

光学学报

高耐压和低暗计数 SiC 紫外雪崩光电二极管

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摘要 碳化硅(SiC)雪崩光电二极管(APD)是一种独具优势的微弱紫外光探测器, 其过偏压承受能力是确保器件可靠工作的一个重要因素。本工作设计并制备了穿通型 SiC 吸收层-电荷控制层-雪崩倍增层分离(SACM)APD。基于这种结构, 器件电场从雪崩倍增层向吸收层扩展, 从而减小了雪崩倍增层内电场强度变化率, 最终将器件过偏压承受能力提高到 10 V; 得益于吸收层的分压, 雪崩倍增层的电场强度得到有效降低, 载流子隧穿可能性减小, 这能够有效降低器件暗计数, 从而有利于提高器件探测灵敏度; 此外, 设计的 SiC SACM APD 倾斜台面仅刻蚀到雪崩倍增层上表面, 这能够让器件填充因子提高至约 60%, 显著改善了深刻蚀导致的传统 SACM 结构有效光敏区域减小的问题。

关键词 探测器; 雪崩光电二极管; 碳化硅; 微弱紫外光探测器; 暗计数; 过偏压承受能力

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1 引言

微弱紫外光探测或紫外单光子探测在火灾预警、电晕检测、导弹尾焰检测、深空检测和紫外通信等领域具有广泛的应用前景^[1-6]。与常用的硅(Si)材料相比, 碳化硅(SiC)作为一种宽禁带半导体材料, 响应截止波长位于 380 nm, 具有可见光盲特性, 临界电场强度在 3 MV/cm 以上, 耐高压特性好, 能够适用于大功率的电子器件, 其材料外延技术成熟, 被认为是构建微弱紫外光探测器的优选材料^[7-8]。

目前, 用于单光子探测的器件主要有光电倍增管(PMT)和雪崩光电二极管(APD)。其中, APD 具有质量小、功耗低、量子效率(QE)高、增益大和便于集成等优势, 是当前紫外单光子探测领域一个主流的发展方向。APD 是一种凭借内部雪崩倍增实现微弱光探测的光电二极管^[9-11]。当 APD 两端外加反向偏压时, 在耗尽区电场的作用下, 光生载流子向相反的方向运动: 光生电子向 n 型层漂移, 光生空穴向 p 型层漂移。光生载流子的漂移速度与电场强度和载流子加速距离有关, 当电场强度足够大时, 光生载流子在耗尽区内获得足够的动能, 与晶格发生碰撞, 产生新的电子空穴对。同样地, 这些电离的电子空穴对将继续在电场中被加速, 也与晶格碰撞产生更多的电子空穴对。因此, 耗尽区会发生链式的载流子碰撞离化过程, 以实现对微弱信号的放大。

目前, SiC APD 的制备工艺已经比较成熟, 器件

增益达到 $10^5 \sim 10^6$, 峰值量子效率达到 50% 以上, 在微弱紫外光探测领域表现出巨大的潜力^[12-15]。SiC APD 在进行微弱光探测时长期处于临界电场条件下, 此时, 器件电流对于偏压极度敏感, 这容易导致器件发生不可逆热击穿, 因此过偏压承受能力是关系器件工作稳定性的一个关键性能; 另外, 在进行微弱紫外光探测时, 暗计数是决定器件探测灵敏度的重要参数。然而, 已报道的 SiC APD 表现出的过偏压都较低, 并且暗计数较大。Li 等^[15] 报道的 SiC PIN 结型 APD 探测阵列的过偏压仅测试到 2 V, 而对应的暗计数达到了 5 Hz/ μm^2 。Zhou 等^[16] 报道的 SiC APD 过偏压也只测试到 3 V, 对应的暗计数达到了 10~15 Hz/ μm^2 。本文设计并制备了具有高耐压特性的 SiC 吸收层-电荷控制层-雪崩倍增层分离(SACM)APD, 通过将器件雪崩击穿时的电场分布从雪崩倍增层扩展到电荷控制层和吸收层, 最终有效地将器件过偏压极值提升到 10 V, 且此时器件的暗计数仍能够保持在约 3.7 Hz/ μm^2 (当过偏压设置为 3 V 时, 器件暗计数仅为 0.3 Hz/ μm^2), 这均与器件低的雪崩倍增层电场强度变化率有关。另外, 对于传统的 SiC SACM APD, 倾斜台面均刻蚀到底部接触层, 刻蚀深度达到 2 μm 左右, 台面边缘占据了较大的器件面积, 严重缩小了器件有效光敏区域^[17-19], 为此, 本工作设计了新型双台面结构 SiC SACM APD, 通过将台面刻蚀深度控制在雪崩倍增层上表面, 成功将器件填充因子提高到约 60%。

