8 Double Junction Photo Transistor type Solar Cell

Under Construction

Yoshiaki Hagiwara

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A typical conventional solar cell is very similar to the N+P junction photodiode used in classical MOS image sensors with poor quantum efficiency.



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A typical solar panel on the market today has a large area semiconductor device structure of a single junction floating photodiode. Although fabricated by an economically simple semiconductor process technology, cares are taken to prevent the surface reflection loss.



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The physical principle under lining the photon to electron energy conversion process is identical both in a solar cell and an image sensor. Silicon wafers are attractive cost-wise and used widely.



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The sun light contains a large portion of the short wave energy spectrum. However the short wave blue light cannot penetrate the silicon wafer more than $0.2 \,\mu$ m in depth.



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However the conventional simple N+P junction type photodiode has the floating N+ type charge collecting surface layer of the majority carrier electron accumulation.



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The silicon surface has a flat potential and no electric filed to separate the photo electron and hole pairs generated by the sun light.

Since the short wave blue light incident to the surface cannot penetrate more than $0.2 \mu m$ depth in silicon, the electron and hole pairs generated by photons feel no electric field to separate each other.



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The electron and hole pairs generated by photons will stay where they were and eventually they will meet each other again and recombine to become heat.

In this way, the short wave blue energy spectrum of the sun light does not contribute the solar cell photon to electron energy conversion efficiency.



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Only the long wave length light low energy photons can be converted into electron energy in the depletion region of the very narrow width Xd. With the same reason, the classical simple N+P single floating junction photodiode used in the MOS type CTD image sensors had a poor short blue light sensitivity. So is the conventional N+P junction type solar cell of low efficiency.



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The IR light can reach the back P+P heavily doped region and if the photon energy is larger than the silicon energy gap EG = 1.10 eV, the electron and hole pairs can be generated and will contribute the solar cell photon energy conversion efficiency. This observation means that, if the heavily doped P+P profile is formed in the silicon surface of the light illumination side, the short wave light also contributes the solar cell photon energy conversion efficiency.



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The barrier potential V_{bar} is given as $V_{bar} = kT \ln (NA + /NA)$ and the barrier electric field region has the width X_{bar} which can be estimated roughly as X_{bar} = { 1 + ln (NA + /NA) } L_{debye} where the Debye length L_{debye} is given by L_{debye} = $\sqrt{\epsilon_{s_i} kT / N_{A^+}} = 0.0407 \mu m$ for NA + = 10000 e μm ,³ we then have X_{bar} = 7.91 L_{debye} = 0.322 µm for the low density P substrate of NA = 100 e μm .³ Here we use $\epsilon_{s_i} = 648 e / volt \cdot \mu m$ and kT = 0.0256 volt for our convenience.



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Instead in 1975, Hagiwara at Sony proposed a double junction P+NP type dynamic photo transistor with more useful extra function capability.





The dynamic photo transistor shown in Fig. 6 of JPA 1975-134985

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The cost is the issue. However many diligent research and development efforts have been performed to improve the solar cell energy conversion efficiency.





The dynamic photo transistor shown in Fig. 6 of JPA 1975-134985

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The double junction P+NP type dynamic photo transistor has been intensively studied and well understood now, being powered by the image sensor market.





The dynamic photo transistor shown in Fig. 6 of JPA 1975-134985

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The most important feature of the double junction P+NP type dynamic photo transistor is the complete charge transfer without a single photo electron loss.





The dynamic photo transistor shown in Fig. 6 of JPA 1975-134985

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On the other hand, as explained before, the conventional single junction type floating photodiode used in the present solar cells lose many photo electrons.





The dynamic photo transistor shown in Fig. 6 of JPA 1975-134985

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If the double junction type dynamic photo transistor is used for the solar cell in a proper process and device design, a single photo electron may not be lost.





The dynamic photo transistor shown in Fig. 6 of JPA 1975-134985

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And the 60% efficiency solar cell may not be a dream if all of the photo electron and hole pairs are instantly separated by the presence of an electric filed and prevented from being recombined again completely.



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Since the surface floating N+N region with no electric field has flat potential with stored photo electron charges, electron hole pairs at the surface cannot be separated and do not contribute to the quantum efficiency.



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The short wave length blue light cannot penetrate silicon crystal more than 0.2 μ m in depth. Most of the sun light energy is concentrated in the short wave blue light spectrum reaching only the floating N+ silicon surface vicinity of 0.2 micro meter in depth.



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In conventional the N+P single junction type solar cells, the N+P junction depletion region width Wd is very narrow.



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The large portion of the surface portion of the floating N+ region is used as the photo electron storage region which forms the sea of the photo electrons, with a flat photo electron sea level with no barrier electric field.



