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METHOD FOR FABRICATING SEMICONDUCTOR DEVICE

Abstract

A method for fabricating a semiconductor device includes the steps of forming a magnetic tunneling junction (MTJ) on a substrate, forming a first inter-metal dielectric (IMD) layer on the MTJ, removing part of the first IMD layer to form a damaged layer on the MTJ and a trench exposing the damaged layer, performing a ultraviolet (UV) curing process on the damaged layer, and then conducting a planarizing process to remove the damaged layer and part of the first IMD layer.

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Background/Summary

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS [0001] This application is a continuation application of U.S. application Ser. No. 17/548,576, filed on Dec. 12, 2021. The content of the application is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0002] The invention relates to a method for fabricating semiconductor device, and more particularly to a method for fabricating magnetoresistive random access memory (MRAM).

2. Description of the Prior Art

[0003] Magnetoresistance (MR) effect has been known as a kind of effect caused by altering the resistance of a material through variation of outside magnetic field. The physical definition of such effect is defined as a variation in resistance obtained by dividing a difference in resistance under no magnetic interference by the original resistance. Currently, MR effect has been successfully utilized in production of hard disks thereby having important commercial values. Moreover, the characterization of utilizing GMR materials to generate different resistance under different magnetized states could also be used to fabricate MRAM devices, which typically has the advantage of keeping stored data even when the device is not connected to an electrical source.

[0004] The aforementioned MR effect has also been used in magnetic field sensor areas including but not limited to for example electronic compass components used in global positioning system (GPS) of cellular phones for providing information regarding moving location to users. Currently, various magnetic field sensor technologies such as anisotropic magnetoresistance (AMR) sensors, GMR sensors, magnetic tunneling junction (MTJ) sensors have been widely developed in the market. Nevertheless, most of these products still pose numerous shortcomings such as high chip area, high cost, high power consumption, limited sensibility, and easily affected by temperature variation and how to come up with an improved device to resolve these issues has become an important task in this field.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0005] According to an embodiment of the present invention, a method for fabricating a semiconductor device includes the steps of forming a magnetic tunneling junction (MTJ) on a substrate, forming a first inter-metal dielectric (IMD) layer on the MTJ, removing part of the first IMD layer to form a damaged layer on the MTJ and a trench exposing the damaged layer, performing a ultraviolet (UV) curing process on the damaged layer, and then conducting a planarizing process to remove the damaged layer and part of the first IMD layer.

[0006] These and other objectives of the present invention will no doubt become obvious to those of ordinary skill in the art after reading the following detailed description of the preferred embodiment that is illustrated in the various figures and drawings.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] FIGS. **1-10** illustrate a method for fabricating a MRAM device according to an embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0008] Referring to FIGS. **1-10**, FIGS. **1-10** illustrate a method for fabricating a MRAM device according to an embodiment of the present invention. As shown in FIG. **1**, a substrate **12** made of semiconductor material is first provided, in which the semiconductor material could be selected from the group consisting of silicon (Si), germanium (Ge), Si—Ge compounds, silicon carbide (SiC), and gallium arsenide (GaAs), and a MRAM region **14** and a logic region **16** are defined on the substrate **12**.

[0009] Active devices such as metal-oxide semiconductor (MOS) transistors, passive devices, conductive layers, and interlayer dielectric (ILD) layer **18** could also be formed on top of the substrate **12**. More specifically, planar MOS transistors or non-planar (such as FinFETs) MOS transistors could be formed on the substrate **12**, in which the MOS transistors could include transistor elements such as gate structures (for example metal gates) and source/drain region, spacer, epitaxial layer, and contact etch stop layer (CESL). The ILD layer **18** could be formed on the substrate **12** to cover the MOS transistors, and a plurality of contact plugs could be formed in the ILD layer **18** to electrically connect to the gate structure and/or source/drain region of MOS transistors. Since the fabrication of planar or non-planar transistors and ILD layer is well known to those skilled in the art, the details of which are not explained herein for the sake of brevity.

[0010] Next, metal interconnect structures **20**, **22** are sequentially formed on the ILD layer **18** on the MRAM region **14** and the logic region **16** to electrically connect the aforementioned contact plugs, in which the metal interconnect structure **20** includes an inter-metal dielectric (IMD) layer **24** and metal interconnections **26** embedded in the IMD layer **24**, and the metal interconnect structure **22** includes a stop layer **28**, an IMD layer **30**, and metal interconnections **32** embedded in the stop layer **28** and the IMD layer **30**.