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2 器件制备

器件制备于 n^+ 型4H-SiC衬底上,如图1所示,器件外延结构由下而上分别为一层 $10\ \mu\text{m}$ p型接触层(受主掺杂浓度 $N_A=3\times 10^{18}\ \text{cm}^{-3}$)、一层 $0.65\ \mu\text{m}$ n-雪崩倍增层(施主掺杂浓度 $N_D=1.5\times 10^{16}\ \text{cm}^{-3}$)、一层 $0.15\ \mu\text{m}$ n型电荷控制层($N_D=6\times 10^{17}\ \text{cm}^{-3}$)、一层 $0.6\ \mu\text{m}$ n-吸收层($N_D=2\times 10^{16}\ \text{cm}^{-3}$)和一层 $0.2\ \mu\text{m}$ n型接触层($N_D=2\times 10^{18}\ \text{cm}^{-3}$),器件直径为 $100\ \mu\text{m}$ 。首先,利用感应耦合等离子体刻蚀系统在 SF_6/O_2 的氛围下对外延片进行刻蚀,刻蚀深度约为 $1.05\ \mu\text{m}$,即刻蚀到雪崩倍增层的上表面,形成半台面结构。为了抑制器件边缘电场,采用光刻胶回流技术获得倾斜角度

约为 5° 的小倾角台面^[12]。利用感应耦合等离子体刻蚀系统对外延片进行垂直台面刻蚀,刻蚀到底部接触层,这样的垂直台面在相邻APD像素间能够形成深槽隔离。然后采用 SiO_2 层对外延片表面进行钝化处理,具体步骤为:将外延片置于高温管式炉中氧化 $1\ \text{h}$,随后利用氢氟酸溶液腐蚀掉氧化层,将外延片放置于高温管式炉中氧化 $3\ \text{h}$,利用等离子体增强化学的气相沉积法(PECVD)生长 $1\ \mu\text{m}$ SiO_2 ,最后进行欧姆接触电极制备。欧姆接触电极制备的具体过程是:光刻显影后,通过湿法腐蚀获得p型和n型电极窗口;利用电子束蒸发系统蒸镀p型和n型电极,电极金属层依次为 $\text{Ni}/\text{Ti}/\text{Al}/\text{Au}$ (厚度 $35\ \text{nm}/50\ \text{nm}/100\ \text{nm}/100\ \text{nm}$);利用快速热退火系统将外延片在 $850\ ^\circ\text{C}$ 氮气氛围下退火 $3\ \text{min}$ 。

