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CA 2600932 C 2010/02/02

(11)(21) **2 600 932**

(12) **BREVET CANADIEN**
CANADIAN PATENT

(13) **C**

(22) Date de dépôt/Filing Date: 2007/09/07

(41) Mise à la disp. pub./Open to Public Insp.: 2009/02/06

(45) Date de délivrance/Issue Date: 2010/02/02

(51) Cl.Int./Int.Cl. *B66C 23/84* (2006.01), *B63B 27/10* (2006.01), *B65G 67/60* (2006.01), *B66C 23/18* (2006.01)

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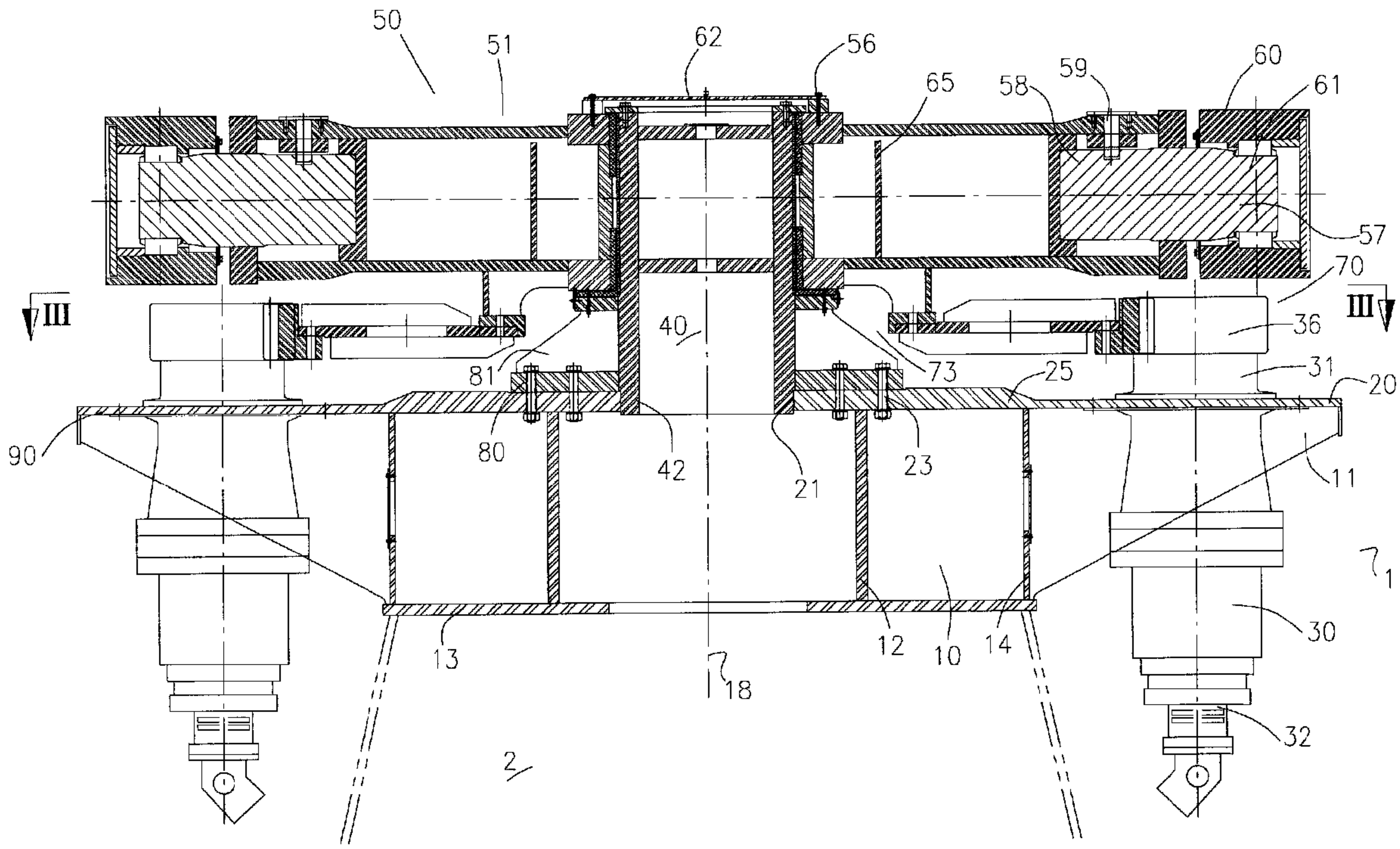
(54) Titre : SYSTEME ACTIONNEUR POUR ORIENTATION DE FLECHE
(54) Title: BOOM SLEWING ACTUATOR SYSTEM



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:
A slewing actuator system for rotating a boom structure comprises a cylindrical support member having lower and upper ends; a drive mounting member; gearing means comprising a gear assembly and at least one gear drive fixable to the drive mounting member and operatively connected to the gear assembly; and a boom support means to releasably secure the boom structure and operatively connectable to the gearing means. In an operating position, the boom support means is mounted proximate the upper end of the cylindrical support member and is rotatable about a substantially vertical axis; the gear assembly is substantially horizontal; and the gearing means imparts rotational movement to the boom support means. The system can include a pedestal surrounding at least part of the cylindrical support member, which can be a tube or kingpin. The compact modular system can be secured to various surfaces including ship decks and land surfaces.

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ABSTRACT

A slewing actuator system for rotating a boom structure comprises a cylindrical support member having lower and upper ends; a drive mounting member; gearing means comprising a gear assembly and at least one gear drive fixable to the drive mounting member and operatively connected to the gear assembly; and a boom support means to releasably secure the boom structure and operatively connectable to the gearing means. In an operating position, the boom support means is mounted proximate the upper end of the cylindrical support member and is rotatable about a substantially vertical axis; the gear assembly is substantially horizontal; and the gearing means imparts rotational movement to the boom support means. The system can include a pedestal surrounding at least part of the cylindrical support member, which can be a tube or kingpin. The compact modular system can be secured to various surfaces including ship decks and land surfaces.

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BOOM SLEWING ACTUATOR SYSTEM

The present invention relates to a slewing actuator system for use with a boom, particularly for use in unloading cargo materials from a ship.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Booms for loading and unloading materials, whether on land or ship decks, are known, and typically are secured to a fixed supporting point and rotatable around at least a part of a circle.

Such booms when intended for use secured to the deck of a ship, for use in unloading materials contained on the ship, are typically rotated (slewed) around a point on the deck. This rotating motion of the boom has been traditionally achieved by slewing actuators, with the boom structure typically being connected to the slewing actuator by trunnion pins. Typically, such a structure will slew from 90 degrees to 120 degrees in either direction to discharge material to another ship or on shore. Such range of motion generally relates to restrictions based on the space available on the ship deck, and not by any operational limits. Similar ground-surface based arrangements are also used for cargo movement.

A conventional slewing actuator typically comprises a hydraulically actuated rack and pinion arrangement. In such an arrangement, hydraulically actuated steel racks move back and forth to effect rotation about the rotatable pinion, which cause the boom to move. The total length of the rack governs the amount of rotation and, typically, these arrangements can take up a large amount of space in order to operate. On some ships, and other loading and unloading locations, there may be a small clearance envelope available in which such an arrangement can be positioned, and this can limit the rotational range of the boom to, for example, 90 degrees in some situations, which may not be sufficient for unloading operations.

There are other problems inherent in such slewing actuator arrangements. Firstly, slewing actuators are typically manufactured and shipped as integral units, and are not disassembled for shipping from the manufacturing facility to the shipyard or other intended use location, thus making transport by air freight or other standard means expensive and difficult, as the equipment used in these systems is very large, heavy and expensive.

Secondly, such systems can be very difficult to install, particularly when intended for use on ships, as they are typically affixed to the ship deck by kingpin bushing arrangements mounted to the ship deck, in which a vertical pin is positioned through a key opening, to the hull. This requires cooperation between the key opening and the kingpin so that a proper fit is ensured. However, achieving such compatibility can be difficult since these are each usually fabricated by different manufacturers to very tight tolerances.

Thirdly, conventional slewing actuators have a limited number of specific sizes available, often leading to extremely large, over-designed actuators, when the ideal size would have been in between two available sizes.

It would therefore be advantageous to have a slewing actuator system suitable for use on ships, land surfaces or docks, and possessing a more compact design that allows for a greater amount of rotational range of the boom attached thereto, particularly on ships or at other use locations having a small clearance envelope.

It would be further advantageous to have a slewing actuator system which is easy to install, lighter than conventional slewing actuator systems, and which can be easily disassembled into separate portions for shipping, if necessary.

It would be still further advantageous to have a boom slewing actuator system which safely prevents boom slippage which securely locks the boom in place when hydraulic pressure is removed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention discloses a rotary drive system comprising a plurality of fixed horizontally rotatable drives each of which drives a rotatable pinion gear for effecting the movement of a boom structure.

The present invention safely prevents boom slippage through having an integral brake so that when hydraulic pressure is removed (or lost due to component failure), the boom remains securely locked in place.

The present invention has a compact design, which may provide a greater amount of rotational range to a boom, is easy to install, and can be easily disassembled for shipping, if necessary.

The present invention includes several degrees of redundancy in order to prevent a system shutdown in the event of a single component failure.

The present invention is built up of several discrete components which are readily available for replacement in the event of component failure.

In a broad embodiment, the invention therefore seeks to provide a slewing actuator system for rotating a boom structure and constructed and arranged to be secured to a support structure, the system comprising:

(i) a cylindrical support member having a lower end constructed and arranged to be secured to the support structure, and an upper end;

(ii) a drive mounting member;

(iii) gearing means comprising:

(a) a gear assembly; and

(b) at least one gear drive constructed and arranged to be fixed to the drive mounting member and operatively connected to the gear assembly; and

(iv) a boom support means mounted to a securing means and having

(a) a lower surface constructed and arranged to be operatively connected to the gearing means;

(b) an upper surface constructed and arranged to receive and releasably secure the boom structure; and

(c) a central region and two lateral regions having respective outer edges;

wherein, when the system is in an operating position,

(A) the boom support means is rotatably mounted proximate to the upper end of the cylindrical support member and is rotatable about a substantially vertical axis of rotation;

(B) the gear assembly is positioned substantially horizontally; and

(C) the gearing means imparts rotational movement to the boom support means.

