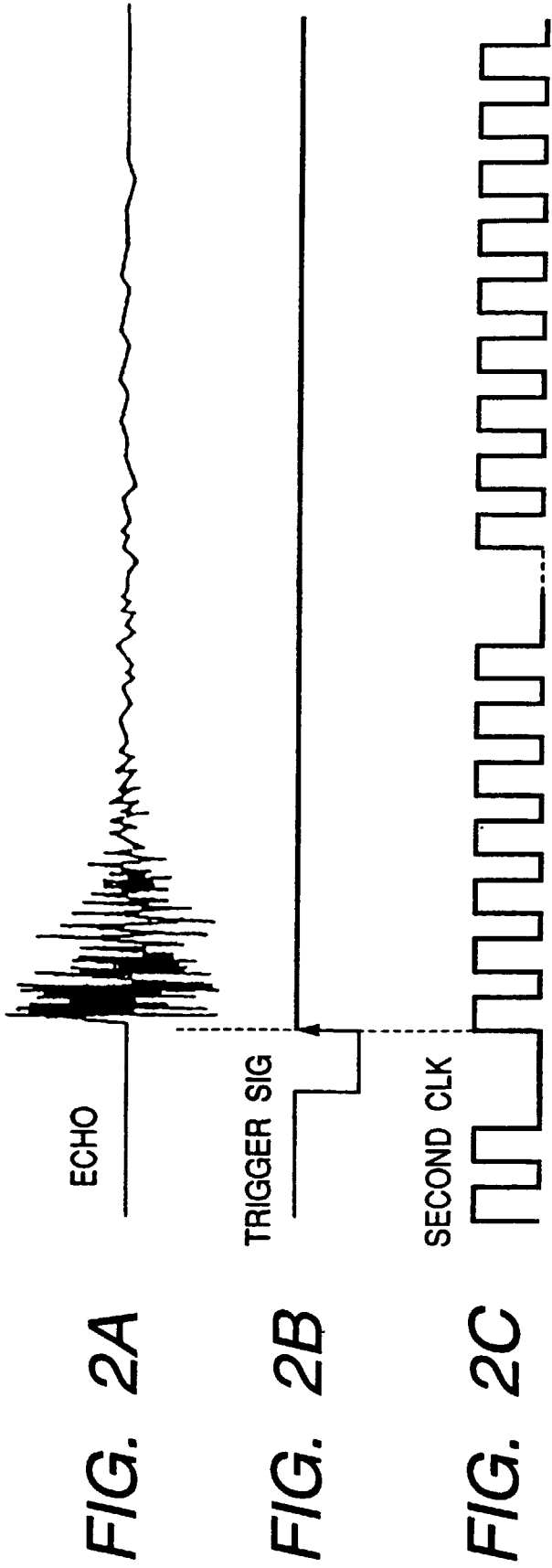


FIG. 3

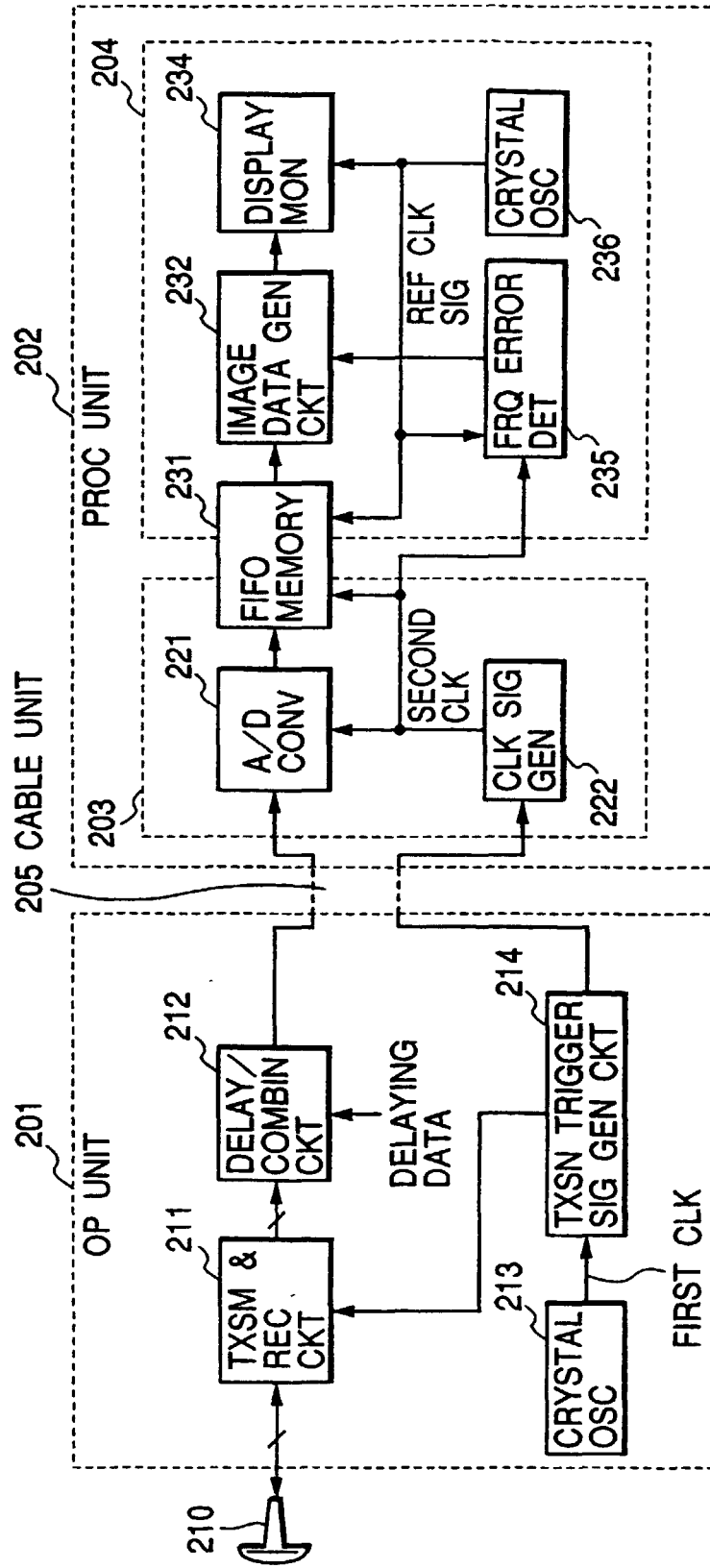


FIG. 4A