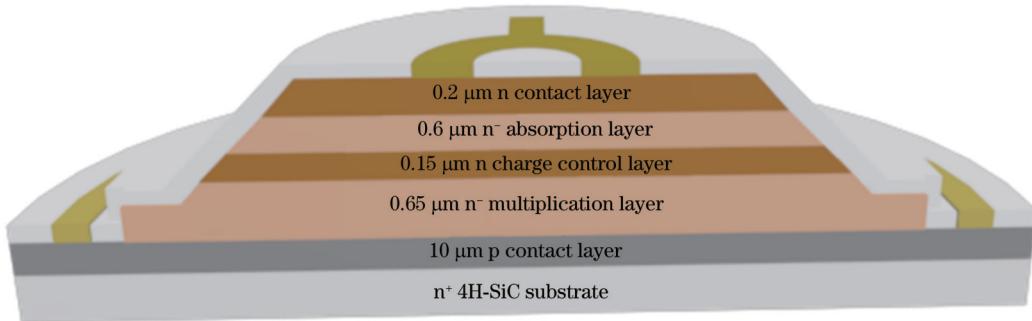


图1 双台面SiC SACM APD的剖面结构示意图

Fig. 1 Cross section schematic of double-mesa SiC SACM APD

本工作中制备的SiC SACM APD采用双台面结构,包括一个小倾角半台面和一个垂直台面,通过减小倾斜台面的刻蚀深度成功制备出填充因子约为58%的SACM结构APD。若本工作中的外延结构采用传统台面深度,器件填充因子仅约为36%。可见,小倾角半台面结构SiC SACM APD的填充因子是传统SiC SACM APD的约1.6倍。此外,从倾斜台面的下台面继续将器件垂直刻蚀至底部接触层,这不仅可以有效阻断载流子扩散,还能有效抑制光子在SiC/钝化层界面的反射,从而减小相邻像素对器件发射光子的吸收,降低器件间串扰可能性,这对于构建紫外成像探测阵列具有重要意义^[20]。

3 分析与讨论

在器件运行过程中,耗尽区内电场分布均匀性是影响器件稳定性和可靠性的关键因素,因此在器件制备过程中,需要考虑器件结构对电场分布的调控行为。其中,半台面倾斜结构已经被证明是有利的SiC PIN结型APD电场分布均匀性的器件结构^[12,15]。为了验证本工作中SiC SACM APD半台面倾斜结构对边缘电场的抑制作用,采用Silvaco软件模拟了器件在雪崩状态下的电场分布,如图2(a)所示。器件台面附近水平电场强度[图2(b)]的模拟结果显示:当器件处于雪崩击穿状态时,体内电场明显高于边缘电场,这表明半

台面刻蚀能够有效抑制SiC SACM APD器件的边缘电场,这对于器件在高压下的可靠工作是十分有利的。另外,器件纵向电场分布[图2(c)]显示:当雪崩倍增层电场强度达到临界击穿场强时,吸收层和电荷控制层也存在 $10^5\sim 10^6\ \text{V}/\text{cm}$ 量级的电场,称这种反向击穿时吸收层、电荷控制层和雪崩倍增层均具有强电场的SACM APD为穿通型SACM APD。

图3(a)所示为器件在室温下的光电流、暗电流和增益曲线。在雪崩击穿前,器件的暗电流一直保持在 $0.1\ \text{pA}$ 量级,对应的暗电流密度约为 $2.5\ \text{nA}/\text{cm}^2$ 。器件发生雪崩击穿时,光电流和暗电流急剧增加,此时,击穿电压约为 $345.5\ \text{V}$ 。若把单位增益定义在 $25\ \text{V}$,当电压为 $347.5\ \text{V}$ 时,器件增益达到 10^6 。为了研究本文采用的穿通型SiC SACM APD和SiC PIN结型APD的区别,比较了两种器件在击穿电压附近的暗电流曲线,如图3(b)所示。当反向偏压从 $340\ \text{V}$ 增加到 $354\ \text{V}$,SiC SACM APD电流从 $10\ \text{nA}$ 增加到 $1\ \mu\text{A}$;当反向偏压从 $244\ \text{V}$ 增加到 $249\ \text{V}$,SiC PIN结型APD电流从 $10.5\ \text{nA}$ 增加到 $50\ \mu\text{A}$ 。由此可见,随着反向电压增加,穿通型SiC SACM APD雪崩电流较SiC PIN结型APD增加相对缓慢,这与器件电场强度的仿真结果相吻合。仿真结果表明:当穿通型SiC SACM APD工作在雪崩状态时,器件吸收层和电荷控制层同样具有 $10^5\sim 10^6\ \text{V}/\text{cm}$ 的强电场,这说明施加在器件两端的反