According to another aspect of the present invention, there is provided a slewing actuator system for rotating a boom structure and constructed and arranged to be secured to a support structure, the system comprising:

(i) a cylindrical support member having a lower end constructed and arranged to be secured to the support structure, and an upper end;

(ii) a drive mounting member constructed and arranged for receiving the cylindrical support member and for placement upon the support structure;

(iii) gearing means comprising:

(a) a gear assembly; and

(b) at least one rotating gear drive constructed and arranged to be fixed to the drive mounting member and operatively connected to the gear assembly, the gear assembly further comprising a rotating gear constructed and arranged to be operatively driven by the at least one gear drive, and a gear plate in interlocking engagement with the rotating gear; and

(iv) a boom support means mounted to a cylindrical connector operatively connected at a first end to the lower surface of the boom support means and at a second end to the gear assembly, the boom support means having

(a) an upper surface constructed and arranged to receive and releasably secure the boom structure; and

(b) a central region and two lateral regions having respective outer edges;

wherein, when the system is in an operating position,

(A) the boom support means is rotatably mounted proximate to the upper end of the cylindrical support member and is rotatable about a substantially vertical axis of rotation;

(B) the gear assembly is positioned substantially horizontally and comprises a central opening constructed and arranged to rotatably surround a portion of the cylindrical support member; and

(C) the gearing means imparts rotational movement to the boom support means.

In a first more specific embodiment, the invention seeks to provide a system wherein the cylindrical support member is a tube, having an upper portion and a lower portion, and the boom support means is rotatable about the upper portion of the tube.

Preferably, the system further comprises a pedestal constructed and arranged to surround the cylindrical support member substantially concentrically for at least a portion of a height of the cylindrical support member, and preferably the pedestal comprises a substantially cylindrical inner wall and an outer wall having a cross-sectional configuration of a regular polygon.

In this embodiment, the gear assembly can be connected to the boom support means, and be rotatable about the tube, thus rotating the boom support means. Alternatively, the gear assembly can be fixedly connected to the tube, and the at least one gear drive rotates around the gear assembly and thereby rotates the boom support means.

In a second more specific embodiment, the invention seeks to provide a system wherein the cylindrical support member is a solid kingpin, and the gear assembly is connected to the boom support means, and is rotatable about the kingpin, thus rotating the boom support means.

Preferably, the support structure is selected from a base plate, a pedestal structure comprising a base plate, a pedestal structure comprising at least one support plate, a wharf, a stationary dock, a floating dock, and a ship deck.

Where the cylindrical support member is a tube, it is preferably constructed and arranged to be secured at its lower portion to the support structure, and the securing means comprises the pedestal which is constructed and arranged to rotatably surround at least the upper portion of the tube and to be secured to the lower surface of the boom support means. Alternatively, where the support structure is a pedestal comprising a support plate, the tube is constructed and arranged to be secured to the support plate.

Where the system includes a pedestal secured to the support structure, preferably the drive mounting member is constructed and arranged to be mounted on and secured by the upper surface of the pedestal. Alternatively, the drive mounting member can be mounted proximate a lower portion of the pedestal.

Preferably each gear drive comprises an integral brake. More preferably, the system comprises a plurality of gear drives each fixed substantially equidistantly from the vertical axis of rotation of the boom support means, in which case preferably each of the plurality of gear drives shares a common power source, selected from hydraulic and electrical power.

Preferably, the gear assembly has a proximal end constructed and arranged to be secured to the cylindrical support member; alternatively, the gear assembly has a proximal end constructed and arranged to be secured to the cylindrical connector.

Preferably, the gear drive comprises a pinion gear, and the gear assembly comprises

(i) a rotating gear constructed and arranged to be operatively driven by each pinion gear; and

(ii) a gear plate in interlocking engagement with the rotating gear. More preferably, the gear plate has a plurality of spaced-apart openings from its upper surface through to its lower surface.

Preferably, the boom support means comprises a central opening from its upper surface through to its lower surface and is constructed and arranged to rotatably surround the upper end of the cylindrical support member, and more preferably a cap plate is secured to the upper surface of the boom support means over the central opening. Further, the boom support means preferably also comprises at least one low friction bushing between the central opening and the upper end of the cylindrical support member.

Preferably, the boom support means comprises a trunnion weldment and each lateral region includes a trunnion pin. More preferably, each trunnion pin is operatively connected to one of a pair of boom hubs each constructed and arranged to be operatively connected to the boom structure.

Preferably, the cylindrical support member has an outer surface which includes an annular retaining location constructed and arranged to receive and support the lower surface of the boom support means, and more preferably the annular retaining location is selected from a protruding ledge and a detent provided at the outer surface of the cylindrical support member. Further, at least one low friction thrust washer is preferably provided between the annular retaining location and the boom support means.

Preferably, the drive mounting member is constructed and arranged to be supported at its lower surface at least proximate its lateral edges by a plurality of wing support members connected to the pedestal.

Preferably, the system further comprises an internal support ring which at least partially encloses the cylindrical support member proximate its upper end. More preferably, the cylindrical support member also has an internal reinforcing disc which substantially encloses the lower end of the cylindrical support member.

Preferably, the system further comprises a retainer plate secured to the pedestal at a lower portion.

Optionally, the system can be configured so that a horizontal distance between the vertical axis of rotation and each lateral edge of the boom support means exceeds a horizontal distance between a centre and an outer limit of the gear assembly.

The structural system of the invention and its modular construction allow for each component to be easily shipped in conventional and relatively inexpensive fashion and then easily assembled during installation at the intended end use location, or subsequently disassembled for removal to another location. Similarly, maintenance and repairs are substantially simplified. As discussed further below, the features of the present invention result in a slewing actuator system suitable for use on ships, land surfaces or docks, with a more compact design, allowing for a greater amount of rotational range of the boom, and at the same time safely preventing boom slippage, and which securely locks the boom in place when hydraulic pressure is removed.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The embodiments of the present invention will now be described by reference to the following figures, in which identical reference numerals in different figures indicate identical elements and in which:

Figure 1 is a vertical cross-sectional view of a first embodiment of the invention;

Figure 2 is an enlarged cross-sectional view showing the connection of the cylindrical support to the boom support means in the embodiment of Figure 1;

Figure 3 is a sectional view along the lines III-III in Figure 1;

Figure 4 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of the gear assembly of the invention;

Figure 5 is a vertical cross-sectional view of a second embodiment of the invention;

Figure 6 is a sectional view along the lines VI-VI in Figure 5;

Figure 7 is a vertical cross-sectional view of a third embodiment of the invention;

Figure 8 is an enlarged cross-sectional view showing the connection of the kingpin to the boom support means in the embodiment of Figure 7;

Figure 9 is a top view of the third embodiment, taken along the lines IX-IX in Figure 7; and

Figure 10 is a sectional view along the lines X-X in Figure 7.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The invention will be described for the purposes of illustration only in connection with certain embodiments; however, it is to be understood that other objects and advantages of the present invention will be made apparent by the following description of the drawings according to the present invention. While a preferred embodiment is disclosed, this is not intended to be limiting. Rather, the general principles set forth herein are considered to be merely illustrative of the scope of the present invention and it is to be further understood that numerous changes may be made without straying from the scope of the present invention.

Referring to Figure 1, a first exemplary embodiment of the boom slewing actuator system **1** of the invention is shown in an operational position. The slewing actuator system **1** comprises a pedestal **10**, having an inner circular wall **12**, and an outer wall **14**, preferably having a cross-sectional configuration of a regular polygon, the pedestal **10** being mountable on a support, shown here as a base plate **13** affixed to the support **2**, such as a ship deck or a dock. Affixed to the upper surface **90** of the pedestal **10** is a drive mounting plate **20**, having a central opening providing a tube-receiving location **21**. At an upper surface of the drive mounting plate **20** adjacent the central opening, a support plate **80** contributing to the tube-receiving location **21** is affixed, for example secured by bolts **23**. Similarly mounted on an upper surface of the support plate **80** is a stiffening ring **81**.

A cylindrical support, in this embodiment a tube **40**, is affixed with its lower end **42** secured by the perimeter of the tube-receiving location **21** provided by the central openings in the drive mounting plate **20** and the support plate **80**.

Referring also to Figure 2, the upper portion **41** of the tube **40** is provided with a mounting ring **82**, secured to an upper surface of the stiffening ring **81**. A boom support means, shown here as a structure known in the art as a trunnion weldment **50**, having a central cylindrical opening **66**, is mounted in a clearance fit over the upper portion **41** of the tube **40**, being dimensioned to be selectively rotatable about the tube **40**, and secured in the rotatable position by the cooperation of shoulders **53** adjacent the lower edge of the trunnion weldment **50**, the tube **40** and the stiffening ring **81**. Bushings **54** and thrust washers **52** are provided as shown between the trunnion weldment **50** and the tube **40**, to allow for smooth rotation of the trunnion weldment **50** and reduce wear. The upper portion **41** of the tube **40** is preferably covered by a very thin outer tube **46**, preferably of stainless steel, in order to provide the appropriate surface hardness required for the bushings **54**. Lubrication of the regions of contact can be effected through lubrication fittings **55**.

For additional strength and stability, and to maintain the integrity of the load-bearing tube **40**, it can be provided with one or more reinforcing rings, shown in Figure 2 as upper and lower reinforcing rings **43** and **45** respectively, the upper reinforcing ring preferably comprising a disc **48** to seal the upper end of the tube **40**.

At each lateral portion of the trunnion weldment **50**, trunnion pins **57** are provided to enable the securing of a boom hub **60**. A proximal end **58** of each trunnion pin **57** is secured to the trunnion weldment **50** by locking pins **59**, and the boom hub **60** is mounted on a distal end **61** of each trunnion pin **57**, each of the boom hubs **60** having respective ends of the selected boom structure (not shown) secured and mounted thereon.

Within the intermediate portion **51** of the trunnion weldment **50**, reinforcement means can be provided, preferably steel stiffeners **65**.

A cap plate **62** is secured, for example by bolts **56**, to the upper surface of the trunnion weldment **50** adjacent the central opening **66**, so as to cover the top of the central opening **66**, and inhibit or prevent water, dirt or other particulates from entering the central opening **66** and coming into contact with or potentially inhibiting the movement of trunnion weldment **50** around the tube **40**, or becoming lodged in spaces between the tube **40** and thrust washers **52** and bushings **54**.

The pedestal **10** has vertical stiffeners, such as stiffening wings **11**, secured to the outer pedestal wall **14**, and extending radially outward from the central vertical axis **18** of the system, to provide support to the drive mounting plate **20** at its lower surface along a desired distance, which may be up to the outer perimeter of the drive mounting plate **20**, while not interfering with any portion of the plurality of gear drives **30**, discussed further below, as may extend below the drive mounting plate **20**.

Referring now also to Figure 3 together with Figure 1, the drive mounting plate **20** comprises a substantially planar surface having a plurality of openings **22** in spaced-apart relation a constant distance radially outward from the central vertical axis **18**. The thickness (in the vertical direction when in operation) of the drive mounting plate **20** is selected so as to minimize the weight of the plate, while providing sufficient strength for its support functions. Increased thickness can advantageously be provided in the region between the central opening and the location of the outer wall **14** of the pedestal **10**, for example as shown at **25**.

Referring again to Figure 1, each of the plurality of gear drives **30** is a rotational drive system and is adapted to be mounted in one of the openings **22** provided in the drive mounting plate **20**, so as to extend downwardly and substantially perpendicular to the drive mounting plate **20**. Each of the gear drives **30** mounted on the drive mounting plate **20** drives a corresponding pinion gear **36** which meshes with the gear assembly **70** (discussed in more detail below in relation to Figure 4), whereby the pinion gears **36**, when driven by the gear drives **30**, cause the gear assembly **70** to rotate, and thus to provide the desired selected rotation of the trunnion weldment **50**.

