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(54) **TIMING SIGNAL OCCURRENCE CIRCUIT**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

Object of the present invention is to provide a timing signal occurrence circuit capable of precisely adjusting timing, without complicating a circuit.

A timing signal occurrence circuit according to the present invention has a tristate buffer connected to a delay clock line, a tristate buffer connected to an operand bus, a calculator connected to an input terminal of each of the tristate buffers, a pulse generating circuit for generating an one shot pulse based on a delay clock on the delay clock line, and a calculator for fetching operands on the operand bus and carrying out calculation using the fetched operands. Either of a plurality of tristate buffers is arbitrarily selected to adjust delay time of the delay clock. Because of this, it is possible to generate a one shot pulse with optimum timing for carrying out calculation by the calculator.

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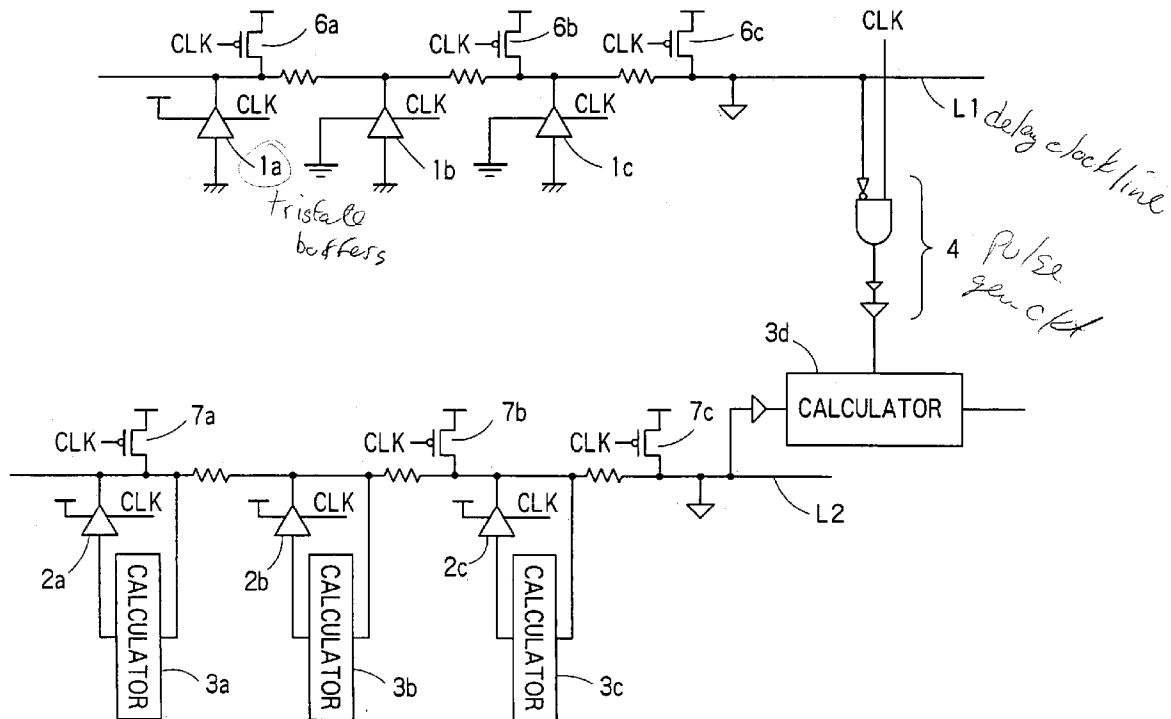
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(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