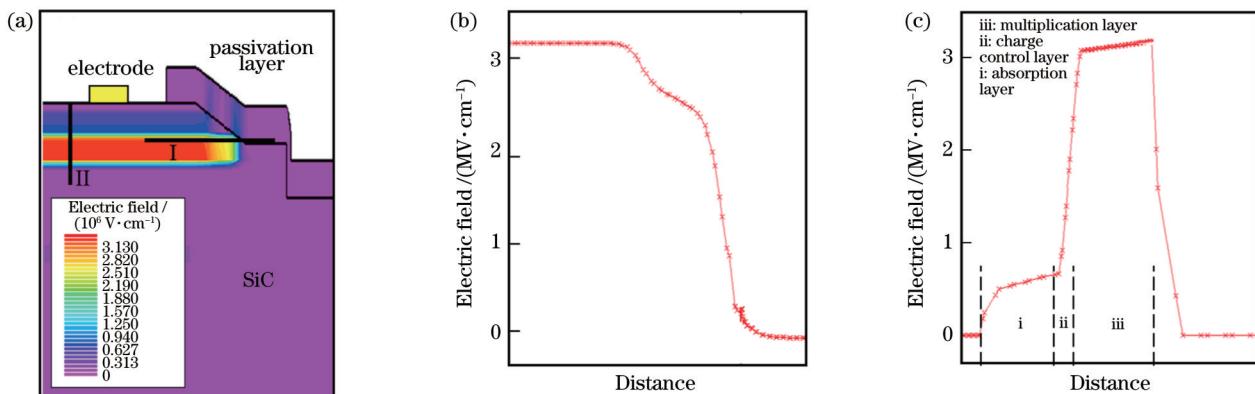


图 2 双台面结构 SiC SACM APD 电场强度模拟结果。(a)二维电场分布;(b)二维电场分布中线 I 处的一维水平电场分布;(c)二维电场分布中线 II 处的一维垂直电场分布

Fig. 2 Simulated electric field distributions of double mesa SiC SACM APD. (a) 2D electric field distribution; (b) 1D horizontal electrical field profile along line I marked in 2D electrical field profile; (c) 1D vertical electrical field profile along line II marked in 2D electrical field profile

向偏压并非完全作用于雪崩倍增层,低的雪崩倍增层电场强度变化率使得器件的雪崩电流变化随电压的增加相对缓慢,这有利于提升器件的耐压性能,使器件能够在更高的过偏压下可靠工作。另外,对于用来紫外成像的探测阵列而言,实现像素点间高的击穿电压一致性是一个巨大的挑战^[15, 21-22]。在探测阵列工作中,对每个像素点施加相同的工作电压,但不同器件间的击穿电压会存在一定范围的波动,这对于成像效果影响很大,此时,降低雪崩电流随反向电压的增加

速率能够改善探测阵列中像素点间击穿电压均匀性,从而提高各像素点对微弱紫外光探测效率的一致性,有助于减小紫外成像误差。综上所述,相较于 SiC PIN 结型 APD,本工作中的穿通型 SiC SACM APD 虽然损失了一部分载流子雪崩电流,但在器件过偏压承受性上有了较大提升,这对于器件的长期可靠工作是十分有利的,同时,更小斜率的电流增长能够给探测阵列带来更好的击穿电压均匀性,这对于实现紫外成像是十分关键的。

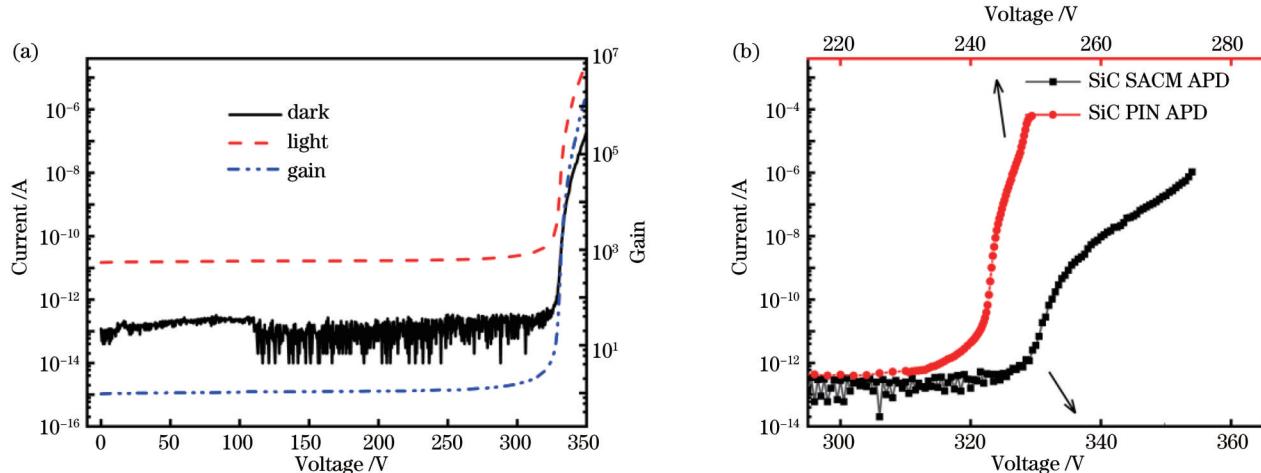


图 3 电流-电压曲线。(a) SiC SACM APD 的电流-电压和增益曲线;(b) SiC SACM APD 和 PIN 结型 APD 暗电流曲线
Fig. 3 Current-voltage curves. (a) Current-voltage and gain curves of SiC SACM APD; (b) dark current curves of SiC SACM APD and SiC PIN APD