Although a substantial portion of each of the gear drives **30** extends downwardly from the drive mounting plate **20**, an upper portion **31** of the gear drives **30** extends upwardly above the drive mounting plate **20**.

Referring now to Figure 4, the gear assembly **70** comprises a connecting ring **76**, a gear pedestal plate **71** and a large circular gear **72**.

The connecting ring **76** is rigidly secured on an underside of the trunnion weldment **50**, preferably by welding, such that it descends downwardly from the trunnion weldment **50** and is positioned, when the trunnion weldment **50** is mounted upon the tube **40**, around an outside circumference of both the central opening **66** in the trunnion weldment **50** and the tube **40**.

The connecting ring **76** is secured to the gear pedestal plate **71** by any suitable means, such as by pins or bolts (not shown), and the gear pedestal plate **71** supports the large circular gear **72**.

The gear pedestal plate **71** comprises a large substantially planar surface having a central opening **73** (see Figure 1), which is configured to be coaxial, in an operational position, with the central vertical axis **18**.

Referring again to Figure 3, the gear pedestal plate **71** has a plurality of inner bolt circles **74** defined thereon, positioned proximate to an outside circumference of the central opening **73** in the gear pedestal plate **71**. These inner bolt circles **74** correspond to openings **78** in the lower surface of the connecting ring **76**, as seen in Figure 4, whereby the gear pedestal plate **71** can be secured to the connecting ring **76** by any suitable means, such as pins or bolts (not shown).

The gear pedestal plate **71** also has a plurality of outer bolt circles **75** positioned thereon proximate its outer circumference, corresponding to securing openings **79** provided in the circular gear **72**, whereby the plate **71** can be secured to the circular gear **72** by any suitable means, such as by pins or bolts (not shown).

Preferably, a plurality of holes **77** extend throughout the surface of the gear pedestal plate **71**, so as to reduce the weight of the plate **71**, and to provide for drainage. These holes **77** are arranged around a circumference of the gear pedestal plate **71**, and between the inner bolt circles **74** and the outer bolt circles **75**.

Referring to Figures 1 and 4, the circular gear **72** meshes with the pinion gears **36**, and extends around an outside circumference of the plate **71**. The circular gear **72** has a thickened lower portion having securing openings **79** therein, upon which a portion of the plate **71** near to and inside its outer circumference can be secured. In operation, the pinion gears **36**, when driven by the gear drives **30**, cause the circular gear **72** to rotate, which correspondingly causes the trunnion weldment **50**, and the boom structure rigidly secured thereto, to rotate around the tube **40** to a desired position, without interference from the gear drives **30** positioned underneath the trunnion weldment **50**.

Preferably, all of the pinion gears **36** are simultaneously supplied from a suitable common power source, including hydraulic power and electric power. If the common power source is hydraulic, so that the pressure between the pinion gears **36** will automatically equalize, thus keeping the pinion gears **36** in synchronization.

Additionally, each of the gear drives **30** preferably has a normally locked in line, spring applied integral brake **32** (see Figure 1). When there is no hydraulic pressure, the springs within the brake will lock the drive shaft, preventing it from rotation. When hydraulic pressure is applied, the spring pressure will be counteracted, and the lock will release. In the absence of hydraulic power, there is no further rotation of the pinion gears **36** or unloading boom structure indirectly attached thereto, so that the boom structure at all times remains positively locked in place, thus preventing slippage of the boom, without the application of hydraulic power.

Referring now to Figure 5, a second exemplary embodiment **501** of the boom slewing actuator system of the present invention is shown. The configuration of this embodiment is particularly advantageous in situations where there is limited clearance space available on the support surface, such as a ship deck or a land surface. In this embodiment, the gear drives **30** and the pedestal **10** are inverted from their respective positions in the first embodiment discussed above in relation to Figures 1 to 4, to provide a low clearance solution and a more compact design.

Furthermore, unlike its position in the first embodiment, the trunnion weldment **550** is rigidly secured directly to the pedestal **510**, the trunnion weldment **550** and the pedestal **510** combining to form a single unit that is rotatably mounted upon, and substantially covers, the tube **540**.

The cylindrical support, shown here as tube **540**, is preferably constructed of steel and rigidly mounted on the deck or other support surface (not shown), either directly or, as shown in

Figure 5, to a supporting platform **503**, which is in turn mounted to an intermediate support structure **502**, which is itself rigidly mounted on the support surface. The tube **540** is preferably connected to the support structure **502** by welding, though it will also be readily apparent to one skilled in the art that other means could be used. Support platform **503**, which is optionally positioned between the support structure **502** and the tube **540**, serves to provide a stable flat surface on which to mount the tube **540**.

In this embodiment, the tube **540** consists of lower, middle and upper portions, respectively **541**, **542** and **543**, the outermost diameter of each of the lower portion **541** and the upper portion **543** being slightly greater than the outermost diameter of the middle portion **542**. Preferably, such difference is achieved by thickening the lower portion **541** and upper portion **543** relative to the middle portion **542**. These thickened portions bear a greater share of the load on the tube **540** imposed by pedestal **510** being rotatably mounted thereon, as discussed below, while the reduced thickness of the middle portion **542** reduces points of contact with the pedestal **510** for ease of installation, and incidentally results in cost savings associated with the types of bushings **516** which can be used.

The upper portion **543** of the tube **540** has an annular internal support ring **544** formed at the top thereof, partially enclosing (but for a central opening **545**, which acts as a sighting and alignment hole) the interior of the upper portion **543** of the tube **540**. Similarly, the lower portion **541** of the tube **540** preferably also has an internal reinforcing disc **546** which can enclose the lower portion **541** proximate the top of that portion, but for a central opening **547**.

Preferably, the support ring **544** and the reinforcing disc **546** are both made of steel. The dimensions and configuration of the support ring **544** and reinforcing disc **546** can be varied, as appropriate, corresponding to the amount of load expected to be borne by the tube **540**.

In the operating position, the pedestal **510** slides over and surrounds the tube **540**, in a loose fit, the pedestal **510** having a vertical cylindrical cavity **512** defined therethrough by an interior pedestal wall **519** which is coaxial with the central vertical axis **18**.

At the upper surface of the pedestal **510**, support plates **515** are affixed, on an upper surface of which a mounting portion **525** is secured, to receive and secure the trunnion weldment **550**. At the upper and lower ends of the pedestal **510**, bushings **516** are fixed to the interior of the interior pedestal wall **519**, to cooperate in the operating position with the upper portion **543** and bottom of the lower portion **541** of the tube **540**, respectively.

In this manner, the pedestal **510** may be rotated about the vertically extending tube **540**, without interference from the support structure **502** upon which the tube **540** rests.

Preferably the pedestal **510** has vertical stiffeners, such as stiffening wings **514**, secured to the interior pedestal wall **519**, and extending radially outward from the central vertical axis **18** of the system, to provide support to the drive mounting plate **520** at its upper surface along a desired distance, which may be up to the outer perimeter of the drive mounting plate **520**, while not interfering with any portion of the plurality of gear drives **30**, discussed further below, as may extend above the drive mounting plate **520**.

The pedestal **510** preferably also has a steel stiffening band **513** formed internally within an upper portion of each of the vertical stiffeners **514**, which extends laterally across a partial internal width of the vertical stiffeners **514**. The stiffening band **513** provides additional support to the pedestal **510** in handling loads placed upon the pedestal **510** by trunnion weldment **550**. Similarly, the interior pedestal wall **519** of the pedestal **510** can also be thickened or reinforced if desired.

The interior pedestal wall **519** of the pedestal **510** extends at its lower edge **561** below the drive mounting plate **520**, so as to provide sufficient contact area for the lower bushing **516**. At the edge **561**, a securement ring **562** can be attached to assist in maintaining the desired positioning of the associated bushing **516**.

The inverted positioning of the gear drives **30** in this embodiment, as compared with the embodiment shown in Figure 1, thus permits a lower clearance structure, and allows the boom to be mounted closer to the support surface such as a ship's deck, with a lower centre of gravity and, in the case of mounting on a ship or other movable support, a correspondingly increased stability despite any movement of the support surface.

The drive mounting plate **520** comprises a large substantially planar surface, and is secured to a lower surface of the pedestal **510**, preferably by welding. The drive mounting plate **520** supports and positions the gear drives **30**, as discussed below, and has a central opening **523** coaxial, in an operational position, with the central vertical axis **18**. The central opening **523** is dimensioned so that the drive mounting plate **520** abuts the interior pedestal wall **519**.

In the same manner as for drive mounting plate **20** in Figure 1, drive mounting plate **520** comprises a plurality of openings **22** in spaced apart relation a constant distance radially outward from the central opening **523**, each sized to accept and support one of the plurality of gear drives **30**. In this embodiment, a substantial portion of each of the gear drives **30** will extend vertically above the drive mounting plate **520**, while a lower portion **35** of the gear drives **30** and the gear assembly **570** will extend below the drive mounting plate **520**. In the illustrated embodiment, as shown in Figure 6, four separate gear drives **30** are shown, though it will be readily apparent to one skilled in the art that variations as to the actual number of gear drives present can be made.

Although the gear drives **30** are identical to those shown in Figure 1, they are each provided with a mounting portion **533** which has a greater diameter than that of the openings **22**, to provide a mounting surface for the gear drives **30**.

As can be seen from Figure 5, the gear assembly **570** is substantially identical to gear assembly **70** shown in Figures 1 and 2, and comprises a gear ring support **572**, a gear pedestal plate **571** and a large circular gear **72**.

With reference also to Figure 6, gear pedestal plate **571** has a plurality of inner bolt circles **74** defined therealong which surround an outside circumference of the central opening **73** in the gear pedestal plate **571**, whereby openings (not shown) in the gear ring support **572** are aligned with the inner bolt circles **74** to secure the gear pedestal plate **571** to the gear ring support **572** by any suitable means, such as pins or bolts (not shown).

The gear pedestal plate **571** also has a plurality of outer bolt circles **75** positioned thereon proximate its outer circumference. These outer bolt circles **75** correspond to securing openings (not shown) in the circular gear **72**, whereby the gear pedestal plate **571** can be secured to the circular gear **72** by any suitable means, such as pins or bolts (not shown).

Gear ring support **572** is connected, preferably by welding, to an outside surface of lower portion **541** of the tube **540**, such that it extends outwardly therefrom while, at the same time, being vertically positioned at a sufficient height whereby there is no interference with rotation of the pedestal **510**, and correspondingly the trunnion weldment **550**, about the tube **540**, from any of the support structure **502** or the support platform **503**.

