

CRYSTALLIZATION OF POLYCRYSTALLINE SILICON THIN FILM BY
EXCIMER LASER ANNEALING

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*Specially dedicated to my beloved mom, Pn. Halimah Kaliwon,
dad, Ab. Razak Sarkawi,
brothers, Rahim and Fahmi,
sisters, Nora, Dayah, Ayu, and Zura,
and all my friends..
Thank you for your love and support.
You are all my ins and my means..*

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ABSTRACT

Enhancing the crystallization of silicon thin film is important for better performance of thin film transistor (TFT). In an attempt to achieve this goal, a fundamental study was carried out to enhance the crystallization of doped silicon thin film (STF) with various types of dopants. The dopants used in this research are copper, aluminium and germanium. Initially the amorphous silicon (a-Si) film was prepared by low pressure physical vapour deposition (PVD). The STF was annealed using a combination of two techniques. Firstly, the doped STF was annealed by conventional method using tube furnace. Secondly, annealing was done using argon fluoride (ArF) excimer laser. The microstructure of thin film was analyzed using metallurgical technique via field emission scanning electron microscope (FESEM) and atomic force microscope (AFM). In general the grain size of doped STF increased with the energy density of the excimer laser except for Si:Ge. However, the crystallization was found to decrease after exceeding the critical or super lateral growth (SLG) energy. The optimum grain size achieved by Si:Cu, Si:Al, and Si:Ge thin film were 143.2, 129.2 and 105.6 nm respectively at the corresponding SLG energy each of 345.00, 356.11, and 413.78 mJcm^{-2} respectively. Copper was found to be the best dopant based on its largest grain size achievement. The enhancement of crystallization was also carried out using single heat treatment that are a conventional furnace heat treatment and directly using ELA separately. Apparently, the combination of the two techniques offers better performance in comparison to any single heat treatment.

ABSTRAK

Peningkatan penghabluran saput tipis silicon adalah sangat penting untuk mendapatkan prestasi transistor saput tipis (TFT) yang lebih baik. Dalam usaha untuk mencapai matlamat ini, kajian asas telah dilaksanakan bagi membesarkan struktur Kristal saput tipis silikon (STF) dengan pelbagai jenis dopan. Dopan yang digunakan dalam kajian ini ialah kuprum, aluminium, dan germanium. Sebagai permulaan, saput tipis silicon amorfos disediakan melalui pemendapan wap bertekanan rendah (PVD). Saput tipis STF disepuhlandap dengan menggunakan kombinasi antara dua teknik. Pertama, STF berdop disepuhlandapkan melalui kaedah konvensional menggunakan tiub relau. Kedua, sepuhlandap dilaksanakan menggunakan laser eksimer argon florida (ArF). Mikrostruktur saput tipis dianalisa menggunakan teknik kaji logam melalui mikroskop imbasan kesan medan electron (FESEM) dan mikroskop daya atom (AFM). Secara umumnya, saiz butiran STF berdop bertambah dengan ketumpatan tenaga laser eksimer kecuali bagi Si:Ge. Walaubagaimanapun, pertumbuhan didapati berkurangan selepas melebihi takat genting atau tenaga super pertumbuhan sisi (SLG). Saiz butiran optimum yang dicapai untuk saput tipis Si:Cu, Si:Al, dan Si:Ge masing-masing adalah 143.2, 129.2 dan 105.6 nm yang berpadanan dengan tenaga SLG iaitu 345.00, 356.11, dan 413.78 mJcm^{-2} . Kuprum telah didapati sebagai bahan dop yang terbaik berdasarkan pencapaian saiz butiran yang terbesar. Peningkatan penghabluran juga dilaksanakan melalui proses pemanasan tunggal secara berasingan dengan menggunakan kaedah konvensional dan ELA secara terus. Jelas menunjukkan bahawa kombinasi antara dua teknik menawarkan peningkatan yang lebih baik berbanding dengan rawatan pemanasan tunggal.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
	DECLARATION	ii
	DEDICATION	iii
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
	ABSTRACT	v
	ABSTRAK	vi
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
	LIST OF TABLES	x
	LIST OF FIGURES	xi
	LIST OF SYMBOLS	xv
	ABBREVIATIONS	xvii
	LIST OF APPENDICES	xviii
1	INTRODUCTION	
	1.1 Overview	1
	1.2 Significant of the Study	2
	1.3 Objective of the Study	2
	1.4 Research Scope	3
	1.5 Thesis Outline	3
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	
	2.1 Introduction	5
3	THEORY	
	3.1 Introduction	10
	3.2 Excimer Laser	10