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Most of the electron hole pairs generated at the silicon surface are recombined and do not contribute to the solar cell quantum efficiency.



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Barrier electric field is needed to separate the photo electron and hole pairs in solar cells. There are two methods to create barrier electric field. One approach is to use the PN junction depletion region.



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The second approach utilizes the principle applied in a drift field bipolar transistor base region with the P+P barrier electric field.



Drift Field Bipolar Transistor with P+P Barrier Electric Field

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The second approach has been applied also in the form of the surface Pinned P+P Hole Accumulation Photodiode (HAD) for highly light sensitive imager sensors.



Yoshiaki . Hagiwara, "Multichip CMOS Image Sensor Structure for Flash Image Acquisition", IEEE 3DIC2019 conference in Sendai, Japan, Oct 2019

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The cross sectional view of a typical back light illuminated CMOS image sensor in the global shutter scheme with an MOS gate buffer memory (GSG) is shown with the surface Pinned P+P Hole Accumulation Photodiode (HAD) widely used now for highly light sensitive imager sensors.



Yoshiaki . Hagiwara, "Multichip CMOS Image Sensor Structure for Flash Image Acquisition", IEEE 3DIC2019 conference in Sendai, Japan, Oct 2019



Poisson equation $dV(x)/dx = \rho(x)/\mathcal{E}si$ was solved numerically for the electron potential V(x).



The space charge polarization $\rho(x) = D(x) - P(x)$ is also calculated where P(x) is the hole carrier concentration.



In this case study, the surface P+P Hole Accumulation Photodiode (HAD) was assumed to have a smoothly varying shape of a Gaussian function defined here as Gaus (X) = $\exp(-x^2)$.



For the P+P double surface ion implantation process of our case study we set with Rs << Ra and Ns >> N_A .

Ds(x) = (Ns - NA) Gaus(x / Rs) + NA Gaus(x / Ra) .



The total doping is then given as D(x) = Ds(x) + Ds(Xd - x) - Nd

where Nd is the N-type original substrate doping level.



If the surface P+P is a uniform abrupt doping level Ns and NA, the surface barrier potential drop V_{bar} can be obtained as

 $V_{bar} = kT \ln(Ns/N_A) = 0.0776 eV$ with kT = 0.0259 eV.



Salient physical parameters were set as

Nd =100 e
$$\mu$$
m⁻³, Ns =1 x 10⁵ e μ m⁻³ and N_A = 5 x 10⁷ e μ m⁻³.



The ion implantation parameters are chosen as $Rs = 0.57 \mu m$ and $Ra = 2.5 \mu m$ with the width of the device $X12 = 20 \mu m$.


The difference of the hole potential Ve(x) and the electron potential Vh(x) is the silicon band gap EG.

 $Vh(x) - Ve(x) = E_{G}$



Since the P+ regions in both side of the device are connected and pinned by the outside metal ground wire, the values of the hole potential Vh(x)at the both sides are defined as the ground level of 0 volt.



The curve shown in the figure is the electron potential Ve(x) for the photo electron charge carriers. Vh(x) = 0 V at the both edges while Ve(x) = - EG.



The empty potential well is pinned and is given as Vm = -0.203 eV. All the photo electrons are to be drained down into the center charge collecting and storage N+ region.



Other parameters obtained were $X1=0.828 \mu m$, $X2=1.726 \mu m$, $X3=6.315 \mu m$, $X4=6.705 \mu m$ and $X5=7.292 \mu m$.



The buried N region width is given as $W1=X7-X5=5.416 \mu m$. The charge capacity was computed as $Qd = 459.5 e \mu m$.²



The average doping level was then given as $<Nd>=Qd/W1=84.84 \text{ e }\mu\text{m}^{-3}$

which is close to the initial N type substrate doping level Nd = 80 e μm^{-3} .



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A conventional ion implantation gives a natural Gaussian P+P doping profile at the surface hole accumulation region which creates the barrier potential Vbar = kT ln (NA+/NA) at the vicinity of the silicon surface.



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A high energy photon with very short wave length can be collected very effectively. The output voltage Vout of this P+PNPP+ double junction Pinned Photodiode type solar cell is less than the silicon band gap $E_G = 1.1 \text{ eV}$.



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We need to keep the photo charge collecting empty potential well always empty for a newly generated photo electron to be captured and swiftly be removed.



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That is, the captured electron has to be removed immediately from the empty potential well to the adjacent charge collecting and storage N+ region.



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Another example of a symmetric P+PNPP+ junction type Pinned Photodiode (PPD) has two PN junction depletion region side by side, and also with the P+P barrier electric fields in both sides.



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All of them contribute to quantum efficiency. The photoelectrons must be collected into the center lightly doped N region, but must be transferred quickly to the adjacent floating N+ heavily doped outlet.