In operation, none of the components of the gear assembly **570** rotates, but instead the pinion gears **36**, when driven by the gear drives **30**, rotate and move about the stationary circular gear **72** in a desired direction, causing the pedestal **510**, trunnion weldment **550** and the boom structure (not shown) attached thereto, to correspondingly rotate about the tube **540** and be positioned where desired. The inverted gear drives **30**, by virtue of their connection to the drive mounting plate **520** secured to the pedestal **510**, will also likewise correspondingly rotate about the tube **540** when the pedestal **510** rotates about the tube **540**.

The rotational range of the pinion gears **36** in moving around the stationary circular gear **72**, and the corresponding rotational movement of the boom structure (not shown) is only a portion of a complete revolution. Nevertheless, the rotating portion is not restricted from so doing by the space available on the support surface (not shown) as is the case with conventional slewing actuator systems. In this embodiment, rotation of such a structure may be restricted and in a range of 180-200° from a center position. Since the boom structure is constrained from complete rotation, the hydraulic lines (not shown) connected to the gear drives **30** will not get crossed during the slewing motions.

Preferably, the gear drives **30** are powered and supplied with an integral brake in the same manner as for the first embodiment, as discussed above.

This embodiment thus provides a smaller support structure, and a vertically more compact design than the first embodiment or known structures.

Referring again to Figure 5, the trunnion weldment **550** is mounted onto the pedestal **510**, and, as with the first embodiment described in relation to Figures 1 to 4, is used to support a boom structure (not shown). However, in this embodiment, the trunnion weldment **550** is preferably constructed as a substantially solid piece. In this manner, when secured to the pedestal **510**, the trunnion weldment **550** effectively covers the top of the tube **540**, thus rendering superfluous the cap plate **62** (shown in Figure 1).

As noted above, mounting portion **525** of the trunnion weldment **550** is mounted and secured to support plate **515** by suitable means such as bolts **555**, and is thereby rigidly secured to and covers the pedestal **510**.

Thrust washers **560** are provided between a lower surface of cylindrical mounting portion **525** of the trunnion weldment **550** and an upper lip **549** of the tube **540**, so as to provide a low friction sliding surface for the rotation of the pedestal **510** and the trunnion weldment **550** about the tube **540**.

The lateral portions of the trunnion weldment **550** are preferably constructed in the manner described in relation to the embodiment shown in Figure 1, and reinforcing stiffeners **65** are preferably also provided in the same manner as described above.

Referring now to Figures 7 to 10, a third embodiment **701** of a boom slewing actuator system of the invention is shown.

This embodiment has a substantially similar construction to that of the first embodiment, in relation to the features, configuration, orientation and securing of each of the pedestal **10**, drive mounting plate **20**, gear drives **30**, gear assemblies **70**, and the general construction of the trunnion weldment **50**, so that these will not be described further in relation to this embodiment.

However, instead of the tube **40** of the first embodiment, this third embodiment comprises a substantially cylindrical kingpin **740**, which is secured directly or indirectly to the support surface **2**, as discussed below, and is secured to the drive mounting plate **20** at the upper surface of pedestal **10**. The kingpin **740** provides by means of a selected variation in its outer surface a support location on which the lower portion of the trunnion weldment **50** can rest securely, the kingpin being received in the central opening **51** of the trunnion weldment **50**, whereby the trunnion weldment **50** can rotate around the upper portion of the kingpin **740** about the central vertical axis **18**.

As can be seen from Figure 7, the pedestal **10** has a vertical cylindrical cavity **91** coaxial with the central vertical axis **18**, in which the kingpin **740** can be supported and retained in a vertical position. The lower edge of the pedestal **10** is preferably secured to a circular interior base wall **15** to form a cylindrical shoulder which engages a detent **41** on the kingpin **740**. For ease in installation, preferably, the circular interior base wall **15** has an opening **19**, which can be closed by a retainer plate **16** which is preferably welded in place to the interior base walls **15**. The kingpin **740** can be secured to the retainer plate by any suitable means, for example by bolts **17** through the retainer plate **16**, and can thereby be secured to the support surface **2**.

When in such position, the kingpin **740** is rigidly mounted, so that unlike conventional systems, no keying system is required, and the close fit which can be achieved by this construction provides accurate mounting and secure support against tilting.

The kingpin **740** is secured within the central opening **21** provided adjacent the drive mounting plate **20,** and preferably the thickness of the drive mounting plate **20** is increased at that location as shown at **25,** so as to provide additional support to the kingpin **740** in an upright position against stresses resulting from those imparted on the trunnion weldment **50** by the weight of the boom (not shown).

Referring now to Figure 7 together with Figure 8, at an upper portion **745,** the outside diameter of the kingpin **740** is narrowed, for example by a detent or upper shoulder **743** machined upon the upper portion **745,** configured to receive and retain in a sliding fit the lower edge **53** of the trunnion weldment **50.** As shown in Figure 8, preferably thrust washers **52** are provided between the lower edge **53** of the trunnion weldment **50** and the upper shoulder **743** of the kingpin **740.** As in the embodiment shown in Figures 1 and 2, the thrust washers **52** are low friction rings that transmit any vertical load from the trunnion weldment **50** into the kingpin **740,** and provide a sliding surface for the rotation of the trunnion weldment **50** about the kingpin **740.**

Similarly bushings **54** are preferably fixed to the interior of the trunnion weldment **50.** Additionally, grease or other lubricants such as would be known to those having ordinary skill in this art may be fed by way of lubrication fittings **55** into the bushings **54** and thrust washers **52** to further reduce friction between the kingpin **740** and the trunnion weldment **50** positioned thereon.

As in the embodiment shown in Figure 1, preferably a cap plate **62** is secured to the upper surface of the trunnion weldment **50**, by any suitable means such as bolts **56**.

Referring now to Figure 9, it can be seen that the configuration and the relationship of the drive mounting plate **20** and the pinion gears **36** are substantially as in the embodiment shown in Figure 1, and the configuration of the boom hubs **60** and the cap plate **62** can also be seen, as well as the location of the kingpin **740**.

Referring to Figure 10, in addition to the features of the pinion gears **36**, drive mounting plate **20**, gear pedestal plate **71** and circular gear **72** described above in relation to the first embodiment, the location and configuration of the kingpin **740** and the upper shoulder **743** can be seen.

Those having ordinary skill in this art will appreciate that the structural system of the invention is modular in construction, such that each component may be easily shipped in conventional and relatively inexpensive fashion and then easily assembled during installation at the intended end use location. Similarly, maintenance and repairs are substantially simplified.

In addition, the present invention provides a slewing actuator system suitable for use on ships, land surfaces or docks, which possesses a more compact design that allows for a greater amount of rotational range of the boom attached thereto, particularly on ships or at other use locations having a small clearance envelope.

The present invention also provides a slewing actuator system which is easy to install, lighter than conventional slewing actuator systems, and which can be easily disassembled into separate portions for shipping, if necessary, and subsequent reassembly.

The present invention further provides a boom slewing actuator system which safely prevents boom slippage, and which securely locks the boom in place when hydraulic pressure is removed.

Other embodiments consistent with the present invention will become apparent from consideration of the specification and the practice of the invention disclosed therein.

Accordingly, the specification and the embodiments are to be considered exemplary only, with the true scope and spirit of the invention being disclosed by the following claims.

THE EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION IN WHICH AN EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OR PRIVILEGE IS CLAIMED ARE DEFINED AS FOLLOWS:

1. A slewing actuator system for rotating a boom structure and constructed and arranged to be secured to a support structure, the system comprising:

(i) a cylindrical support member having a lower end constructed and arranged to be secured to the support structure, and an upper end;

(ii) a drive mounting member constructed and arranged for receiving the cylindrical support member and for placement upon the support structure;

(iii) gearing means comprising:

(a) a gear assembly; and

(b) at least one rotating gear drive constructed and arranged to be fixed to the drive mounting member and operatively connected to the gear assembly, the gear assembly further comprising a rotating gear constructed and arranged to be operatively driven by the at least one gear drive, and a gear plate in interlocking engagement with the rotating gear; and

(iv) a boom support means mounted to a cylindrical connector operatively connected at a first end to the lower surface of the boom support means and at a second end to the gear assembly, the boom support means having

(a) an upper surface constructed and arranged to receive and releasably secure the boom structure; and

(b) a central region and two lateral regions having respective outer edges;

wherein, when the system is in an operating position,

(A) the boom support means is rotatably mounted proximate to the upper end of the cylindrical support member and is rotatable about a substantially vertical axis of rotation;
(B) the gear assembly is positioned substantially horizontally and comprises a central opening constructed and arranged to rotatably surround a portion of the cylindrical support member; and
(C) the gearing means imparts rotational movement to the boom support means.

2. A slewing actuator system according to claim 1, further comprising a pedestal constructed and arranged to surround the cylindrical support member substantially concentrically for at least a portion of a height of the cylindrical support member.

3. A slewing actuator system according to claim 2, wherein the pedestal comprises a substantially cylindrical inner wall and an outer wall having a cross-sectional configuration of a regular polygon.

4. A slewing actuator system according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the cylindrical support member is a tube, having an upper portion and a lower portion.

5. A slewing actuator system according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the cylindrical support member is a solid kingpin.

6. A slewing actuator system according to any one of claims 1 to 5, wherein the support structure is selected from a base

plate, a pedestal structure comprising at least one support plate, a wharf, a stationary dock, a floating dock, and a ship deck.

7. A slewing actuator system according to claim 4, wherein the tube is constructed and arranged to be secured at its lower portion to the support structure, and the cylindrical connector comprises the pedestal which is constructed and arranged to rotatably surround at least the upper portion of the tube and to be secured to the lower surface of the boom support means.

8. A slewing actuator system according to claim 1, wherein the support structure is a pedestal comprising a support plate, and the cylindrical support member is a tube constructed and arranged to be secured to the support plate.

9. A slewing actuator system according to claim 2, wherein the pedestal is secured to the support structure, and has an upper surface, and the drive mounting member is constructed and arranged to be mounted on and secured by the upper surface of the pedestal.

10. A slewing actuator system according to claim 7, wherein the drive mounting member is mounted proximate a lower portion of the pedestal.

11. A slewing actuator system according to any one of claims 1 to 10, wherein each gear drive comprises an integral brake.

12. A slewing actuator system according to any one of claims 1 to 11, comprising a plurality of gear drives each fixed

substantially equidistantly from the vertical axis of rotation of the boom support means.

13. A slewing actuator system according to claim 12, wherein each of the plurality of gear drives shares a common power source.

14. A slewing actuator system according to any one of claims 1 to 13, wherein each gear drive is constructed and arranged to be powered by a source selected from hydraulic and electrical power.

15. A slewing actuator system according to claim 1, wherein the gear assembly has a proximal end constructed and arranged to be secured to the cylindrical support member.

16. A slewing actuator system according to claim 1, wherein the gear assembly has a proximal end constructed and arranged to be secured to the cylindrical connector.

17. A slewing actuator system according to claim 1, wherein the gear plate has a plurality of spaced-apart openings from its upper surface through to its lower surface.