3.2.1	Excimer Energy Level	11
3.2.2	Gain Medium	13
3.2.3	Photon and Thermal Energy	13
3.2.4	Excimer Laser Annealing	15
3.3	Thin Film	18
3.3.1	Physical Vapour Deposition	18
3.3.2	Thermal Evaporation	18
3.3.3	Amorphous Silicon and Polycrystalline Silicon	20
3.3.4	Energy Band Gap of Thin Film	22
3.4	Analyzing Equipment	24
3.4.1	Atomic Force Microscope	24
3.4.2	Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscope	27
4	METHODOLOGY	
4.1	Introduction	30
4.2	Instruments and Materials	31
4.3	Thin Film Fabrication	32
4.4	Annealing Process	33
4.4.1	Conventional Annealing	34
4.4.2	Excimer Laser Annealing	35
	4.4.2.1 Procedure of Operation	35
4.5	Scanning Probe	40
5	RESULT AND DISCUSSION	
5.1	Introduction	43
5.2	Polycrystalline Silicon Characterisation	43
5.3	Catalyst Doped In Silicon	49
5.3.1	Copper Catalyst	49
5.3.2	Aluminium Catalyst	54
5.3.3	Germanium Catalyst	58
5.3.4	Comparison of Different Annealing Techniques	61

5.4	Single Annealing Technique	63
5.4.1	Si:Al Thin Film by Excimer Laser Annealing	64
5.4.2	Conventional Heat Treatment of Silicon Film	66
6	CONCLUSION	
6.1	Summary	69
6.2	Further Work	70
	REFERENCES	72
	APPENDICES	78
	PAPERS & PRESENTATIONS	85

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO	TITLE	PAGE
5.1	The grain size poly-silicon based on FESEM analysis	47
5.2	Average grain size of poly-Si doped with Copper catalyst.	52
5.3	Average grain size of poly-Si doped with Aluminium catalyst	56
5.4	Average grain size of poly-Si doped with Germanium catalyst.	60
5.5	Maximum grain size of STF doped with different types of catalysts.	62
5.6	Average grain size of Si:Al film obtained by AFM	65

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Thin film transistors switches in liquid crystal displays LCD.	6
2.2	Re-crystallization process of a-Si by (a) solid phase crystallization SPC and (b) excimer laser crystallization ELC techniques.	8
3.1	Dimers of carboxylic acids found in vapour phase as an example of dimer.	11
3.2	Excimer energy diagram.	12
3.3	Schematic diagram of molecular orbitals	12
3.4	Schematic diagram of excimer laser annealing with line beam optics.	17
3.5	Crystallization process during excimer laser annealing ELA	17
3.6	Schematic diagram of thermal evaporation system.	20
3.7	Amorphous silicon's random structural characteristics cause deviations like dangling bonds.	21
3.8	SEM photographs of (a) a-Si without any treatment and (b) poly-Si with laser fluence (energy density) of 360 mJ/cm^2 .	22
3.9	Schematic diagram of beam deflection system, using a laser and photo-detector to measure the beam position.	25
3.10	Schematic diagram of FESEM working principle.	28
3.11	An electron path through the electromagnetic lenses.	29

4.1	The materials used to fabricate the thin film are (a) silicon powder and three selected catalyst and (b) the 7010 microscope glass substrate.	31
4.2	(a) Thermal evaporator Edwards 360 which is connected to (b) vacuum pressure meter and Edward FTM 7 thickness counter and (c) schematic diagram of thin film layer.	33
4.3	(a) The heat treatment for conventional annealing by using tube furnace and (b) the carbon block container used for encapsulated annealing.	34
4.4	(a) A rectangular line beam and (b) a line profile of laser beam spot of excimer laser.	36
4.5	The schematic diagram of the experimental set-up	37
4.6	Excimer laser system including (a) EX5/200 excimer laser connected with (b) AFG310 external trigger unit, (c) premix gas as an active medium, and (d) Helium gas to avoid contamination in laser chamber.	39
4.7	The laser mirror optics can be adjusted by tightening or loosening the four socket head screws located 90 degrees apart around each mirror mount.	40
4.8	(a) The SII scanning probe and (b) the round stage (2 cm in diameter).	41
4.9	Scanning process of the film surface by using AFM	42
5.1	(a) A line marker is sketch on FESEM image of STF to measure the average grain size of poly-Si and (b) the grain size analysis of the silicon thin film by using Matrox Inspector 2.1.	44
5.2	FESEM images with 50 000 x magnification of (a) silicon base thin film and (b) silicon film after four hours conventional annealing process with temperature 350°C and poly-Si surface after ELA with energy density (c) 72.38 mJ cm ⁻² , (d) 146.92 mJ cm ⁻² , (e) 219.04 mJ cm ⁻² , (f) 284.50 mJ cm ⁻² and (g) 352.08 mJ cm ⁻² , and (h) 423.79 mJ cm ⁻² .	46