由于 SiC APD 的暗计数主要来源于缺陷辅助隧穿,而隧穿可能性又与电场强度直接相关,因此雪崩倍增层电场强度变化率还将直接影响器件的暗计数^[23]。为了分析这个问题,采用如图 4 所示的被动淬灭电路对器件的暗计数进行表征。在本测试电路中:APD 器件由 Keithley 237 源表提供高于击穿电压的反向偏压,并与淬灭电阻(阻值 $R_L = 50 \text{ k}\Omega$)和取样电阻(阻值

$R_s = 100 \Omega$)串联;Tektronix DPO 4032 示波器和斯坦福 SR400 光子计数器与取样电阻并联,用于观测和统计雪崩脉冲信号。图 5(a)所示为穿通型 SiC SACM APD 和 SiC PIN 结型 APD 的暗计数随过偏压的变化曲线。当过偏压为 4 V 时,穿通型 SiC SACM APD 的暗计数约为 $0.5 \text{ Hz}/\mu\text{m}^2$,而 SiC PIN 结型 APD 的暗计数约为 $17 \text{ Hz}/\mu\text{m}^2$ 。对于低雪崩倍增层电场强度变化

率的穿通型SiC SACM APD,载流子隧穿概率低,能够实现更低的暗计数水平,提高器件的探测灵敏度。另外,采用光源为280 nm的发光二极管表征穿通型SiC SACM APD的单光子探测效率,估算的入射光子流密度约为680 photon/(s· μm^2)。图5(b)描述了穿通型SiC SACM APD的暗计数-单光子探测效率行为曲线。当暗计数约为1 Hz/ μm^2 时,单光子探测效率达到约8.4%;当暗计数约为2.5 Hz/ μm^2 时,单光子探测效率达到约14%,明显优于已报道的SiC PIN结型APD的微弱紫外光探测能力^[14,16,23]。穿通型SiC SACM APD高单光子探测效率同样得益于器件电场分布,当SiC吸收入射紫外光产生光生空穴时,光生空穴在吸收层电场(10^5 V/cm 量级)的作用下向电荷控制层漂移,进入电荷层后,又在 10^6 V/cm 量级的电场作用下向雪崩倍增层漂移,经过二次加速的光生空穴在进入