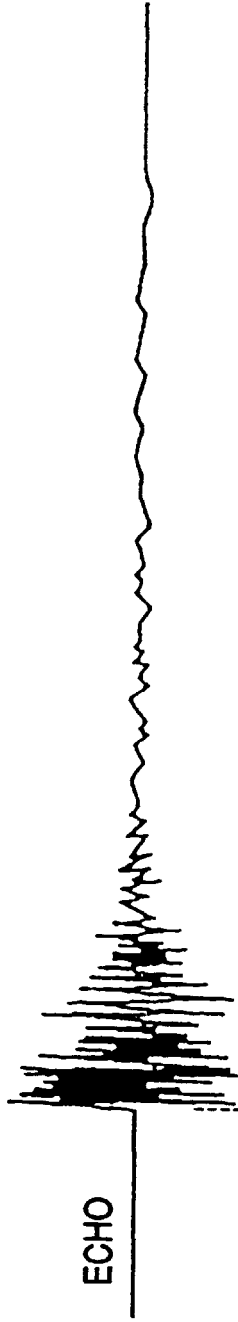


FIG. 4B



FIG. 4C

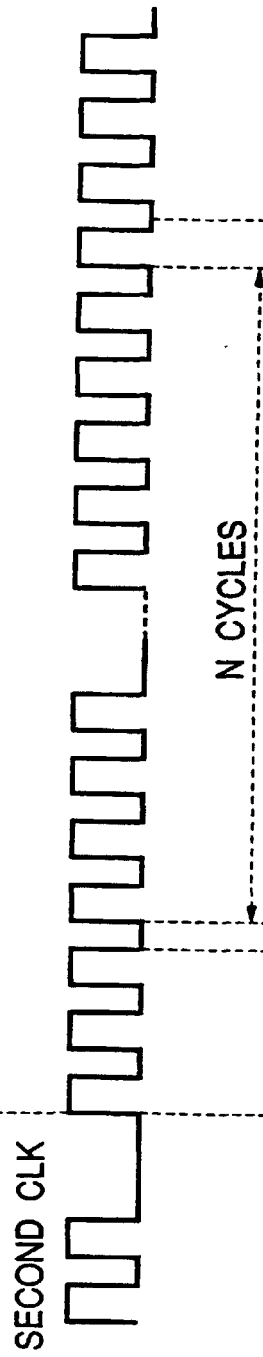


FIG. 4D

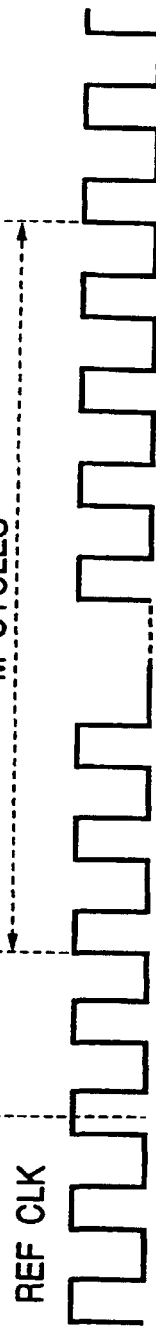


