

TITLE OF INVENTION

Halftone Phase Shift Mask Blank, Halftone Phase Shift Mask,
and Pattern Exposure Method

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TECHNICAL FIELD

15 This invention relates to a halftone phase shift mask
for use in the microfabrication of semiconductor integrated
circuits or the like, a halftone phase shift mask blank, and
a pattern exposure method using the mask.

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BACKGROUND ART

 In the field of semiconductor technology, research and
development efforts are continued for further miniaturization
of pattern features. Recently, as advances including
miniaturization of circuit patterns, thinning of interconnect
25 patterns and miniaturization of contact hole patterns for
connection between cell-constituting layers are in progress
to comply with higher integration density of LSIs, there is
an increasing demand for the micropatterning technology.
Accordingly, in conjunction with the technology for
30 manufacturing photomasks used in the exposure step of the
photolithographic microfabrication process, it is desired to
have a technique of forming a more fine and accurate circuit
pattern or mask pattern.

In general, reduction projection is employed when patterns are formed on semiconductor substrates by photolithography. Thus the size of pattern features formed on a photomask is about 4 times the size of pattern features formed on a semiconductor substrate. In the current photolithography technology, the size of circuit patterns printed is significantly smaller than the wavelength of light used for exposure. Therefore, if a photomask pattern is formed simply by multiplying the size of circuit pattern 4 times, the desired pattern is not transferred to a resist film on a semiconductor substrate due to optical interference and other effects during exposure.

Sometimes, optical interference and other effects during exposure are mitigated by forming the pattern on a photomask to a more complex shape than the actual circuit pattern. Such a complex pattern shape may be designed, for example, by incorporating optical proximity correction (OPC) into the actual circuit pattern. Also, attempts are made to apply the resolution enhancement technology (RET) such as modified illumination, immersion lithography or double exposure (or double patterning) lithography, to meet the demand for miniaturization and higher accuracy of patterns.

The phase shift method is used as one of the RET. The phase shift method is by forming a pattern of film capable of phase reversal of approximately 180 degrees on a photomask, such that contrast may be improved by utilizing optical interference. One of the photomasks adapted for the phase shift method is a halftone phase shift mask. Typically, the halftone phase shift mask includes a substrate of quartz or similar material which is transparent to exposure light, and a mask pattern of halftone phase shift film formed on the substrate, capable of providing a phase shift of approximately 180 degrees and having an insufficient transmittance to

contribute to pattern formation. As the halftone phase shift mask, Patent Document 1 (JP-A H07-140635) proposes a mask having a halftone phase shift film of molybdenum silicide oxide (MoSiO) or molybdenum silicide oxynitride (MoSiON).

5 For the purpose of forming finer images by photolithography, light of shorter wavelength is used as the light source. In the currently most advanced stage of lithography process, the exposure light source has made a transition from KrF excimer laser (248 nm) to ArF excimer laser
10 (193 nm). The lithography using ArF excimer laser light of greater energy was found to cause damages to the mask, which were not observed with KrF excimer laser light. One problem is that on continuous use of the photomask, foreign matter-like growth defects form on the photomask. These growth defects
15 are also known as "haze". The source of haze formation was formerly believed to reside in the growth of ammonium sulfate crystals on the mask pattern surface. It is currently believed that organic matter participates in haze formation as well.

 Some approaches are known to overcome the haze problem.
20 With respect to the growth defects formed on the photomask upon long-term irradiation of ArF excimer laser light, for example, Patent Document 2 (JP-A 2008-276002) describes that if the photomask is cleaned at a predetermined stage, then it can be continuously used.