5.3	Average grain size of poly-Si against the number of pulses, n	47
5.4	AFM images with magnification area of 1000 nm X 1000 nm of (a) silicon base and (b) silicon thin film after underwent conventional annealing, and poly-Si surface after ELA with (c) one, (d) two, (e) three, (f) four, (g) five, and (h) six number of pulses	51
5.5	A graph of average grain size G_{av} of Si:Cu thin film versus number of laser pulses, n .	52
5.6	AFM images with magnification area of 1000 nm X 1000 nm of (a) STF after underwent conventional annealing and poly-Si surface after ELA with (b) one, (c) two, (d) three, (e) four, (f) five, (g) six and (h) seven number of pulses	55
5.7	A graph of average grain size of Si:Al thin film versus number of laser pulses n .	56
5.8	AFM images with magnification area of 1000 nm X 1000 nm of a poly-Si surface after ELA with (a) one, (b) two, (c) three, (d) four, (e) five, (f) six, (g) seven, and (h) eight number of pulses.	59
5.9	A graph of average grain size of Si:Ge thin film versus number of laser pulses, n .	61
5.10	AFM images with magnification area of 1000 nm X 1000 nm of (a) a plain glass substrate and (b) amorphous Si:Al thin film before heat treatment	63
5.11	AFM images with magnification area of 1000 nm X 1000 nm of Si:Al film after ELA with (a) one, (b) two, (c) three, (d) four, and (e) five number of pulses	65
5.12	AFM images with magnification area of 1000 nm X 1000 nm of Si:Al film after conventional annealing with temperature 350 °C for (a) 2hours, (b) 4 hours, (c) 6 hours, and (d) 8 hours, (e) 10 hours, and (f) 12 hours.	67

5.13	Comparison of maximum grain size of Si:Al thin film achieved from different stages of heat treatment.	68
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LIST OF SYMBOLS

A	-	Absorption
Al	-	Aluminium
Ar	-	Argon
c	-	Speed of light
Cl	-	Chlorine
Cu	-	Copper
d	-	thickness of thin film
E	-	Photon energy
eV	-	Electron Volt
F	-	Force
Fl	-	Fluorine
g	-	gram
Ge	-	Germanium
h	-	Planck's constant
I	-	Intensity of light
k	-	stiffness of a lever
Kr	-	Krypton
kV	-	kilo volts
mm	-	millimeter
Nm	-	nanometer
ns	-	nanosecond
Si	-	Silicon
Si_3N_4	-	Silicon nitride
T	-	Light transmission
ν	-	Electromagnetic wave

Xe	-	Xenon
z	-	the distance the lever is bent
α	-	Absorption coefficient
β	-	A constant value
λ	-	Wavelength of the light
μA	-	micro Ampere

ABBREVIATIONS

AFM	-	Atomic force microscope
AMLCD's	-	Active matrix liquid crystal displays
ArF	-	Argon fluoride
a-Si	-	Amorphous silicon
CVD	-	Chemical vapour deposition Deposition
ELA	-	Excimer laser annealing
ELC	-	Excimer laser crystallization
FES	-	Field emission source
FESEM	-	Field effect scanning electron microscope
LTPS	-	Low temperature poly-silicon
PEVCD	-	Plasma-Enhanced Chemical Vapor-
Poly-Si	-	Polycrystalline silicon
P _v		Vacuum pressure
PVD	-	Physical vapour deposition
SEM	-	Scanning electron microscope
SLG	-	Super lateral growth
SPC	-	Solid phase crystallization
SPM	-	Scanning probe microscope
STF	-	Silicon thin film
TFTs	-	Thin film transistors
UV	-	Ultraviolet
UV-Vis	-	Ultraviolet-Visible