Aug. 11, 1999 (JP) 11-227578



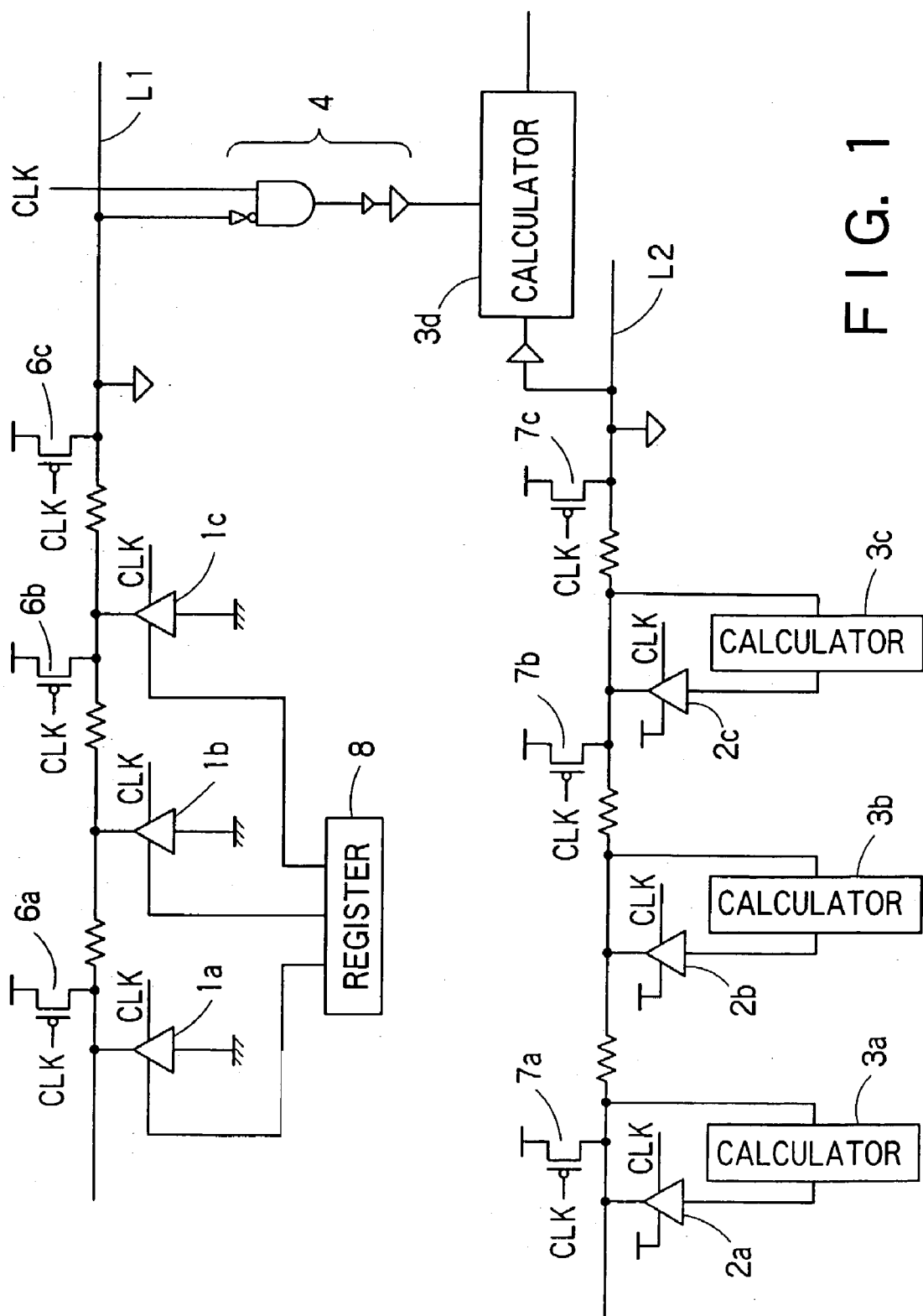


FIG. 1

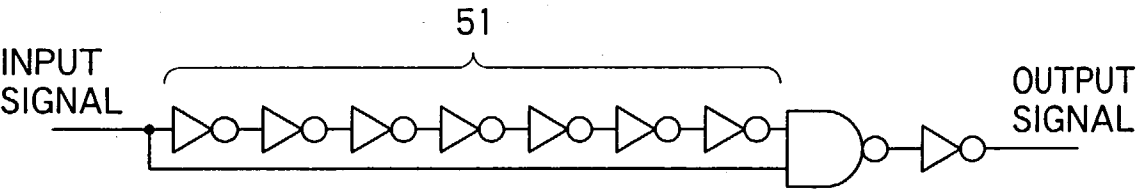


FIG. 2