FIG. 5
PRIOR ART

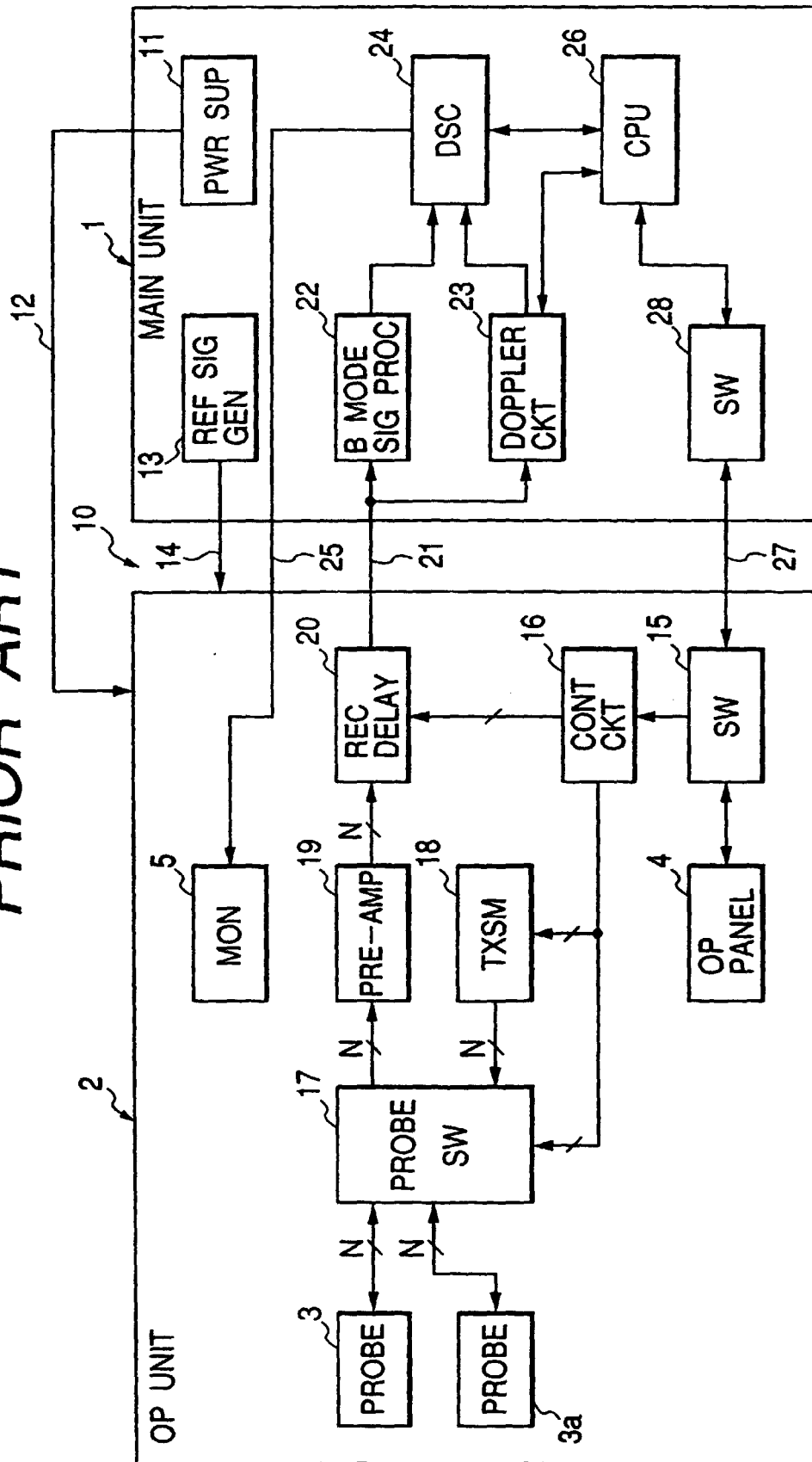
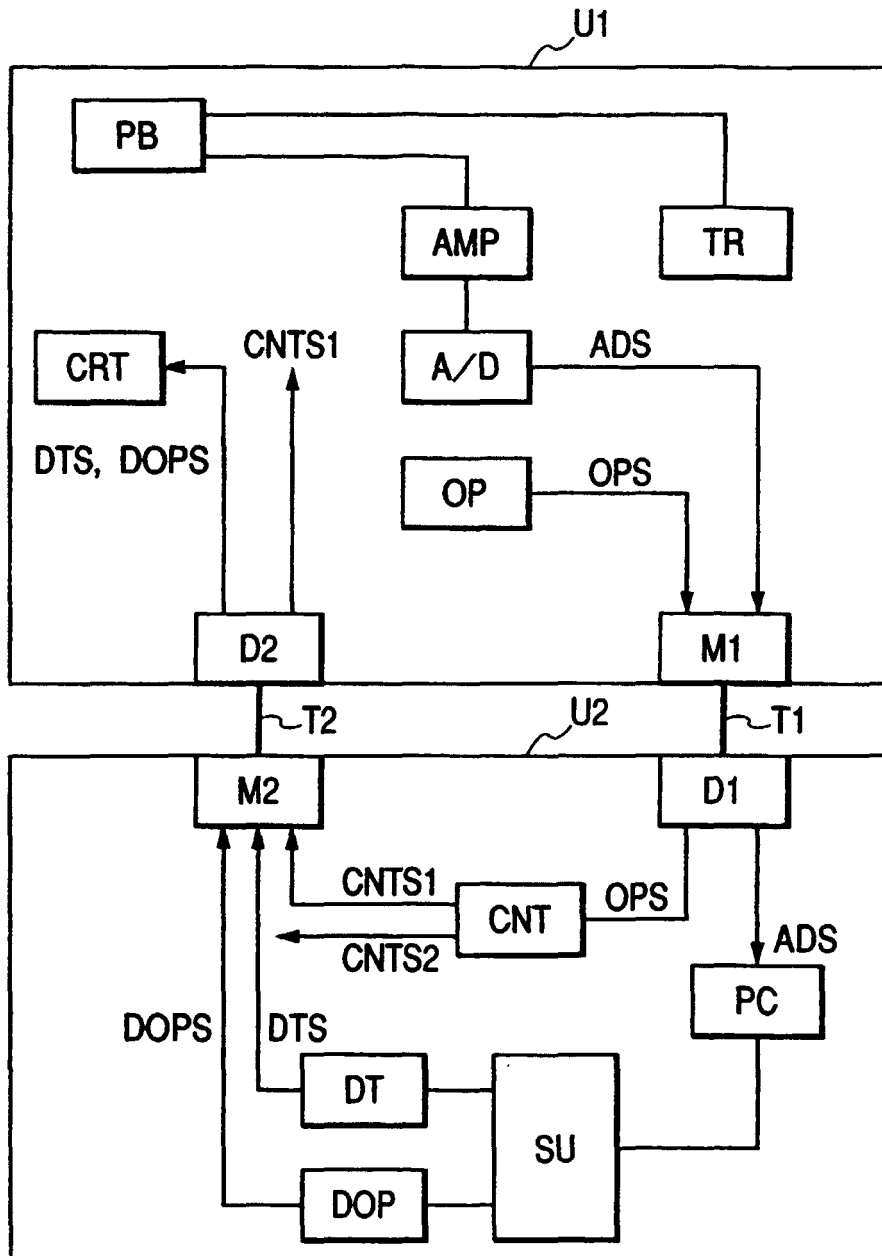