[0011] In this embodiment, each of the metal interconnections **26** from the metal interconnect structure **20** preferably includes a trench conductor and the metal interconnection **32** from the metal interconnect structure **22** on the MRAM region **14** includes a via conductor. Preferably, each of the metal interconnections **26**, **32** from the metal interconnect structures **20**, **22** could be embedded within the IMD layers **24**, **30** and/or stop layer **28** according to a single damascene process or dual damascene process. For instance, each of the metal interconnections **26**, **32** could further include a barrier layer **34** and a metal layer **36**, in which the barrier layer **34** could be selected from the group consisting of titanium (Ti), titanium nitride (TiN), tantalum (Ta), and tantalum nitride (Ta₂N₃) and the metal layer **36** could be selected from the group consisting of tungsten (W), copper (Cu), aluminum (Al), titanium aluminide (TiAl), and cobalt tungsten phosphide (CoWP). Since single damascene process and dual damascene process are well known to those skilled in the art, the details of which are not explained herein for the sake of brevity. In this embodiment, the metal layers **36** in the metal interconnections **26** are preferably made of copper, the metal layer **36** in the metal interconnections **32** are made of tungsten, the IMD layers **24**, **30** are preferably made of silicon oxide such as tetraethyl orthosilicate (TEOS), and the stop layer **28** is preferably made of nitrogen doped carbide (NDC), silicon nitride, silicon carbon nitride (SiCN), or combination thereof.

[0012] Next, a bottom electrode **42**, a MTJ stack **38** or stack structure, a top electrode **50**, and a patterned mask (not shown) are formed on the metal interconnect structure **22**. In this embodiment, the formation of the MTJ stack **38** could be accomplished by sequentially depositing a pinned layer **44**, a barrier layer **46**, and a free layer **48** on the bottom electrode **42**. In this embodiment, the bottom electrode **42** and the top electrode **50** are preferably made of conductive material including

but not limited to for example Ta, Pt, Cu, Au, Al, or combination thereof. The pinned layer **44** could be made of ferromagnetic material including but not limited to for example iron, cobalt, nickel, or alloys thereof such as cobalt-iron-boron (CoFeB) or cobalt-iron (CoFe). Alternatively, the pinned layer **44** could also be made of antiferromagnetic (AFM) material including but not limited to for example ferromanganese (FeMn), platinum manganese (PtMn), iridium manganese (IrMn), nickel oxide (NiO), or combination thereof, in which the pinned layer **44** is formed to fix or limit the direction of magnetic moment of adjacent layers. The barrier layer **46** could be made of insulating material including but not limited to for example oxides such as aluminum oxide (AlOx) or magnesium oxide (MgO). The free layer **48** could be made of ferromagnetic material including but not limited to for example iron, cobalt, nickel, or alloys thereof such as cobalt-iron-boron (CoFeB), in which the magnetized direction of the free layer **48** could be altered freely depending on the influence of outside magnetic field.

[0013] Next, as shown in FIG. 2, one or more etching process is conducted by using the patterned mask as mask to remove part of the top electrode **50**, part of the MTJ stack **38**, part of the bottom electrode **42**, and part of the IMD layer **30** to form MTJs **52** on the MRAM region **14**. It should be noted that a reactive ion etching (RIE) and/or an ion beam etching (IBE) process is conducted to remove the top electrode **50**, MTJ stack **38**, bottom electrode **42**, and the IMD layer **30** in this embodiment for forming the MTJs **52**. Due to the characteristics of the IBE process, the top surface of the remaining IMD layer **30** is slightly lower than the top surface of the metal interconnections **32** after the IBE process and the top surface of the IMD layer **30** also reveals a curve or an arc. It should also be noted that as the IBE process is conducted to remove part of the IMD layer **30**, part of the metal interconnection **32** is removed at the same time to form inclined sidewalls on the surface of the metal interconnection **32** immediately adjacent to the MTJs **52**.