25 As the exposure dose of ArF excimer laser light irradiated for pattern transfer increases, the photomask is given damage different from haze; and the size of the mask pattern changes in accordance with the cumulative irradiation energy dose, as reported in Non-Patent Document 1 (Thomas
30 Faure et al., "Characterization of binary and attenuated phase shift mask blanks for 32 nm mask fabrication," Proc. of SPIE, vol. 7122, pp 712209-1 to 712209-12). This problem is that as the cumulative irradiation energy dose increases

during long-term irradiation of ArF excimer laser light, a layer of a substance which is considered to be an oxide of the pattern material grows outside the film pattern, whereby the pattern width changes. It is also reported that the mask
5 once damaged cannot be restored by cleaning with AMP (aqueous ammonia/hydrogen peroxide) as used in the above-mentioned haze removal or with SPM (sulfuric acid/hydrogen peroxide). It is believed that the damage source is utterly different.

Non-Patent Document 1 points out that upon exposure of
10 a circuit pattern through a halftone phase shift mask which is the mask technology useful in expanding the depth of focus, substantial degradation is induced by pattern size variation resulting from alteration of a transition metal/silicon base material film such as MoSi base material film by irradiation
15 of ArF excimer laser light (this degradation is referred to as "pattern size variation degradation"). Then, in order to use an expensive photomask over a long period of time, it is necessary to address the pattern size variation degradation by irradiation of ArF excimer laser light.

20 As pointed out in Non-Patent Document 1, the pattern size variation degradation by irradiation of short wavelength light, typically ArF excimer laser light does scarcely occur when light is irradiated in a dry air atmosphere. Exposure in a dry air atmosphere is regarded as a new approach for inhibiting
25 the pattern size variation degradation. However, the control of a dry air atmosphere adds an extra unit to the exposure system and gives rise to electrostatic and other problems to be managed, leading to an increased expense. Under the circumstances, it is necessary to enable long-term exposure
30 in a common atmosphere that does not need complete removal of humidity (typically having a humidity of around 50%).

The photomasks used in the lithography using ArF excimer laser light as light source include halftone phase

shift masks having a halftone phase shift film of a silicon base material containing a transition metal, typically molybdenum. This silicon base material is mainly composed of a transition metal and silicon, and further contains oxygen and/or nitrogen as light element (e.g., Patent Document 1). Suitable transition metals used include Mo, Zr, Ta, W, and Ti. Among others, Mo is most often used (e.g., Patent Document 1). Sometimes a second transition metal is added (e.g., Patent Document 3). For the light-shielding film, silicon base materials containing a transition metal, typically molybdenum are also used. However, when a photomask using such transition metal-containing silicon base material is exposed to a large dose of high-energy radiation, the mask undergoes significant pattern size variation degradation by irradiation of high-energy radiation. Then the service lifetime of the photomask is shorter than the requirement.

It is a serious problem that when a photomask pattern on a halftone phase shift mask is irradiated with short-wavelength light, typically ArF excimer laser light, the photomask pattern for exposure experiences a variation of line width, that is, "pattern size variation degradation." The permissible threshold of pattern width differs with the type of photomask pattern, especially the pattern rule applied thereto. If variations are small, the mask may be further used by correcting the exposure conditions and resetting the irradiation conditions of an exposure system. For example, in the lithography for forming semiconductor circuits complying with the pattern rule of 22 nm, the variation of mask pattern line width must fall within approximately ± 5 nm. However, if a pattern width variation is large, there is a possibility that the variation has an in-plane distribution on the photomask. Also in the further miniaturization technology, an auxiliary pattern having an

ultrafine size of less than 100 nm is formed on the mask.
For the purpose of pattern miniaturization on these masks and
from the aspect of an increase of mask processing cost by
complication of mask pattern, there is a need for a halftone
5 phase shift mask film which experiences minimal pattern size
variation degradation and allows for repeated exposure.

Citation List

Patent Document 1: JP-A H07-140635
Patent Document 2: JP-A 2008-276002 (USP 7941767)
10 Patent Document 3: JP-A 2004-133029
Patent Document 4: JP-A 2007-033469
Patent Document 5: JP-A 2007-233179
Patent Document 6: JP-A 2007-241065
Non-Patent Document 1: Thomas Faure et al.,
15 "Characterization of binary and
attenuated phase shift mask
blanks for 32 nm mask
fabrication," Proc. of SPIE, vol.
7122, pp 712209-1 to 712209-12

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SUMMARY OF INVENTION

With respect to the phase shift film, a thinner film is
advantageous for pattern formation and effective for reducing
3D effect. Thus a thinner film is required in order for
25 photolithography to form a finer size pattern.