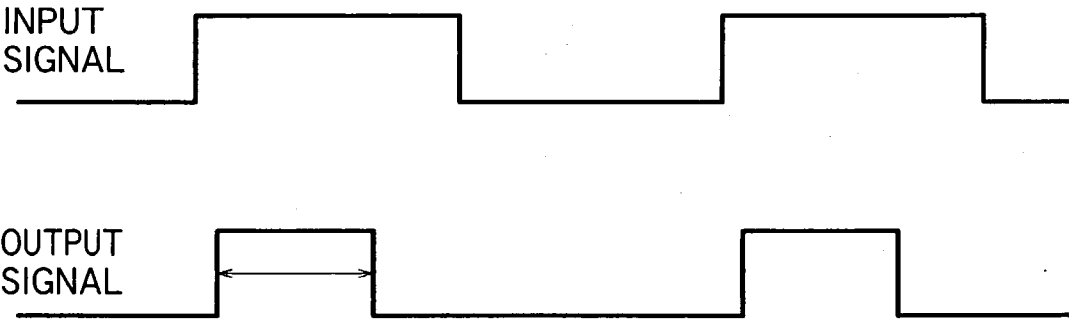


FIG. 3

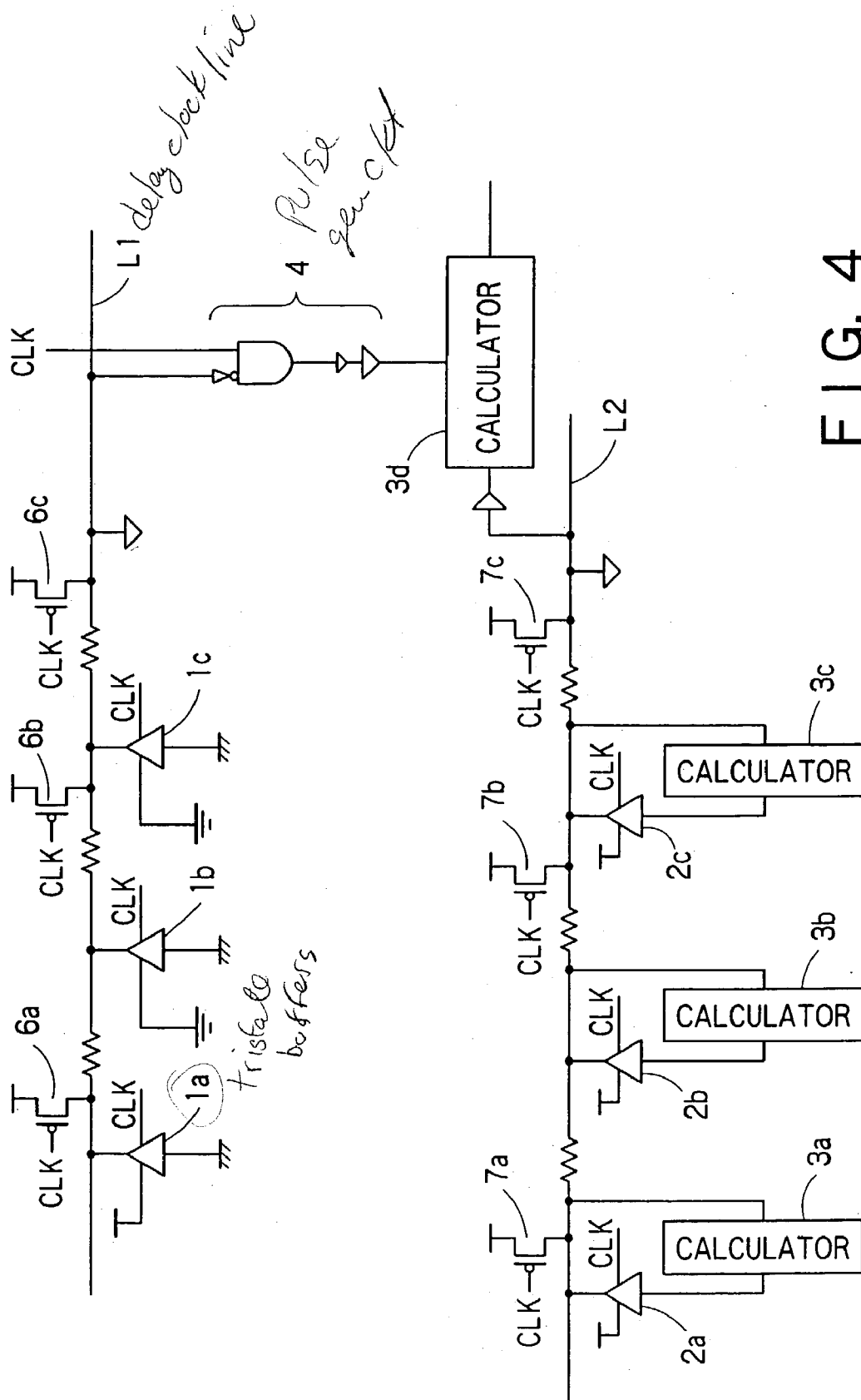
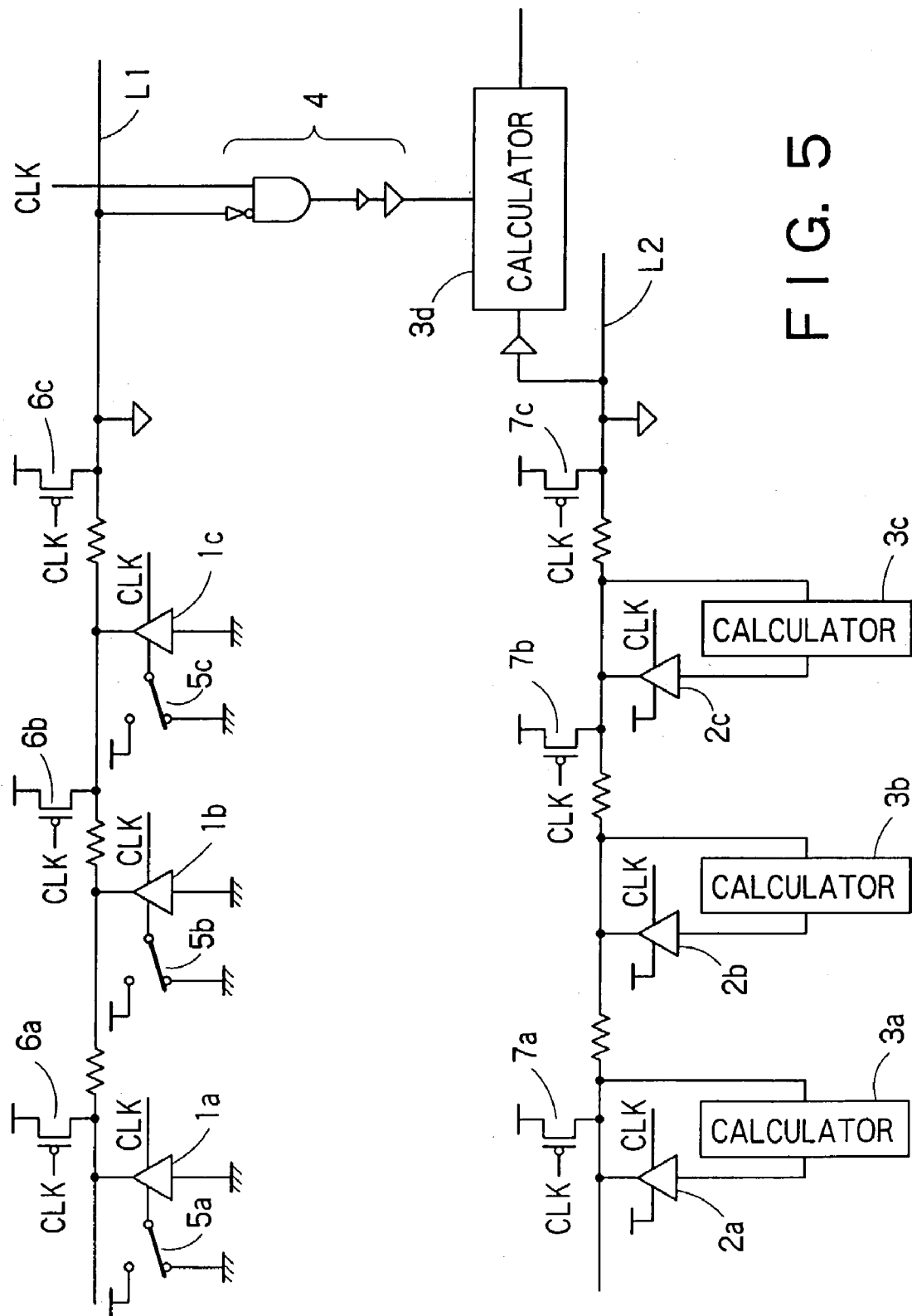