[0014] Next, a cap layer **56** is formed on the MTJs **52** while covering the surface of the IMD layer **30**. In this embodiment, the cap layer **56** preferably includes silicon nitride, but could also include other dielectric material including but not limited to for example silicon oxide, silicon oxynitride (SiON), or silicon carbon nitride (SiCN).

[0015] Next, as shown in FIG. 3, an atomic layer deposition (ALD) process is conducted to form a passivation layer **58** covering the MTJs **52** and the IMD layer **30** on the logic region **16**, an etching back process is conducted to remove part of the passivation layer **58** on the MRAM region **14** and logic region **16** for forming a V-shape on the top surface of the passivation layer **58** between the two electrodes **50**, and then another photo-etching process is conducted to remove the passivation layer **58**, the cap layer **56**, and part of the IMD layer **30** on the logic region **16**. In this embodiment, the passivation layer **58** preferably includes silicon oxide, but not limited thereto.

[0016] It should be noted that after using the aforementioned etching process to remove part of the passivation layer **58**, the top surface of the remaining passivation layer **58** is still slightly higher than the top surface of the two top electrodes **50** at a distance about 300-500 Angstroms and a V-shape is also formed on the top surface of the passivation layer **58** on the MRAM region **14** at the same time, in which the V-shape is between the two top electrodes **50**, the valley point of the V-shape is higher than the top surface of the top electrodes **50**, and the angle of the V-shape is greater than 110 degrees or more preferably greater than 120 degrees.

[0017] Next, as shown in FIG. 4, a flowable chemical vapor deposition (FCVD) process is conducted to form an inter-metal dielectric (IMD) layer **62** on the passivation layer **58**. In this embodiment, the IMD layer **62** preferably include an ultra low-k (ULK) dielectric layer including but not limited to for example porous material or silicon oxycarbide (SiOC) or carbon doped silicon oxide (SiOCH). It should be noted that after the IMD layer **62** is formed the top surface of the IMD layer **62** on the lotic region **16** is preferably lower than the top surface of the IMD layer **62** on the MRAM region **14** to form a step height.

[0018] Next, as shown in FIG. 5, a reflective layer **82** is formed on the surface of the IMD layer **62** on the MRAM region **14** and logic region **16**, and then a patterned mask **84** such as patterned resist

is formed on the reflective layer **82**, in which the patterned mask **84** includes an opening exposing the surface of the reflective layer **82**. In this embodiment, the reflective layer **82** preferably includes metal or metal nitride such as tantalum (Ta) or tantalum nitride (TaN).

[0019] Next, as shown in FIG. **6**, an etching process is conducted by using the patterned mask **84** as mask to remove part of the reflective layer **82** and part of the IMD layer **62** from forming a trench **86**, and the patterned mask **84** is removed thereafter. It should be noted when part of the reflective layer **82** and part of the IMD layer **62** are removed by the etching process, part of the IMD layer **62** is transformed at the same time into a damaged layer **88** as the surface of the damaged layer **88** is exposed by the trench **86**.

[0020] Next, as shown in FIG. **7**, an ultraviolet (UV) curing process **90** is conducted to remove the methyl group (CH₃) bonds within the damaged layer **88** so that the damaged layer **88** would become slightly hardened. By doing so, it would be desirable to evenly planarize the damaged layer **88** and IMD layer **62** afterwards and also prevent collapse of the damaged layer **88** during the planarizing process.

[0021] Next, as shown in FIG. **8**, a planarizing process such as chemical mechanical polishing (CMP) is conducted to remove all of the reflective layer **82**, all of the damaged layer **88**, and part of the IMD layer **62** on the MRAM region **14** and logic region **16** so that the top surface of the IMD layer **62** on the MRAM region **14** is even with the top surface of the IMD layer **62** on the logic region **16**.

[0022] Next, as shown in FIG. **9**, a pattern transfer process is conducted by using a patterned mask (not shown) to remove part of the IMD layer **62**, part of the IMD layer **30**, and part of the stop layer **28** on the logic region **16** to form a contact hole (not shown) exposing the metal interconnection **26** underneath and conductive materials are deposited into the contact hole afterwards. For instance, a barrier layer selected from the group consisting of titanium (Ti), titanium nitride (TiN), tantalum (Ta), and tantalum nitride (TaN) and metal layer selected from the group consisting of tungsten (W), copper (Cu), aluminum (Al), titanium aluminide (TiAl), and cobalt tungsten phosphide (CoWP) could be deposited into the contact hole, and a planarizing process such as CMP could be conducted to remove part of the conductive materials including the aforementioned barrier layer and metal layer to form a metal interconnection **70** in the contact hole electrically connecting the metal interconnection **26**.