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
A	The EX5 excimer laser specifications	78
B	EX5 Software control screen – Advanced Screen	79
C	Gas refilling process	80
D	External Vacuum Pump Setup	82
E	Types of boat for deposition process	83
F	He Ne laser alignment	84

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Thin film transistors (TFTs) are well known devices utilizing thin film semiconductor. The TFTs are fabricated by forming a thin film semiconductor on a substrate and processing the thin film semiconductor (Ohtani, *et al.*, 2003). The TFTs are used in various types of integrated circuits, and are particularly in electro-optical devices, liquid crystal display devices and flat panel displays such as camera viewfinders, car navigation systems, laptops, televisions and etc. Due to their large field effect mobility and high current driving capability (Park, *et al.*, 1999), polycrystalline silicon (poly-Si) TFTs has been extensively investigated for the application in active matrix liquid crystal displays (AMLCDs).

There are various methods available to fabricate poly-Si thin film, either direct or indirect deposition method. However, direct deposition has the problem of rough topography, which is due to high-density of atomic hydrogen in the gas phase caused several etching of the silicon surface (Yogoro, *et al.*, 2003). Re-crystallization of amorphous silicon (a-Si) using excimer laser annealing (ELA) is known as the best method to fabricate a good poly-Si because it can heat the film up to the melting

point and at the same time no thermal damage occur into the glass substrate (Carluccio, *et al.*, 1997; Matsumura, *et al.*, 1999).

ELA technique is widely used to increase the grain size (Gall, *et al.*, 2002) and the microstructure of poly-Si thin film which is the most important characteristics of excellent built-in poly-Si devices (Marmostein, *et al.*, 1999; Palani, *et al.*, 2008). The advantage of using excimer laser is the strong absorption of ultraviolet (UV) light in silicon.

1.2 Significance of The Study

Early research of silicon thin film fabrication required high temperature corning glass substrate due to high annealing temperature, which is higher than 650°C and longer period of annealing process, that is over 10 hours. By using two step annealing techniques, an inexpensive glass substrate can be used, compared with expensive quartz substrate. In this present research, a microscope glass substrate is used, which can be heated up to 350°C. At the same time, the annealing temperature can be reduced. In addition, the short pulse duration of excimer laser would shorten the time duration of laser annealing. By reducing the annealing time and temperature, the fabrication cost become much cheaper, faster and clean technique.

1.3 Objective of The Study

The main objective of this project is to enhance the crystallization of poly-Si thin film by using ELA technique. This is achieved by performing the following works;

1. To determine the appropriate laser parameters for annealing,
2. To optimize the doping of catalyst agent, and
3. To characterize the laser annealing of polycrystalline silicon.

1.4 Research Scope

This research focuses on enhancing the crystallization process that specifies the material used as specimen, the equipment employed in conducting the experiment and technique for analysis. Basically, glass slide was utilized as a substrate. A few numbers of catalysts were selected to dope on the silicon base including aluminium, germanium and copper. The thin film was prepared by using thermal vapour deposition. The amorphous silicon (a-Si) was initially heated using a conventional furnace to hydrogenate. Argon fluoride, (ArF) excimer laser was used as a source of annealing. The annealing materials were later characterized by metallurgical methods using field emission scanning electron microscope (FESEM) and atomic force microscope (AFM).

1.5 Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into six main chapters. Chapter 1 briefly explained the research project which consists of an introduction of TFTs devices which is widely used in our daily life. The objectives and the scope of the study are also discussed in this chapter.

Some similar researches done by previous researchers were reviewed in Chapter 2. Several circumstances and the outcome results were highlighted. Some of those were selected to be as guideline in this work.

The theory of excimer laser annealing, physical vapour deposition, crystalline silicon, photon energy and the optical properties of thin film are discussed in Chapter 3.

The research methodology and experimental procedure are described in details in Chapter 4. The discussions also cover details the apparatus, material and machines that were used in experimental work.

The data obtained from this experiment consists of the microstructure due to crystallization. The observed results were used to measure the grain size and analyzed the relationship with respect to the number of pulse. The details of this results are explained in Chapter 5.

The final chapter summarizes the whole work and addresses the problems experienced throughout the experiment. For further study in this area, along with some suggestions are given in this chapter.

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