FIG. 4



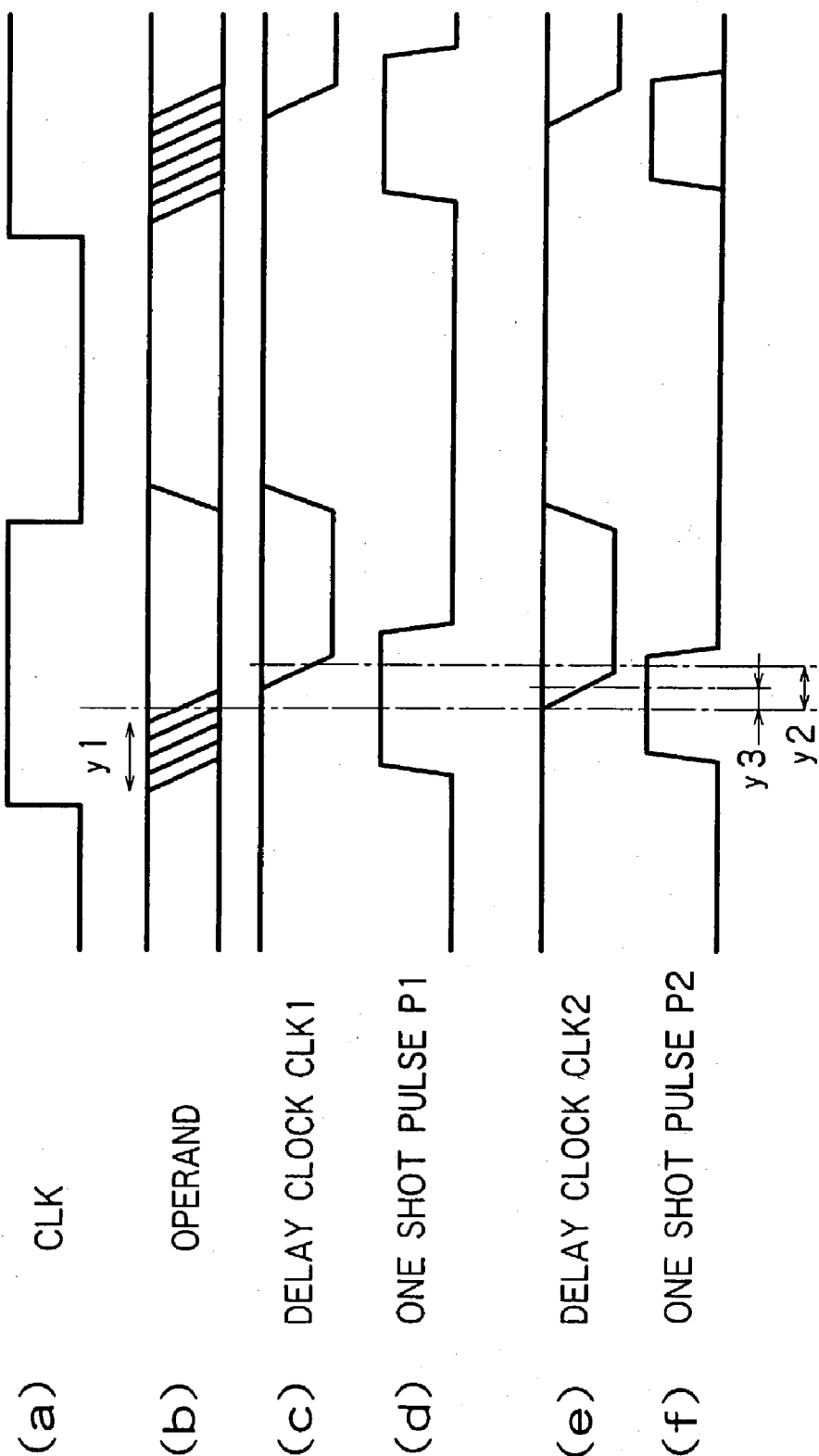


FIG. 6

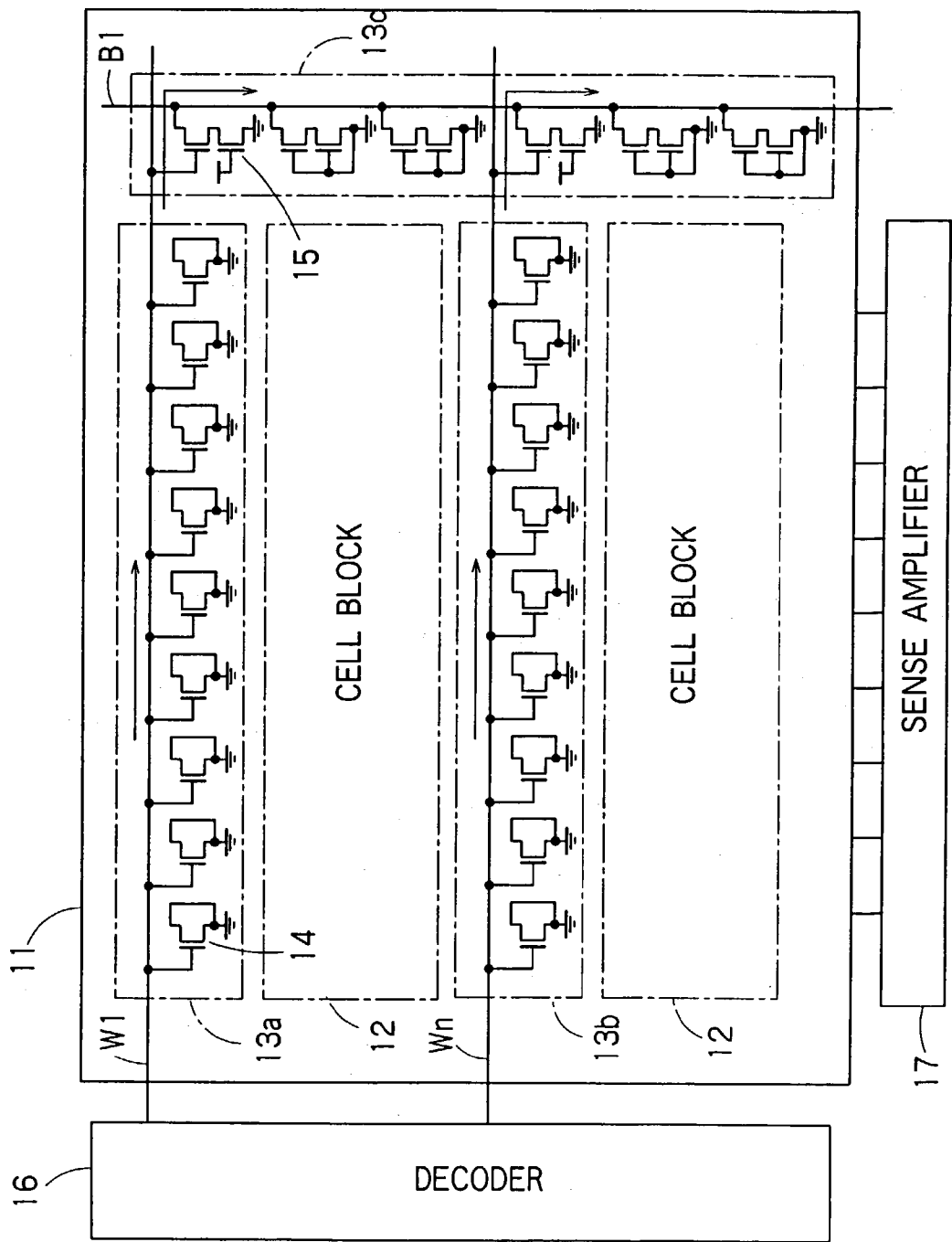


FIG. 7

TIMING SIGNAL OCCURRENCE CIRCUIT

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The subject application is related to subject matter disclosed in Japanese Patent Application No. H11-227578 filed on Aug. 11, 1999 in Japan to which the subject application claims priority under Paris Convention and which is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] 1. Field of the Invention

[0003] The present invention relates to a timing signal occurrence circuit for adjusting delay of a timing signal, and targets, for example, delay adjustment of the timing signal in a semiconductor integrated circuit.

[0004] 2. Related Background Art

[0005] A semiconductor circuit generally performs various processes by synchronizing each signal inputted with a clock. Therefore, there is no particular problem when using only a static circuit. However, when using a precharge circuit in order to improve speed, timings of the precharge period and the following evaluation period are out of synch. Because of this, an inherent timing signal for timing adjustment is necessary.

[0006] As one of timing signal occurrence circuits for generating such a timing signal, as shown in FIG. 1, a circuit for adjusting delay by using an inverter chain 51 is known. A circuit of FIG. 1 adjusts delay time by changing over the number of connection stages of the inverters.

[0007] Furthermore, as an example of the other timing signal occurrence circuit, when a circuit A needs timing when output of the other circuit B is settled, there may be provided with a dummy circuit which has the same delay time as a critical path of the circuit A and generates the timing signal.

[0008] In case of providing the above-mentioned timing signal occurrence circuit in a semiconductor chip, a circuit is formed in combination with transistors. However, the higher a voltage applied to a transistor logic circuit constituted by combining with transistors is, and the lower the temperature is, the more quickly its circuit acts. When adjusting delay time by changing over the number of stages of the above-mentioned inverter chain 51, the delay time changes by voltage property and temperature property of the transistors.