18. A slewing actuator system according to claim 1, wherein the boom support means comprises a central opening from its upper surface through to its lower surface and constructed and arranged to rotatably surround the upper end of the cylindrical support member.

19. A slewing actuator system according to claim 18, further comprising a cap plate secured to the upper surface of the boom support means over the central opening.

20. A slewing actuator system according to claim 18 or 19, wherein the boom support means further comprises at least one low friction bushing between the central opening and the upper end of the cylindrical support member.

21. A slewing actuator system according to any one of claims 1 to 20, wherein the boom support means comprises a trunnion weldment and each lateral region includes a trunnion pin.

22. A slewing actuator system according to claim 21, wherein each trunnion pin is operatively connected to one of a pair of boom hubs each constructed and arranged to be operatively connected to the boom structure.

23. A slewing actuator system according to any one of claims 1, 2 or 5, wherein the cylindrical support member has an outer surface which includes an annular retaining location constructed and arranged to receive and support the lower surface of the boom support means.

24. A slewing actuator system according to claim 23, wherein the annular retaining location is selected from a protruding ledge and a detent provided at the outer surface of the cylindrical support member.

25. A slewing actuator system according to claim 24 further comprising at least one low friction thrust washer between the annular retaining location and the boom support means.

26. A slewing actuator system according to any one of claims 2, 3, 5, 9 or 10, wherein the drive mounting member is constructed and arranged to be supported at its lower surface at least proximate its lateral edges by a plurality of wing support members connected to the pedestal.

27. A slewing actuator system according to claim 4, further comprising an internal support ring which at least partially encloses the cylindrical support member proximate its upper end.

28. A slewing actuator system according to claim 4, wherein the cylindrical support member has an internal reinforcing disc which substantially encloses the lower end of the cylindrical support member.

29. A slewing actuator system according to claim 2, further comprising a retainer plate secured to the pedestal at a lower portion.

30. A slewing actuator system according to any one of claims 1 to 29, wherein a horizontal distance between the vertical axis of rotation and each lateral edge of the boom support means exceeds a horizontal distance between a centre and an outer limit of the gear assembly.

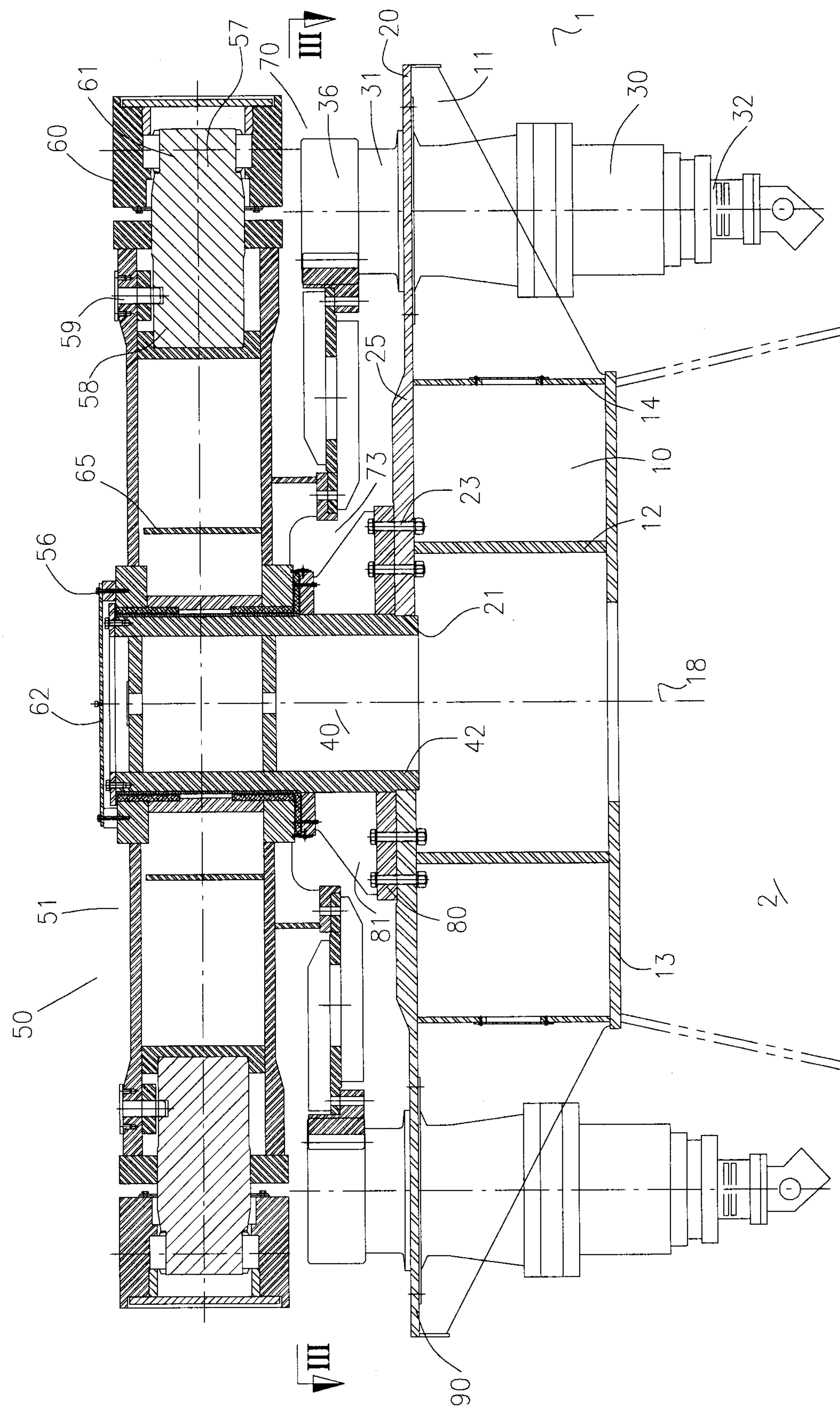
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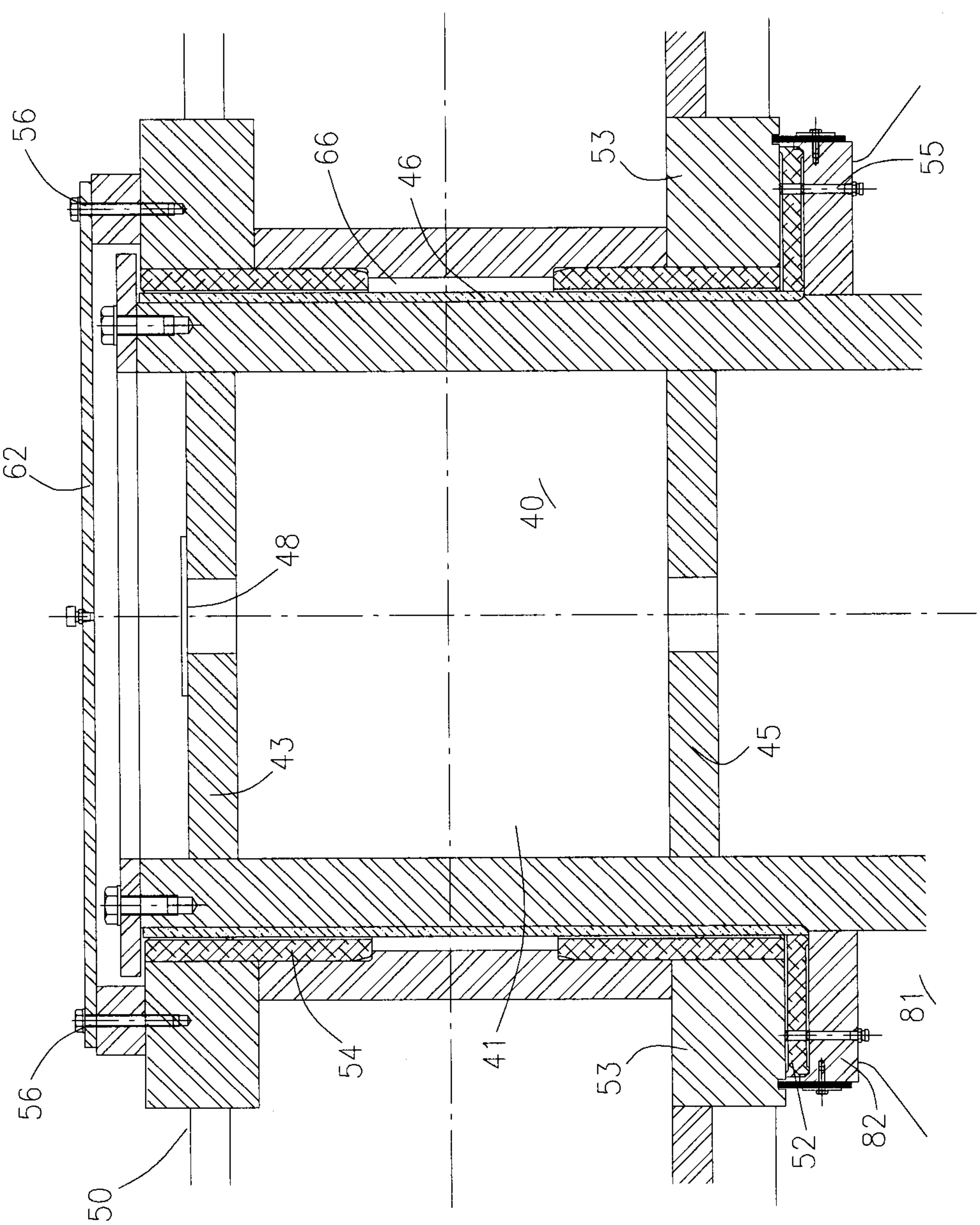
Figure 1