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In this way, we can always keep the charge collecting N region always empty of electrons at the fixed or pinned empty potential, Vm.



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For this case study we have the surface P+ doping level Ns (NA+) of 1 x 10^{7} e μm^{3} while P region doping level of 500 e μm^{3} and the pinned buried N region of 80 e μm^{3} .



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For this case study, having set the buried N region width to be 6.46 μ m, the minimum potential Vm of 0.887 was obtained. This means that the solar cell output margin is expected to be Vout < E_G-Vm = 1.100-0.887 volt = 0.223 volt.



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The ground level of the electron potential curve is set to be at the conduction band Ec of the P+ heavily doped surface accumulation region in this case.



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However, in this case study, the center depth of the buried N-region was designed to be 10 μm in depth in the silicon substrate.



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The visible light cannot reach the 10 μ m depth in silicon. The light reaching the 10 μ m depth in silicon is an IR light of a long wave length. In practical applications, IR filters are used.



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Even in solar cells, IR filters are attractive since they prevent from heating solar cell P/N by the sun light energy of the long wave length that cannot be converted to the electric energy.



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But IR filters themselves get hot. In solar cells, the sun light heating effect is a big issue. For 20 % efficient solar cells, 80 % sun light energy is lost into heat. If we can make 60% efficient solar cells, the heat issue may be lightened.



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Importance of Adjacent P+ Channel Stops in Pinned Photodiode

Hagiwara reported in his SSDM1978 paper the surface P+ ion implantation dosage of $Qd = 2 \times 10^{13} cm.^2$ In order to have more than 95 % efficient surface photo electron and hole separations at the P+ Pinned surface, since the short wave blue light cannot penetrate into the silicon crystal more than 0.2 µm in depth, it is desired to have the surface Debye Length Lpp = $\sqrt{\epsilon_{si} kT/Npp}$ to be around 0.01 µm. Set Qd = Lpp Npp. We have Npp = Qd / 0.01 μ m = 2 x 10¹⁹ cm⁻³ which is about the maximum degenerate silicon crystal impurity doping density. The surface P+ hole accumulation region must have this maximum degenerate hole carrier density, that has to be supplied at the P+ surface from the adjacent P+ channel stops. Pinned Photodiode must have an adjacent P+ channel stops region by necessity. Hagiwara reported in his SSDM1978 paper the P+NP junction type Pinned Photodiode with the adjacent P+ channel Stops in 1978.

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The first Pinned Photodiode was proposed by Hagiwara in 1975 in his Japanese patent applications JPA 1975-127646, JPA 1975-127647 and 1975-134985. Then, the P+NP junction type Pinned Photodiode was applied in the 380H x 488 V Frame Transfer type CCD image sensor for the first time and reported in the SSDM1978 conference in Tokyo in 1978. Subsequently, Hagiwara was invited at the CCD1979 conference in Edinburgh, Scotland UK in 1979, and then in the ECS1980 conference in St. Luis, USA in 1980, for this P+NP junction type Pinned Photodiode Image Sensor works. The short wave blue light cannot penetrate more than 0.1 µm into the silicon crystal in depth. The surface barrier potential VB of the Pinned P+P surface P+PNPP+ double junction type Pinned Photodiode is now applied to realize a very high quantum efficiency solar cell of more than 60 % expectedly. The surface barrier width WB for the photo electron and hole pairs separation was found to be more than four times of the estimated P+P Debye width by a simple calculation.

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Barrier Height VB and Barrier Width WB for the P+P abrupt doping profile

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$ \begin{array}{l} kT = 0.0259 \ eV \ , \ Esi = 648 \ e/volt \cdot um \\ R = 0.100000 \ um \ , Xc \ = 1.000000 \ um \\ N = 40000 \ dx = Xc/N = \ 0.000025 \ um \end{array} \begin{array}{l} Np = 100, \ Npp = 1000, \ Npp = 100.000000 \\ Lp = 0.409673 \ Lpp = 0.129550 \ Lppp = 0.409673 \\ VB = 1000* \ kT * \log(Npp/Nppp) = 59.636954 \\ Nr = D(x) = \ 431.091497 \ at \ x = R = 0.100000 \end{array} $	
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Photo Electron and Hole Pairs Separation at the P+P Pinned Surface Barrier Potential (VB) in a very high quantum efficiency P+PNPP+ junction Pinned Photo Diode Solar Cell proposed and applied for a patent (JPA 2020-131313) by Yoshiaki Hagiwara.



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Artificial Intelligent Image Sensor

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The surface P+P Pinned Surface Solar Cell with the surface P+P Gaussian doping slope is very important to create the surface barrier electric field for separating the photo electron and hole pairs generated by the short wave length blue light which cannot penetrate into the silicon crystal more than 0.2 µm in depth.