[0009] Furthermore, when the dummy circuit is consisted of the inverter chain 51 or logic gate chain, a subject circuit (delay subject circuit) that the dummy circuit imitates is constituted alike by using the transistors, voltage property and temperature property of the transistors is cancelled to each other. Because of this, there is no particular problem.

[0010] On the other hand, when delay cause of the delay subject circuit is mainly a wiring delay (RC delay), the delay time due to the wiring delay does not change less than that due to the transistors, even if voltage or temperature changes. Because of this, a difference between the delay amounts of the dummy circuit and that of the delay subject circuit occurs. Accordingly, even if adjusting the number of

connection stages of the inverters in the dummy circuit as the delay coincides with a certain condition, when voltage or temperature changes, according to circumstances, the delay time of the dummy circuit becomes shorter than the delay time of the delay subject circuit, and what is called as "racing" of the signal occurs.

[0011] The racing of the signal may also occur in accordance with process condition in case of forming the transistor, besides voltage and temperature. Because of this, when generating the timing signal by the inverter chain 51, if delay cause of the delay subject circuit is mainly wiring delay, it is necessary to take much margin for timing.

[0012] On the other hand, when generating the dummy circuit based on the critical path of the delay subject circuit and using output of the dummy circuit as the timing signal, the delay subject circuit delays at the same tendency as the dummy circuit. Because of this, there is high likelihood that its dummy circuit acts more stably than the dummy circuit is formed by using the inverter chain 51. However, because the dummy circuit imitates the critical path as it is, it is difficult to intentionally adjust the delay.