Figure 2



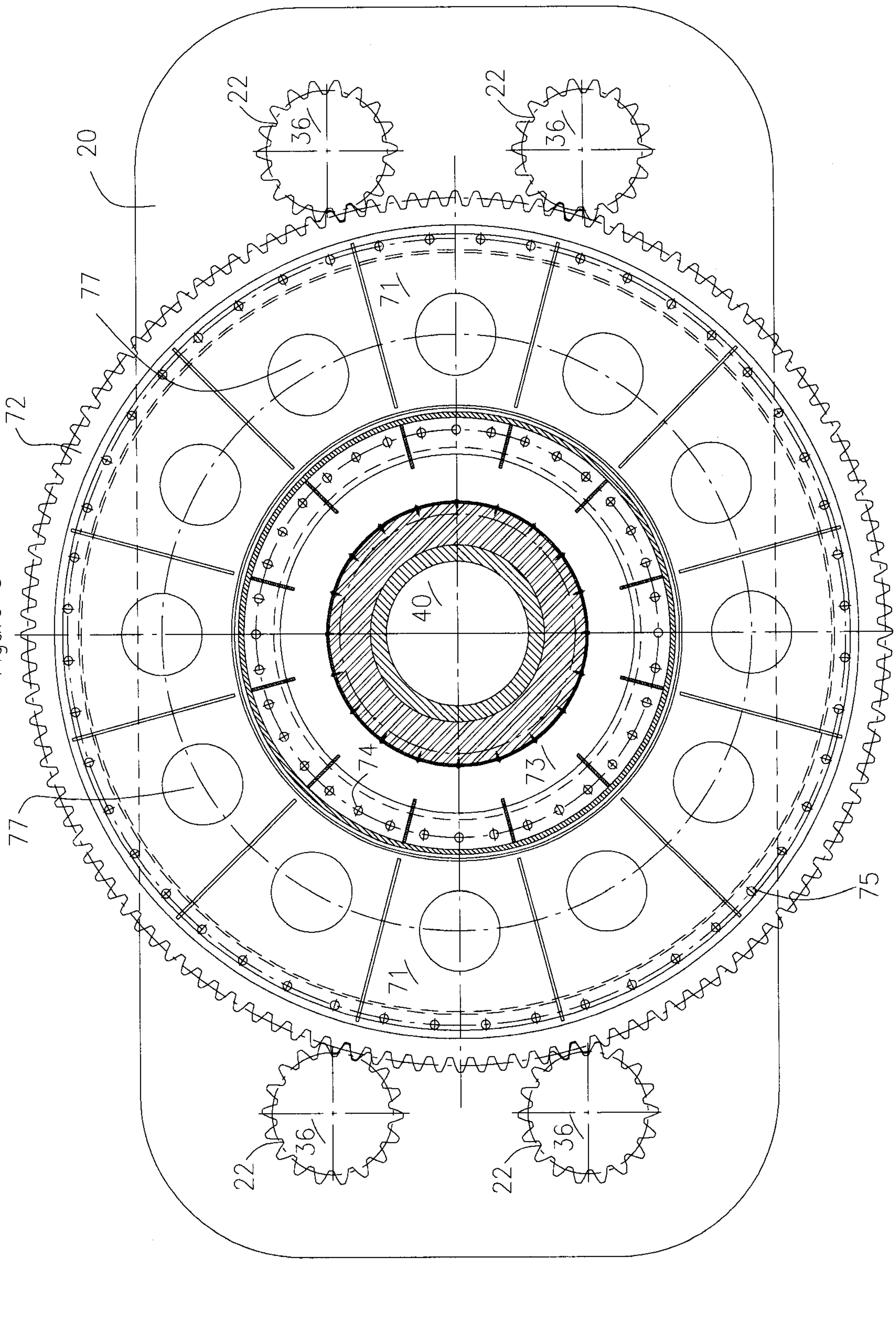


Figure 3

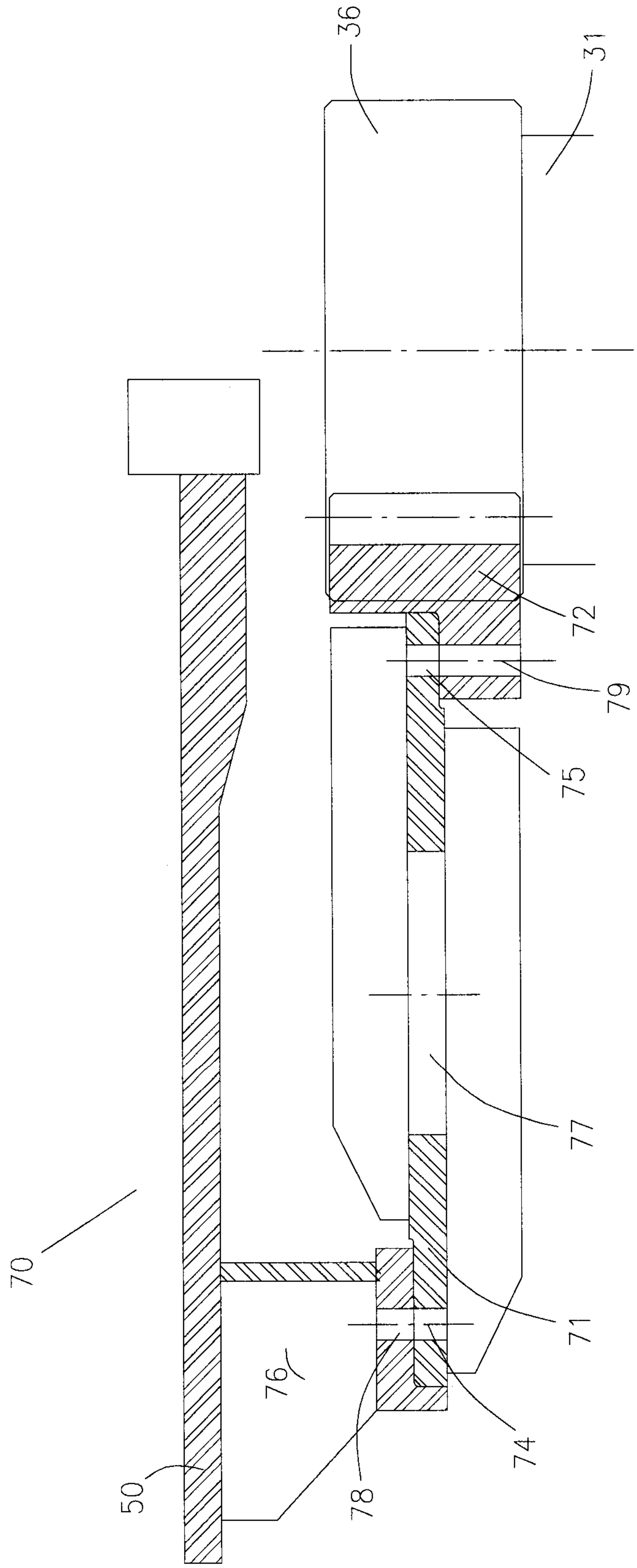
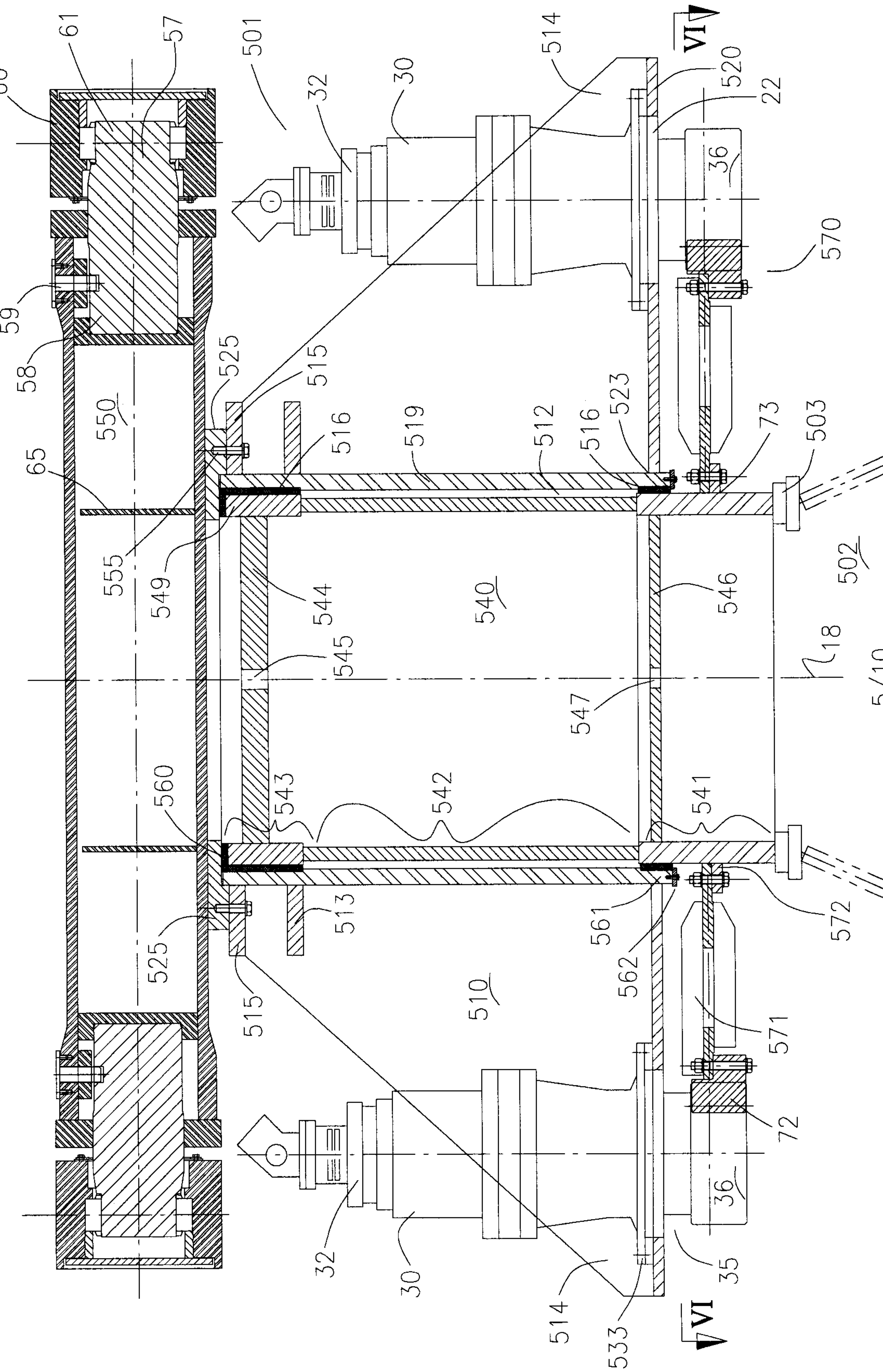