On use of a halftone phase shift mask blank in the
halftone phase shift mask producing process, if foreign
deposits are on the mask blank, they cause defects to the
pattern. To remove foreign deposits, the halftone phase
30 shift mask blank is cleaned many times during the mask
producing process. Further, when the halftone phase shift
mask thus produced is used in the photolithography process,

the mask is also repeatedly cleaned even if the mask itself is free of pattern defects, for the reason that if foreign deposits settle on the mask during the photolithography process, a semiconductor substrate which is patterned using that mask eventually bears pattern-transfer failures.

For removing foreign deposits from the halftone phase shift mask blank or mask, chemical cleaning is applied in most cases, using SPM, ozone water or AMP. SPM is a sulfuric acid/hydrogen peroxide mixture which is a cleaning agent having strong oxidizing action. Ozone water is water having ozone dissolved therein and used as a replacement of SPM. AMP is an aqueous ammonia/hydrogen peroxide mixture. When the mask blank or mask having organic foreign deposits on its surface is immersed in the AMP cleaning liquid, the organic foreign deposits are liberated and removed from the surface under the dissolving action of ammonia and the oxidizing action of hydrogen peroxide.

Although the chemical cleaning with such chemical liquid is necessary for removing foreign deposits such as particles and contaminants on the halftone phase shift mask blank or mask, the chemical cleaning can damage the halftone phase shift film on the mask blank or mask. For example, if the surface of a halftone phase shift film is altered by chemical cleaning, the optical properties that the film originally possesses can be changed. In addition, chemical cleaning of the halftone phase shift mask blank or mask is repeatedly carried out. It is thus necessary to minimize any property change (e.g., phase shift change) of the halftone phase shift film during every cleaning step.

An object of the invention is to provide a halftone phase shift mask blank and halftone phase shift mask having a halftone phase shift film which is thin enough to be advantageous for pattern formation and 3D effect reduction

while maintaining a necessary phase shift and transmittance for the halftone phase shift function to comply with pattern size miniaturization, and has chemical resistance against chemical cleaning. Another object is to provide a pattern exposure method using the halftone phase shift mask.

Aiming to develop a halftone phase shift film having a reduced thickness and improved chemical resistance while maintaining a necessary phase shift and transmittance for the halftone phase shift function, the inventors made a study on a halftone phase shift film containing a transition metal, typically molybdenum which is commonly used as the halftone phase shift film. However, when a transition metal or oxygen is added to a halftone phase shift film, there arise problems that the refractive index of the film having a predetermined transmittance is reduced in proportion to the amount of transition metal or oxygen added, the film must be thick to gain a necessary phase shift for the phase shift function, and chemical resistance is exacerbated.

Then a study was made on halftone phase shift films having a minimal content of transition metal. It has been found that a single layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and up to 6 at% of oxygen, and having a refractive index n of at least 2.4 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.4 to 0.7, or a multilayer including at least one layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and up to 6 at% of oxygen, and having a refractive index n of at least 2.4 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.4 to 0.7 can form a halftone phase shift film which has a thickness of up to 67 nm, and provides a phase shift of 150 to 200° and a transmittance of 3 to 12% with respect to light of wavelength up to 200 nm.

Additionally the halftone phase shift film has chemical resistance against chemical cleaning. Once the halftone phase shift film is constructed as above, there is obtained a halftone phase shift mask blank which can be advantageously
5 processed into a halftone phase shift film pattern including a main photomask pattern with a width of about 100 to 200 nm, which is necessary in photolithography for forming a pattern with a half pitch of up to 50 nm on a processable substrate such as silicon wafer, using exposure light of wavelength up
10 to 200 nm.