[0013] FIG. 3 is a block diagram of the timing signal occurrence circuit for adjusting timing between the timing that the operands are available on an operand bus and the timing that the calculator should start calculation. The circuit of FIG. 3 has a plurality of tristate buffers 1a, 1b and 1c connected to a delay clock line L1, a plurality of tristate buffers 2a, 2b and 2c connected to the operand bus L2, a plurality of calculators 3a, 3b and 3c connected to the input terminal of each of the tristate buffers 2a, 2b and 2c, and a calculator 3d for fetching the operands on the operand bus L2 and performing calculation by using the operands.

[0014] Among a plurality of tristate buffers 1a, 1b and 1c connected to the delay clock line L1, the left end tristate buffers 1a outputs a clock signal, and outputs of the other tristate buffers 1b and 1c is always high impedance state. That is, the tristate buffers beside the left end one is a dummy circuit to give a dummy load.

[0015] In case of a circuit of FIG. 3, the number of stages of the tristate buffers of the delay clock line L1 is set in accordance with the delay time of the critical path of the delay subject circuit. Because of this, it is difficult to intentionally adjust the delay time of the delay clock.

[0016] Furthermore, in case of the timing signal occurrence circuit for controlling the operational timing of a sense amplifier in a memory, the memory is provided with the sense amplifiers in accordance with the number of data bits. Because of this, the output of the timing signal occurrence circuit has to be distributed to each of the sense amplifiers via the buffer. Because of this, the signal delays for period necessary to path the buffers.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0017] An object of the present invention is to provide a timing signal occurrence circuit capable of precisely adjusting timing without complicating a circuit.

[0018] In order to achieve the foregoing object, a timing signal occurrence circuit, comprising:

[0019] a plurality of signal output circuits configured to output a timing signal, and

- [0020] a selecting circuit configured to select either one of the signal output circuits,
- [0021] wherein output terminals of all of the signal output circuits are connected to a common timing signal line, and
- [0022] wherein output terminals of the signal output circuits unselected by the selecting circuit.
- [0023] Furthermore, a timing signal selecting circuit, comprising:
- [0024] a plurality of memory cells connected to word lines and bit lines;
- [0025] a plurality of dummy circuits connected to the word line and the bit line different from each other, and
- [0026] a sense amplifier configured to amplify data read out from the selected memory cell,
- [0027] wherein driving timing of the sense amplifier is controlled based on signal propagation time of each of the dummy circuits.
- [0028] A simplest example of the timing signal selecting circuit is a circuit that fixes an enable input terminal of each output circuit of the timing signal to low level or high level. Or the timing signal selecting circuit is a register of holding the select value, output of which is connected to an enable input terminal of each timing output circuit.
- [0029] According to the present invention, delay of the timing signal is adjusted by selecting either of a plurality of signal output circuits connected to a timing signal line. Because of this, it is possible to adjust timing easily and precisely.
- [0030] Especially, by using the dummy circuit provided conventionally to provide a dummy load as a signal output circuit, it is possible to perform fine adjustment without adding new components, thereby curbing cost increase.
- [0031] Furthermore, according to the present invention, because the signal output circuit is selected based on a critical path of a subject circuit, it is possible to adjust the delay of the timing signal so that the subject circuit acts normally.
- [0032] Furthermore, according to the present invention, because the delay of the timing signal is adjusted so that the calculator fetches the operands after the operand on the operand bus has settled, it is possible to settle operation of the calculator.
- [0033] Furthermore, according to the present invention, because it is possible to adjust the delay of the timing signal only by adjusting a control terminal of the tristate buffer, circuit configuration is simplified.
- [0034] Furthermore, according to the present invention, because a selecting control circuit controls the select circuit, it is possible to programmably change over the delay adjustment of the timing signal.
- [0035] Furthermore, according to the present invention, because operational timing of the sense amplifier is controlled by a plurality of dummy circuits provided in the memory array, it is possible to drive the sense amplifier at optimum timing.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- [0036] FIG. 1 is a diagram showing schematic configuration of a conventional timing signal occurrence circuit.
- [0037] FIG. 2 is a timing chart of FIG. 1.
- [0038] FIG. 3 is a block diagram of a timing signal occurrence circuit for adjusting timing between operands on an operand bus and a delay clock.
- [0039] FIG. 4 is a block diagram showing schematic configuration of a first embodiment of a timing signal occurrence circuit according to the present invention.
- [0040] FIG. 5 is a timing diagram of a timing signal occurrence circuit of FIG. 1.
- [0041] FIG. 6 is a diagram showing schematic configuration of a second embodiment of a timing signal occurrence circuit according to the present invention.
- [0042] FIG. 7 is a diagram showing schematic configuration of a third embodiment of a timing signal occurrence circuit according to the present invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

- [0043] Hereinafter, a timing signal occurrence circuit according to the present invention will be specifically described with reference to drawings.

First Embodiment

- [0044] FIG. 4 is a block diagram showing schematic configuration of a first embodiment of a timing signal occurrence circuit according to the present invention.
- [0045] The timing signal occurrence circuit of FIG. 4 has a plurality of tristate buffers *1a*, *1b* and *1c* connected to a delay clock line *L1*, a plurality of tristate buffers *2a*, *2b* and *2c* connected to an operand bus *L2*, a plurality of calculators *3a*, *3b* and *3c* connected to input terminals of tristate buffers *2a*, *2b* and *2c*, respectively, a pulse generating circuit *4* for generating a one shot pulse based on a delay clock on the delay clock line *L1*, and a calculator *3d* for fetching the operands on the operand bus *L2* in order to perform calculation using the fetched operands.
- [0046] The calculator *3d* performs precharge operation when the one shot pulse is in high level, and carries out the calculation in case of low level.
- [0047] Switches *5a*, *5b* and *5c* are connected to a control terminal of each of the tristate buffers *1a*, *1b*, and *1c* connected to the delay clock line *L1*. When either of the switches *5a*, *5b* and *5c* is connected to a power supply terminal, the corresponding tristate buffer outputs a clock signal. When either of the switches *5a*, *5b* and *5c* is connected to a ground terminal, output of the corresponding tristate buffer becomes high impedance status.
- [0048] Practically, only either one of the switches *5a*, *5b* and *5c* is connected to the power supply voltage terminal, and the other switches are connected to the ground terminal. The delay time of the delay clock is adjusted by change-over of these switches *5a*, *5b* and *5c*. The delay time in this case is determined a wiring resistor and a wiring capacitance of the delay clock line *L1* and the tristate buffer.