Figure 4

Figure 5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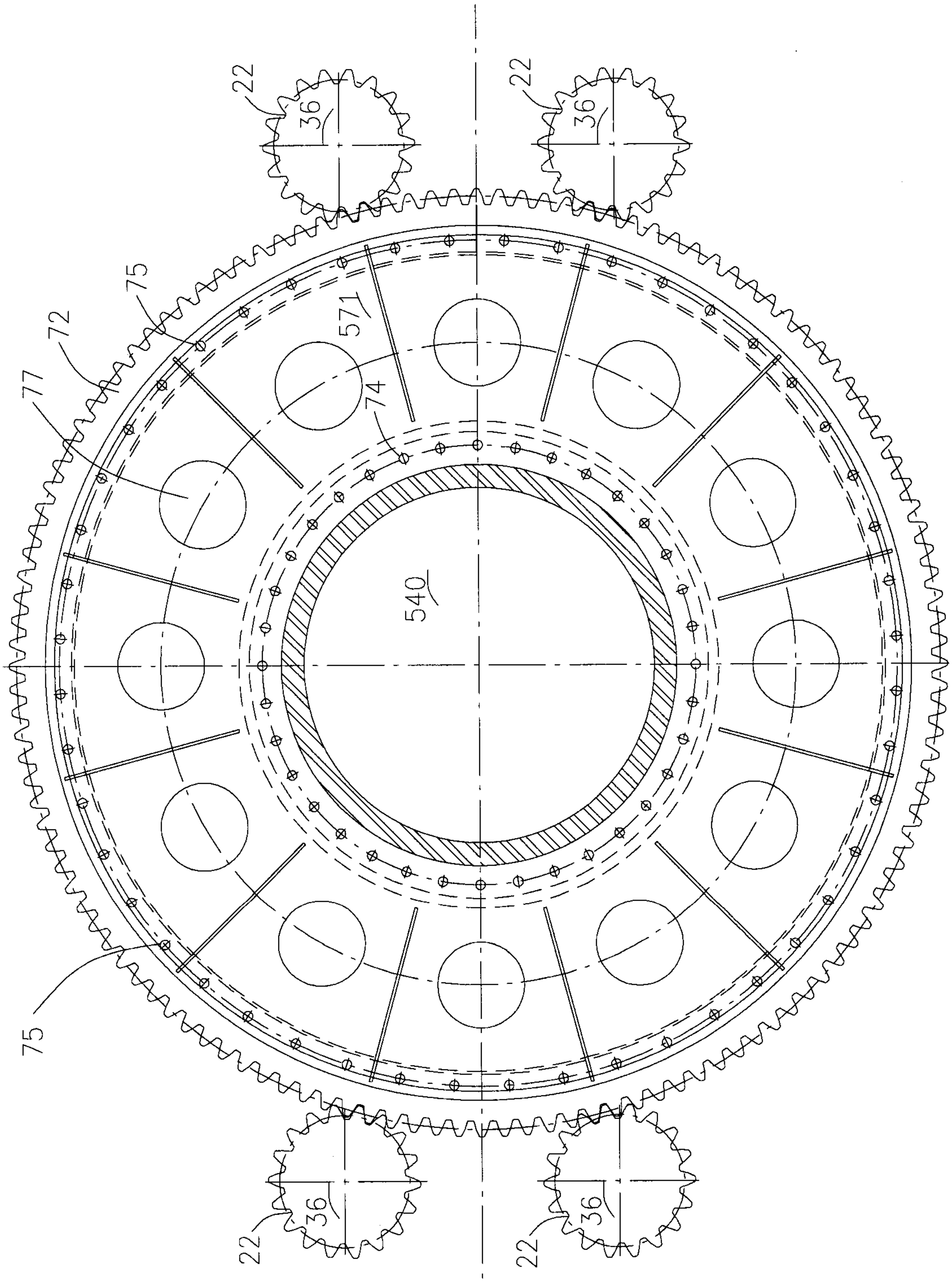

Figure 6

Figure 7

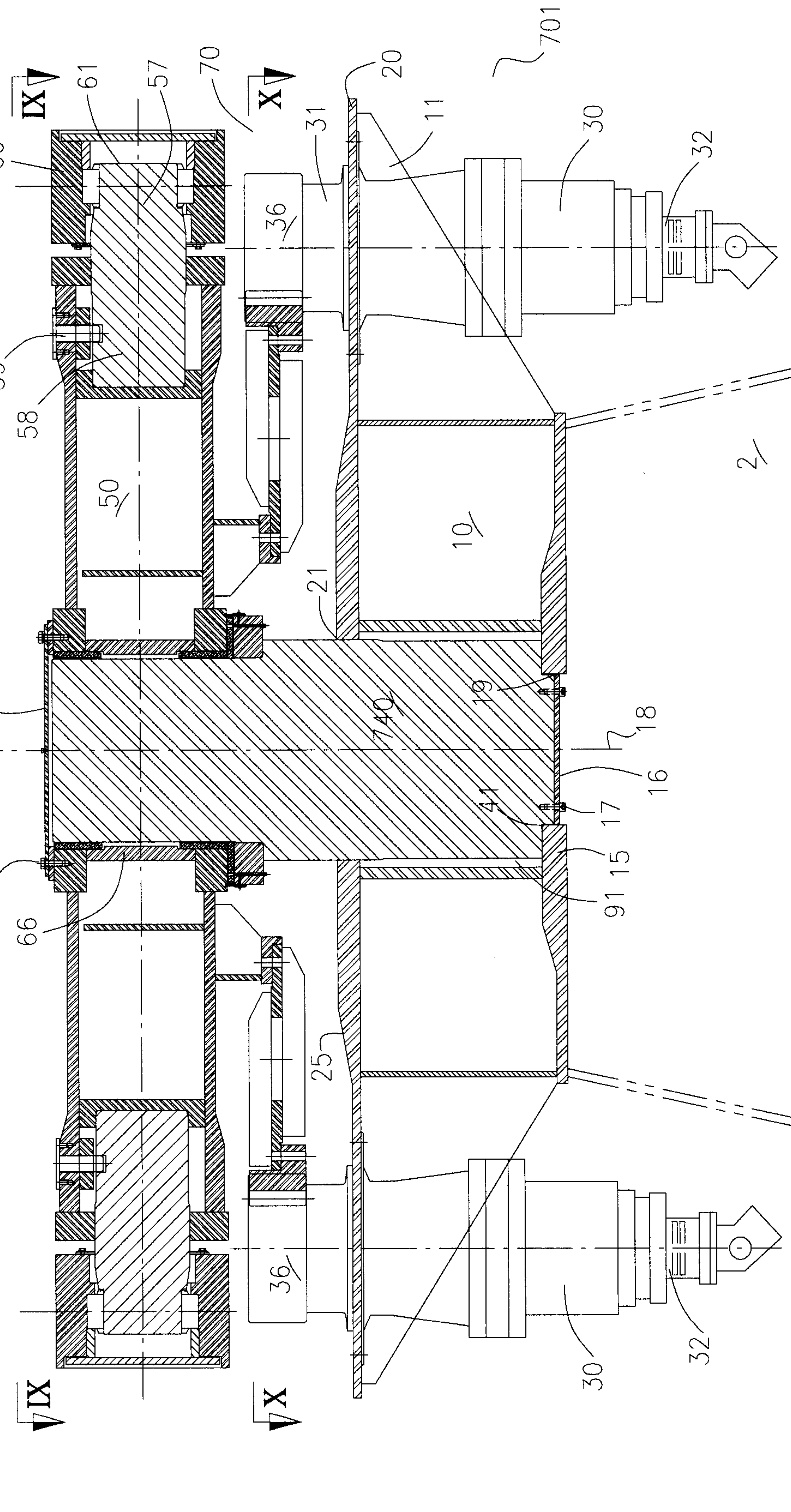

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Figure 8

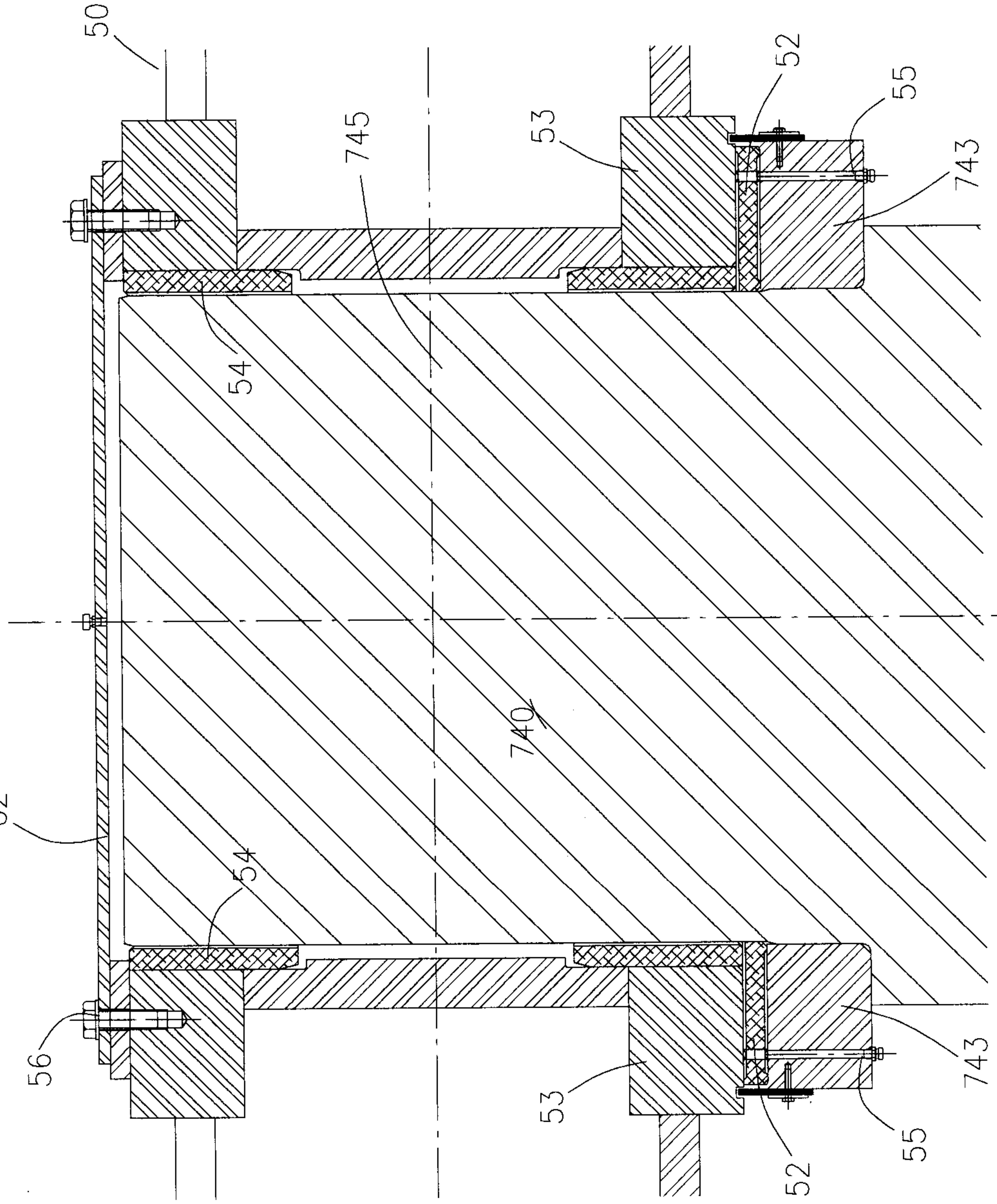
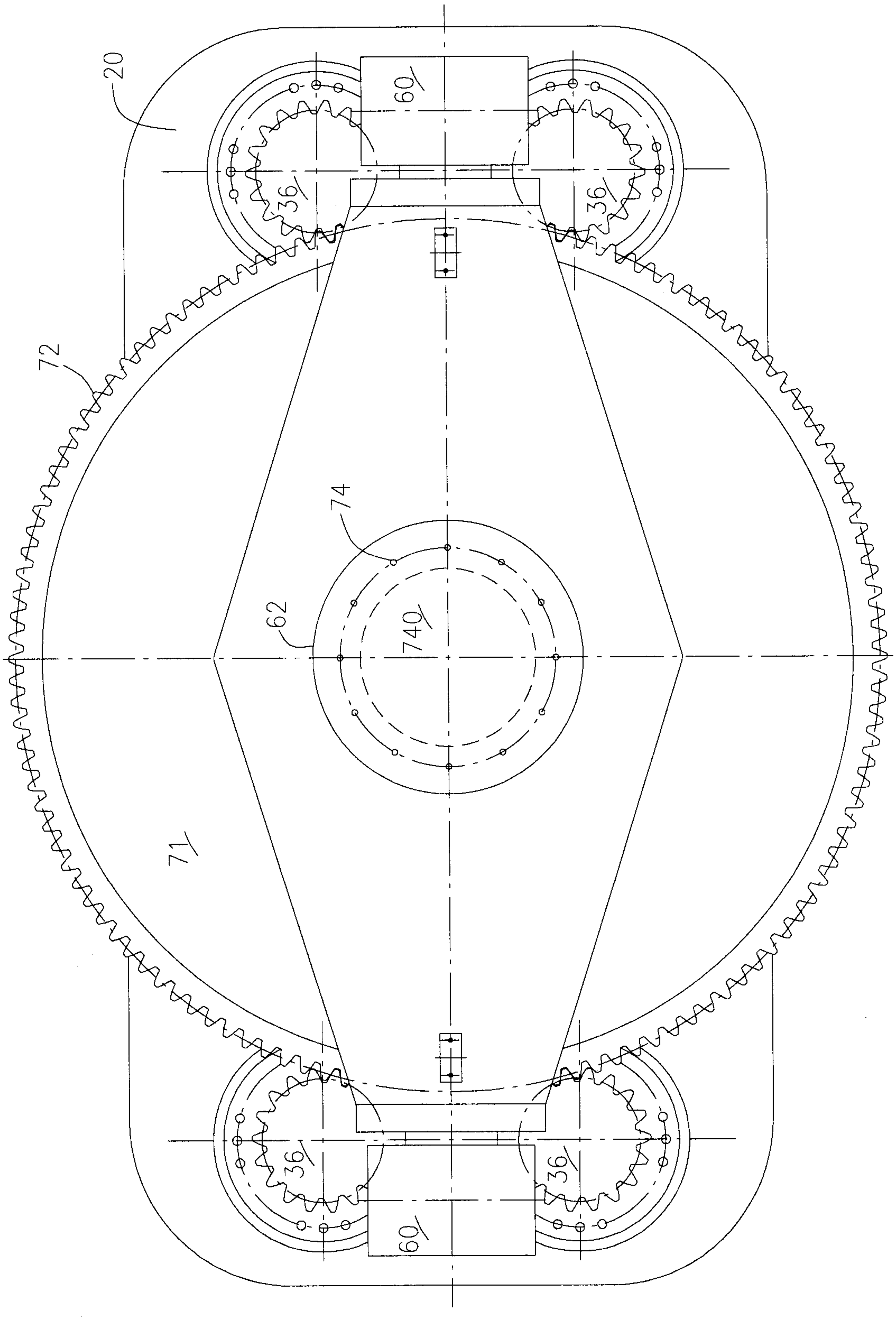