雪崩倍增层后将具有更高的碰撞离化可能性,因此器件的单光子探测效率也更高。

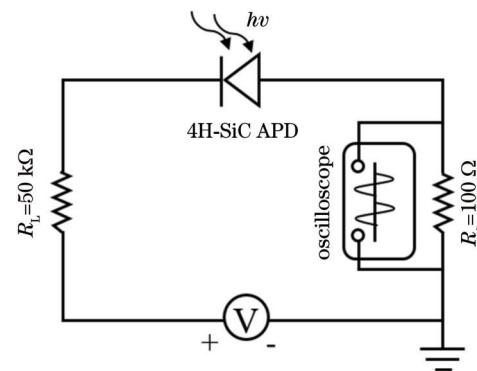


图4 被动淬灭电路示意图

Fig. 4 Schematic diagram of passive quenching circuit

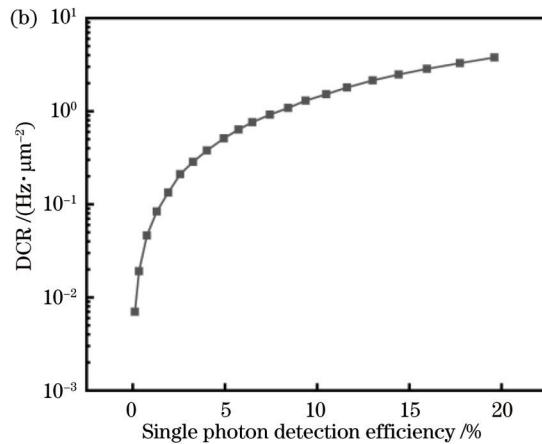
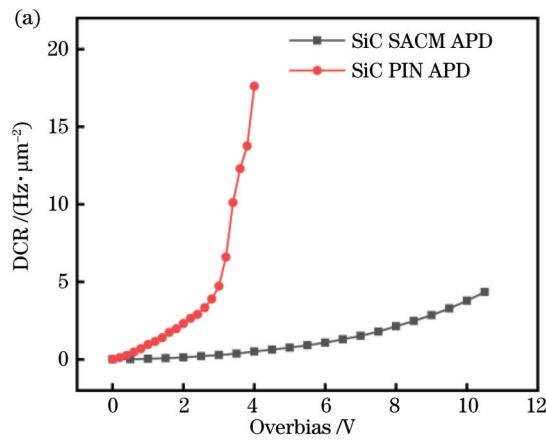


图5 单光子探测性能曲线。(a) SiC SACM APD 和 SiC PIN 结型 APD 暗计数(DCR)-过偏压曲线;(b) SiC SACM APD 暗计数-单光子探测效率(SPDE)曲线

Fig. 5 Single photon detection performance curves. (a) DCR-overbias curves of SiC SACM APD and SiC PIN APD; (b) DCR-SPDE curve of SiC SACM APD

为了分析器件的光响应特性,对零偏压下SiC SACM APD的响应行为进行了表征,测试系统采用氘灯作为光源,利用Horiba iHR320单色仪分光以获得连续单色光,测试得到的响应曲线如图6所示。器件紫外光/可见光抑制比达到约 1×10^4 ,具有优异的可见响应抑制效果;器件的峰值量子效率位于285 nm处,响应度约为0.1464,对应的最高量子效率达到了约61.5%,高的量子效率表明SiC对于该波段具有强烈的吸收,器件响应的截止波长位于380 nm左右,这与4H-SiC材料的禁带宽度相吻合。

4 结 论

本工作设计并制备了穿通型SiC SACM APD,当器件发生雪崩击穿时,电场强度分布从雪崩倍增层扩展到吸收层和电荷控制层,器件倍增层电场强度随反向偏压的变化率降低,表现出更慢的雪崩电流变化行为,这有助于提升器件的耐压性能。同时,较慢雪崩电

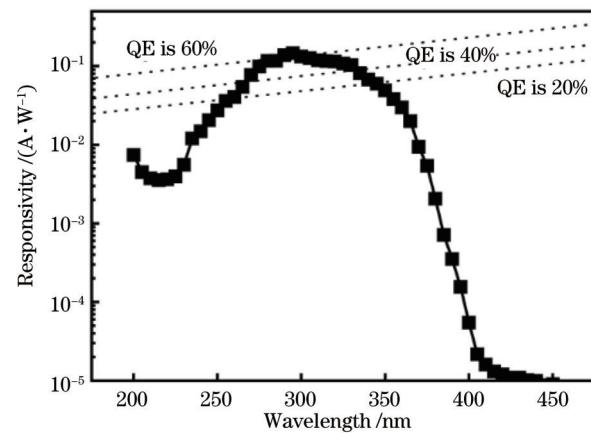


图6 室温下SiC SACM APD的响应度曲线
Fig. 6 Spectral response curve of SiC SACM APD at room temperature

流变化器件可以改善紫外成像阵列像素点间击穿电压波动,这对于实现高质量微弱紫外光成像具有重要意义。

义。此外,本工作设计的SiC SACM APD采用半台面刻蚀,在保证器件可靠工作的同时,将器件的填充因子提高至约60%,这对于提高成像阵列芯片的集成度是有利的。

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SiC UV Avalanche Photodiode with High Voltage Withstanding Capability and Low Dark Count Rate

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Abstract

Objective As a weak ultraviolet (UV) detector with unique advantages, SiC avalanche photodiodes (APDs) are imperative in many key fields, such as environmental monitoring, corona detection, missile plume detection, deep space detection, and ultraviolet communication. A SiC APD is highly susceptible to irreversible thermal breakdown as its current is extremely sensitive to the bias voltage when it works under the condition of a critical electric field. Therefore, the overbias voltage withstanding capability of a SiC APD is a key issue affecting the working stability of the APD. In

addition, the dark count rate is an important parameter that determines the detection sensitivity of the APD in weak UV detection. However, the reported SiC APDs exhibit low overbias voltage withstand capabilities and high dark count rates. SiC APDs with high overbias voltage withstand capabilities and low dark count rate have been designed and fabricated in this study.