[0049] The transistors **6a**, **6b** and **6c** for setting the delay clock line **L1** to high level when an external clock **CLA** is low level are provided on the delay clock line **L1**. Similarly, the transistors **7a**, **7b** and **7c** for setting the operand bus **L2** to high level when the external clock **CLK** is low level is provided on the operand line **L2**.

[0050] **FIG. 5** is a timing chart of the timing signal occurrence circuit of **FIG. 4**. Hereinafter, operation of the circuit of **FIG. 4** will be described with reference to the timing chart of **FIG. 5**.

[0051] The calculator **3d** of **FIG. 4** is constituted by precharge logic, and fetches the operand at a time when the one shot pulse outputted from the pulse generating circuit **4** changes from high level to low level. Because of this, before the one shot pulse changes from high level to low level, the operand on the operand bus **L2** has been settled in advance.

[0052] **FIG. 5A** is a diagram showing timing of the external clock **CLK** inputted from outside for the timing signal occurrence circuit of **FIG. 4**. The delay time of the operand on the operand bus **L2** fluctuates due to voltage, temperature and so on, as shown by an arrow **y1** of **FIG. 5B**. When the tristate buffer **1a** connected to the delay clock line **L1** is in an enable state, the delay clock **CLK1** inputted to the calculator **3d** becomes waveform showing in **FIG. 5C**. At this time, the one shot pulse **P1** inputted to the calculator **3d** becomes waveform showing in **FIG. 5D**.

[0053] On the other hand, when the tristate buffer **1b** on the delay clock line **L1** is in an enable state, the delay clock **CLK2** inputted to the calculator **3d** becomes waveform showing in **FIG. 5e**. The one shot pulse **P2** inputted to the calculator **3d** becomes waveform showing in **FIG. 5f**.

[0054] In **FIG. 5**, a margin **y2** from operand settling time till down edge of the delay clock in case that the clock is outputted from the tristate buffer **1a** is expressed by an arrow **y2**, and a margin **y3** from operand settling time till down edge of the delay clock in case that the clock is outputted from the tristate buffer **1b**.

[0055] The margins **y2** and **y3** are determined by RC delay of the delay clock line **L1** and propagation delay in the pulse generating circuit **4**. Because time width of the margin **y3** is shorter than that of the margin **y2**, when the calculator **3d** can correctly calculate at time width of the margin **y3**, it is desirable to allow the clock to output from the tristate buffer **1b** by changing over the switches **5a**, **5b** and **5c**.

[0056] Thus, the first embodiment adjusts the delay time of the delay clock by selecting arbitrarily either of a plurality of tristate buffers **1a**, **1b** and **1c** connected to the delay clock line **L1**. Because of this, it is possible to generate the one shot pulse of optimum timing for carrying out calculation by the calculator **3d**. Accordingly, it is possible to prevent the problem that the one shot pulse is inputted when not a few time goes by after the operand is inputted to the calculator, or that the one shot pulse is inputted before the operand is settled.

[0057] Furthermore, the first embodiment uses the dummy circuit constituted by the tristate buffers **1a**, **1b** and **1c** provided conventionally to provide the dummy load, for generating the timing signal. Because of this, it is possible to adjust timing without adding new components and to reduce cost increase.

Second Embodiment

[0058] The second embodiment adjusts driving timing of the sense amplifier by providing a dummy circuit in a memory cell array.

[0059] **FIG. 6** is a diagram showing schematic configuration of a second embodiment of a timing signal occurrence circuit according to the present invention. The memory cell array **11** is provided with the timing signal occurrence circuit of **FIG. 6**. Besides, the memory cell array **11** is provided with a plurality of word lines **W1-Wn** and bit lines **B1-Bm**. A plurality of memory cells are connected to each of the word lines **W1-Wn** and bit lines **B1-Bm**.

[0060] A plurality of memory cells adjacent to each other vertically and horizontally constitute cell blocks **12**. Dummy circuits **13a**, **13b** and **13c** are provided between each cell block, respectively. These cell blocks **13a**, **13b** and **13c** are used to set driving timing of the sense amplifier **17**.

[0061] Although **FIG. 6** shows an example of providing three dummy circuits **13a**, **13b** and **13c**, the number of the dummy circuits is not especially limited.

[0062] Each of the dummy circuits **13a** and **13b** is consisted of a plurality of transistors **14** connected in parallel to the corresponding word line. The dummy circuit **13c** is consisted of a plurality of transistors **15** connected in parallel to the corresponding bit line. The number of the transistors **14** or **15** in each of the dummy circuits is set in accordance with the number of the transistors in the cell block.

[0063] The word lines in the dummy circuits **13a** and **13b** are connected to a decoder **16**, similarly to a normal word line. Either of the dummy circuits **13** is selected by a signal from the decoder **16**. For example, the dummy circuit **13a** of **FIG. 6** is a path that propagation time is longest, that is, a critical path. The driving timing of the sense amplifier **17** is set so that data passing through the dummy circuit **13a** is read out from the sense amplifier **17** when the word line in the dummy circuit **13a** is set to high level.