Figure 9



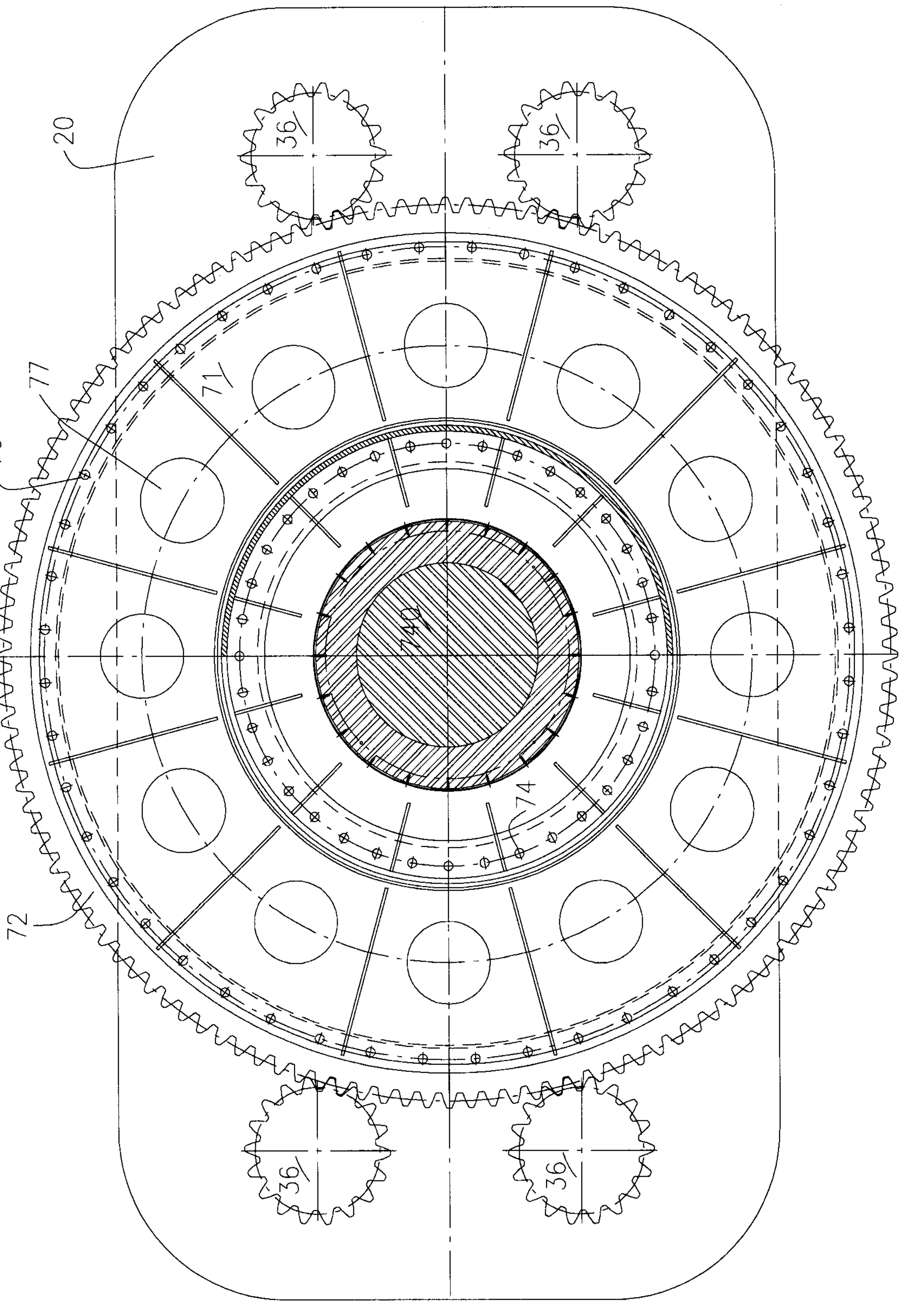
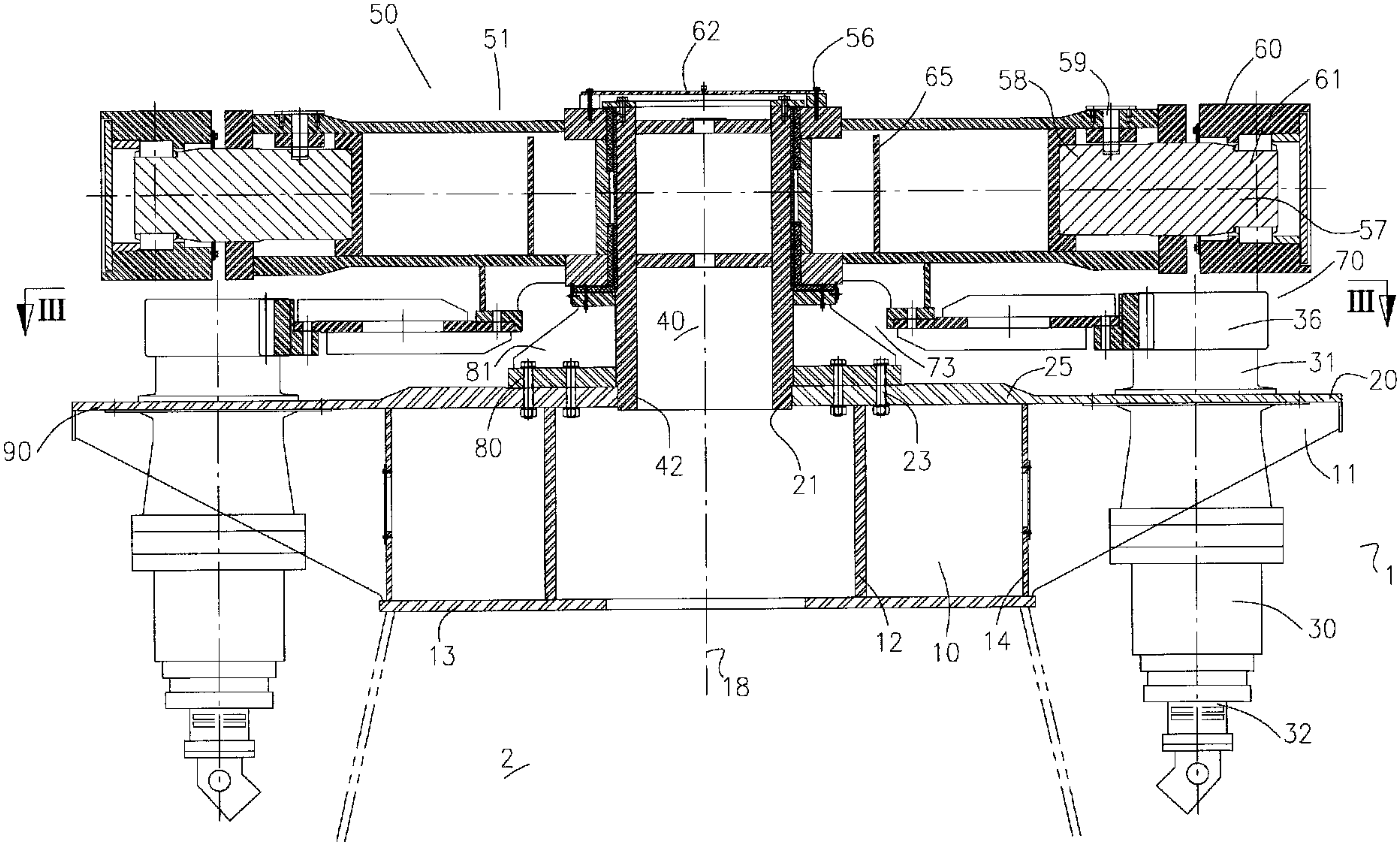


Figure 10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