Accordingly, in one aspect, the invention provides a halftone phase shift mask blank comprising a transparent substrate and a halftone phase shift film thereon having a phase shift of 150 to 200° and a transmittance of 3 to 12%
15 with respect to light of wavelength up to 200 nm. The halftone phase shift film is a single layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen, with an oxygen content being up to 6 at%, the single
20 layer having a refractive index n of at least 2.4 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.4 to 0.7, or a multilayer film including at least one layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen, with an
25 oxygen content being up to 6 at%, the at least one layer having a refractive index n of at least 2.4 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.4 to 0.7. The halftone phase shift film has a thickness of up to 67 nm.

In a preferred embodiment, the halftone phase shift
30 film is a single layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen.

In another preferred embodiment, the halftone phase shift film is a multilayer film including at least one layer

composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen and at least one layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen.

Typically, the mask blank is to be processed into a
5 halftone phase shift mask, the mask being suited in a photolithography method for forming a pattern with a half pitch of up to 50 nm in a processable substrate, comprising the steps of forming a photoresist film on the processable substrate and exposing the photoresist film to light of
10 wavelength up to 200 nm for transferring the pattern to the photoresist film.

In another aspect, the invention provides a halftone phase shift mask comprising a transparent substrate and a pattern of halftone phase shift film thereon having a phase
15 shift of 150 to 200° and a transmittance of 3 to 12% with respect to light of wavelength up to 200 nm. The halftone phase shift film is a single layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen, with an
20 oxygen content being up to 6 at%, the single layer having a refractive index n of at least 2.4 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.4 to 0.7, or a multilayer film including at least one layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material
25 consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen, with an oxygen content being up to 6 at%, the at least one layer having a refractive index n of at least 2.4 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.4 to 0.7. The halftone phase shift film has a thickness of up to 67 nm.

30 Preferred embodiments of said another aspect are the same as above.

Typically, the mask is suited in a photolithography method for forming a pattern with a half pitch of up to 50 nm

in a processable substrate, comprising the steps of forming a photoresist film on the processable substrate and exposing the photoresist film to light of wavelength up to 200 nm for transferring the pattern to the photoresist film.

5 In connection with photolithography for forming a pattern with a half pitch of up to 50 nm on a processable substrate, the invention provides a method of exposing a photoresist film on the processable substrate to light of wavelength up to 200 nm through a mask for pattern transfer.

10 The mask used herein is a halftone phase shift mask comprising a transparent substrate and a pattern of halftone phase shift film thereon having a phase shift of 150 to 200° and a transmittance of 3 to 12% with respect to light of wavelength up to 200 nm, wherein the halftone phase shift
15 film is a single layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen, with an oxygen content being up to 6 at%, the single layer having a refractive index n of at least 2.4 and an extinction
20 coefficient k of 0.4 to 0.7, or a multilayer film including at least one layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen, with an oxygen content being up to 6 at%, the at least one layer having a
25 refractive index n of at least 2.4 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.4 to 0.7, and the halftone phase shift film has a thickness of up to 67 nm.

Preferred embodiments are the same as above.

30 ADVANTAGEOUS EFFECTS OF INVENTION

The halftone phase shift mask blank or halftone phase shift mask of the invention has a halftone phase shift film which is thin enough to be advantageous for photomask pattern

formation, has chemical resistance against chemical cleaning,
and maintains a necessary phase shift for the phase shift
function and a necessary transmittance for the halftone
function. Using the halftone phase shift mask, lithography
5 exposure complying with the requirements of pattern
miniaturization and patterning accuracy becomes possible.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

FIG. 1A and FIG. 1B are cross-sectional views of one exemplary halftone phase shift mask blank and a corresponding halftone phase shift mask of the invention, respectively.

5 FIG. 2A, FIG. 2B and FIG. 2C are cross-sectional views of further embodiments of the halftone phase shift mask blank of the invention.