[0064] The driving timing of the sense amplifier **17** is set so that data passing through the dummy circuit is read out from the sense amplifier **17** when the word line in the other dummy circuit **13b** is set to high level.

[0065] Thus, the second embodiment provides a plurality of dummy circuits **13a**, **13b** and **13c** in the memory cell array **11**. The driving timing of the sense amplifier **17** is set so that data passing through each of the dummy circuits is correctly outputted from the sense amplifier **17**. Therefore, data read out from any memory cell in the memory cell array **11** can be correctly outputted via the sense amplifier **17**.

Third Embodiment

[0066] In the first embodiment, an example for manually selecting the switches **5a**, **5b** and **5c** connected to the tristate buffers has been described. A third embodiment controls automatic selection of the switches **5a**, **5b** and **5c**.

[0067] **FIG. 7** is a block diagram showing schematic configuration of the third embodiment of the timing signal occurrence circuit according to the present invention. In **FIG. 7**, the same figure numbers are attached to constituents common to **FIG. 4**.

[0068] The timing signal occurrence circuit of FIG. 7 has a register 8 for selecting either one of a plurality of tristate buffers connected to the delay clock line L1. Output of the register 8 is inputted to control terminals of the tristate buffers 1a, 1b and 1c, respectively. When output of the register 8 is in high level, the corresponding tristate buffer outputs a clock. Value set to the register 8 is controlled, for example, by a processor (unshown).

[0069] Thus, according to third embodiment, because it is possible to arbitrarily select either one of the tristate buffers by output of the register 8, the delay time of the delay clock can be switched programmably.

What is claimed is:

1. A timing signal occurrence circuit, comprising:
 - a plurality of signal output circuits configured to output a timing signal, and
 - a selecting circuit configured to select either one of said signal output circuits,
 wherein output terminals of all of said signal output circuits are connected to a common timing signal line, and
 - wherein output terminals of said signal output circuits unselected by said selecting circuit.
2. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 1,
 - wherein said signal output circuits is provided in accordance with a subject adjustment circuit being a subject for timing adjustment, and
 - wherein said selecting circuit selects either one of said signal output circuits based on the delay time of a critical path of said subject adjustment circuit.
3. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 1, further comprising:
 - a calculator configured to fetch operands on an operand bus and to carry out the fetched operands, in sync with a delay clock on a delay clock line;
 - a clock delay adjustment circuit configured to adjust delay of the delay clock on said delay clock line, and
 - an operand delay adjustment circuit configured to adjust delay of the operands on said operand bus,
 wherein said clock delay adjustment circuit is provided with said signal output circuit configured to output said delay clock with timing different from each other,
 - wherein said operand delay adjustment circuit is provided with said signal output circuits configured to output the operands with timing different from each other, and
 - wherein each of said clock delay adjustment circuit and said operand control circuit selects either of said signal output circuit, so that said calculator fetches the operands after the operand on said operand bus is settled.
4. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 1,
 - wherein each of said signal output circuits has a tristate buffer configured to switch whether to output a signal from an output terminal or to set the output terminal to be high impedance state, based on logic of a control terminal, and

wherein said selecting circuit switches logic of said control terminal.

5. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 3,

wherein each of said signal output circuit has a tristate buffer configured to switch whether to output a signal from an output terminal or to set the output terminal to be high impedance state,

wherein said selecting circuit switches logic of said control terminal,

wherein said delay adjustment circuit adjusts the delay time based on wiring resistor and wiring capacitance of said delay clock line and said transfer buffer, and

wherein said operand delay adjustment circuit adjusts the delay time based on the wiring resistance and the wiring capacitance of said operand bus and said tristate buffer.

6. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 3, further comprising a plurality of transistors connected to said delay clock line, these transistors being turned on in order to set said delay clock line to a prescribed voltage level when said delay clock is in a prescribed logic.

7. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 3, further comprising a plurality of transistors connected to said operand bus, these transistors being turned on in order to set said operand bus to a prescribed voltage level when said delay clock is in a prescribed logic.

8. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 3 further comprising a switch connected to said control terminal of said tristate buffer,

wherein said tristate buffer outputs said delay clock when said switch is in a first change-over state, and becomes high impedance state when said switch is in a second change-over state.

9. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 4,

wherein the dummy load for timing control is used as said tristate buffer.

10. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 4, further comprising a selecting control circuit configured to control selection by said selecting circuit.

11. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 10,

wherein said selecting control circuit has a register with the number of bits in accordance with the number of said tristate buffers.

12. A timing signal selecting circuit, comprising:

a plurality of memory cells connected to word lines and bit lines;

a plurality of dummy circuits connected to the word line and the bit line different from each other, and

a sense amplifier configured to amplify data read out from the selected memory cell,

wherein driving timing of said sense amplifier is controlled based on signal propagation time of each of said dummy circuits.

13. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 12,

wherein said memory cells constitute cell blocks, said dummy circuit being provided between each of said cell blocks.

14. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 12,

wherein driving timing of said sense amplifier is set so as to be able to correctly read out from said sense amplifier data passing through each of said dummy circuits.

15. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 12,

wherein said dummy circuit is consisted of a plurality of transistors connected in parallel to the corresponding word line and bit line.

16. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 15,

wherein said memory cells constitute cell blocks, said dummy circuit being provided between said cell blocks, and

wherein the number of the transistors in said dummy circuit is set in accordance with the number of the transistors in said cell block.

17. The timing signal occurrence circuit according to claim 12,

wherein at least one of said dummy circuits is a critical path.

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