[0023] Next, as shown in FIG. **10**, a stop layer **72** is formed on the MRAM region **14** and logic region **16** to cover the IMD layer **62** and metal interconnection **70**, an IMD layer **74** is formed on the stop layer **72**, and one or more photo-etching process is conducted to remove part of the IMD layer **74**, part of the stop layer **72**, part of the IMD layer **62**, part of the passivation layer **58**, and part of the cap layer **56** on the MRAM region **14** and logic region **16** to form contact holes (not shown). Next, conductive materials are deposited into each of the contact holes and a planarizing process such as CMP is conducted to form metal interconnections **76** connecting the MTJs **52** and metal interconnection **70** underneath, in which the metal interconnections **76** on the MRAM region **14** directly contacts the top electrodes **50** underneath while the metal interconnection **76** on the logic region **16** directly contacts the metal interconnection **70** on the lower level. Next, another stop layer **78** is formed on the IMD layer **74** to cover the metal interconnections **76**.

[0024] In this embodiment, the stop layers **72** and **78** could be made of same or different materials, in which the two layers **72**, **78** could all include nitrogen doped carbide (NDC), silicon nitride, silicon carbon nitride (SiCN), or combination thereof. Similar to the metal interconnections formed previously, each of the metal interconnections **76** could be formed in the IMD layer **74** through a single damascene or dual damascene process. For instance, each of the metal interconnections **76** could further include a barrier layer and a metal layer, in which the barrier layer could be selected from the group consisting of titanium (Ti), titanium nitride (TiN), tantalum (Ta), and tantalum nitride (TaN) and the metal layer could be selected from the group consisting of tungsten (W), copper (Cu), aluminum (Al), titanium aluminide (TiAl), and cobalt tungsten phosphide (CoWP).

Since single damascene process and dual damascene process are well known to those skilled in the art, the details of which are not explained herein for the sake of brevity. This completes the fabrication of a semiconductor device according to an embodiment of the present invention. [0025] Overall, the present invention first forms at least a MTJ on a substrate, forming an IMD layer on the MTJ, performing an etching process to remove part of the IMD layer for forming a damaged layer directly on top of the MTJ and a trench exposing the surface of the damaged layer, and then conducting an UV curing process to slightly harden the damaged layer so that when a planarizing process is conducted afterwards to remove the damaged layer and the surrounding IMD layer it would be desirable to prevent collapse of the damaged layer and ensure no major step height is created between top surface of the IMD layer on the MRAM region and logic region. [0026] Those skilled in the art will readily observe that numerous modifications and alterations of the device and method may be made while retaining the teachings of the invention. Accordingly, the above disclosure should be construed as limited only by the metes and bounds of the appended claims.

Claims

1. A method for fabricating a semiconductor device, comprising: forming a magnetic tunneling junction (MTJ) on a substrate; forming a passivation layer on the MTJ, wherein a top surface of the passivation layer comprises a V-shape; forming a first inter-metal dielectric (IMD) layer on the passivation layer; removing part of the first IMD layer to form a trench on the MTJ; and performing a ultraviolet (UV) curing process.
 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the substrate comprises a MRAM region and a logic region, the method further comprising: forming a second inter-metal dielectric (IMD) layer on the substrate; forming a first metal interconnection on the MRAM region and a second metal interconnection on the logic region; forming the MTJ on the first metal interconnection; forming a cap layer on the MTJ; and forming the first IMD layer on the cap layer.
 3. The method of claim 2, further comprising: forming a reflective layer on the first IMD layer; removing the reflective layer and the first IMD layer to form the trench.
 4. The method of claim 2, wherein a top surface of the first IMD layer on the logic region is lower than a top surface of the first IMD layer on the MRAM region.
 5. The method of claim 1, further comprising removing part of the first IMD layer to form a damaged layer and the trench exposing the damaged layer.
 6. The method of claim 1, further comprising performing the UV curing process on the damaged layer.
 7. The method of claim 1, further comprising planarizing the first IMD layer after performing the UV curing process.
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