FIG. 6
PRIOR ART





European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 00 11 1262

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.CI.7)
A	US 5 839 442 A (BROADSTONE STEVEN R ET AL) 24 November 1998 (1998-11-24) * column 9, line 12 - column 10, line 16 * -----	1	A61B8/08 A61B8/00
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int.CI.7)
			A61B G01S
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 9 November 2000	Examiner Knüpling, M
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document			

EPO FORM 1503 03/82 (P04C01)

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
ON EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION NO.**

EP 00 11 1262

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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09-11-2000

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
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For more details about this annex : see Official Journal of the European Patent Office, No. 12/82

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当前申请(专利权)人(译)	松下电器产业有限公司.		
[标]发明人	WATANABE YOSHINOBU		
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摘要(译)

在超声诊断设备中，电路被分成两部分（101,102），它们与电缆（105）连接。第一单元（101）包括触发信号发生电路（114）和超声波发射和接收电路（111），其包括探测器（110），用于响应于触发信号发射超声波并接收反射的超声波以产生接收信号。电缆（105）发送接收信号和触发信号。第二单元（102）包括：时钟信号发生电路（122），用于响应于通过电缆（105）发送的触发信号产生时钟信号；以及a/d转换器（121），用于a/d转换接收信号响应时钟信号。还可以提供用于检测时钟信号和参考频率信号之间的频率误差的装置（235）和用于补偿超声诊断数据的装置。