Methods In this study, SiC separated-absorption-charge-multiplication (SACM) APDs have been designed and fabricated. The SiC APDs are fabricated on n^+ type 4H-SiC substrates (Fig. 1). The epitaxial structure of the SiC APDs consists of a 10- μm p type contact layer, a 0.65- μm n^- type multiplication layer, a 0.15- μm n type charge control layer, a 0.6- μm n^- type absorption layer, and a 0.2- μm n type contact layer from bottom to top. The fabrication process starts with mesa etching down to the multiplication layer (to an etching depth of 1.05 μm) by inductively coupled plasma etching. The photoresist reflow technique is employed to obtain a positive beveled mesa (with a small slope angle of about 5°) and thereby prevent mesa edge breakdown. Then, the epitaxial wafer is etched to the bottom contact layer. Subsequently, the APD surface is passivated by a thermal oxidation layer and then by a SiO_2 layer deposited by plasma-enhanced chemical vapor deposition. Both the n-type and p-type Ohmic contact electrodes adopt Ni/Ti/Al/Au (35 nm/50 nm/100 nm/100 nm) layers deposited by e-beam evaporation. Finally, the epitaxial structure is annealed by rapid thermal annealing at 850 °C for 3 min in N_2 atmosphere.

Results and Discussions During the operation of APDs, the uniform distribution of the electric field in the depletion region is a key factor affecting the stability and reliability of the APDs. Therefore, the regulation of electric field distribution by the structure of APDs needs to be considered during APD fabrication. The electric field distribution of the APD at avalanche state is simulated by Silvaco to verify the suppression effect of the SiC SACM APD with a beveled partial mesa structure on the edge electric field (Fig. 2). The results show that partial mesa etching can effectively suppress the peak edge electric field of SiC SACM APDs, and the SACM APD fabricated in this study is a reach-through SACM APD as a high electric field punches through all the active layers. The SACM APD with a partial mesa structure achieves a fill factor of about 58%, which is 1.6 times that of the conventional SACM APD. The current-voltage curves of the reach-through SiC SACM APD and the SiC positive-intrinsic-negative (PIN) APD (Fig. 3) show that the avalanche current of the reach-through SiC SACM APD increases slower than that of the SiC PIN APD. The reverse bias voltage applied to the device does not completely act on the multiplication layer. A small change rate of the electric field intensity at the multiplication layer results in a slow increase in the avalanche current with the voltage, which is beneficial to improving the voltage withstand performance of the device. In addition, the dark count rate of the reach-through SiC SACM APD is only 0.5 Hz/ μm^2 when the over-bias voltage is 4 V, and the single-photon detection efficiency of the device reaches 8.4% when the dark count rate is 1 Hz/ μm^2 (Fig. 5). The low carrier tunneling probability and high photon avalanche probability of the device lead to the low dark count rate and high single-photon detection efficiency of the punch-through SiC SACM APD, and they all contribute to the extension of the electric field to the absorption layer.

Conclusions In this study, a reach-through SiC SACM APD is designed and fabricated. When the device undergoes avalanche breakdown, the electric field extends from the multiplication layer to the absorption layer and the charge control layer. The change rate of the electric field at the multiplication layer decreases, and the avalanche current exhibits a smaller slope accordingly, which is conducive to improving the over-bias voltage withstand capability of APDs. Moreover, APDs with a small-slope avalanche current can alleviate the breakdown voltage fluctuation among the pixels in the UV imaging array, which is of great significance for high-quality weak UV imaging. In addition, partial mesa etching adopted for the SiC SACM APD designed in this study not only ensures the reliable operation of the device but also increases the fill factor of the device to about 60%, which is beneficial for improving the integration level of imaging array chips.

Key words detectors; avalanche photodiode; SiC; weak ultraviolet detector; dark count rate; overbias withstand capability