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

10 The invention pertains to a halftone phase shift (photo)mask blank comprising a transparent substrate and a halftone phase shift film formed thereon. The transparent substrate is typically a quartz substrate. Preference is given to transparent substrates of 6 inch squares and 25 mil
15 thick, known as 6025 substrate, as prescribed in the SEMI standards, or transparent substrates of 152 mm squares and 6.35 mm thick when expressed in the SI units. The halftone phase shift film may be a single layer structure or a multilayer structure (i.e., two or more layers). The
20 halftone phase shift (photo)mask has a (photo)mask pattern of a halftone phase shift film.

 FIG. 1A is a cross-sectional view of a halftone phase shift mask blank in one embodiment of the invention. The halftone phase shift mask blank 100 includes a transparent
25 substrate 10 and a halftone phase shift film 1 formed on the transparent substrate 10. FIG. 1B is a cross-sectional view of a halftone phase shift mask in one embodiment of the invention. The halftone phase shift mask 101 includes a transparent substrate 10 and a halftone phase shift film
30 pattern 11 formed on the transparent substrate 10.

 The halftone phase shift film may be composed of a single layer or multiple layers as long as a phase shift and a transmittance necessary for the halftone phase shift

function are met. In the case of multilayer structure, the film is preferably composed of multiple layers including an antireflective function layer so that the overall film may meet a predetermined surface reflectance as well as the
5 necessary phase shift and transmittance.

In either of the single layer and multilayer structure, each layer may be a uniform layer or a compositionally graded layer (i.e., a layer whose composition varies continuously in thickness direction). In the case of multilayer structure,
10 the halftone phase shift film may be a combination of two or more layers selected from layers composed of different constituents and layers composed of identical constituents in different compositional ratios. Where the film is composed of three or more layers, identical layers may be included as
15 long as they are not contiguous to each other.

Since halftone phase shift masks are used in the photolithography using exposure light of wavelength up to 200 nm, typically ArF excimer laser light (wavelength 193 nm), the halftone phase shift film should provide a predetermined
20 phase shift and a predetermined transmittance with respect to the exposure light at a predetermined thickness.

The (overall) thickness of the halftone phase shift film should preferably be up to 67 nm, more preferably up to 65 nm, and even more preferably up to 62 nm, because a
25 thinner film facilitates to form a finer pattern. The lower limit of the film thickness is set in the range where the desired optical properties are obtained relative to light of wavelength up to 200 nm. Specifically, the film thickness is set at least 40 nm, though the lower limit is not critical.

30 The phase shift of the halftone phase shift film with respect to exposure light is such that a phase shift between the exposure light transmitted by a region of phase shift film (phase shift region) and the exposure light transmitted

by a neighboring region where the phase shift film is removed, causes interference of exposure light at the boundary whereby contrast is increased. Specifically the phase shift is 150 to 200 degrees. Although ordinary halftone phase shift films are set to a phase shift of approximately 180° , it is possible from the standpoint of contrast enhancement to adjust the phase shift below or beyond 180° . For example, setting a phase shift of smaller than 180° is effective for forming a thinner film. It is a matter of course that a phase shift closer to 180° is more effective because a higher contrast is available. In this regard, the phase shift is preferably 160 to 190° , more preferably 175 to 185° , and most preferably approximately 180° .

The halftone phase shift film has a transmittance of exposure light which is preferably at least 3%, more preferably at least 5%, and up to 12%, more preferably less than 10%, and most preferably up to 7%.

In the halftone phase shift film of the invention, when the film is a single layer, the overall single layer, or when the film is a multilayer film, at least one layer, especially the overall layers (excluding a surface oxidized layer if any) should preferably have a refractive index n of at least 2.4, more preferably at least 2.5, and even more preferably at least 2.6 with respect to the exposure light. By reducing the oxygen content of a halftone phase shift film, preferably by eliminating oxygen, or by eliminating transition metal from the film, the refractive index n of the film can be increased while maintaining the predetermined transmittance, and the thickness of the film can be reduced while maintaining the necessary phase shift for the phase shift function. The refractive index n becomes higher as the oxygen content is lower, and the necessary phase shift is available from a thinner film as the refractive index n is higher.

When the halftone phase shift film is a single layer, the overall single layer, or when the film is a multilayer film, at least one layer, especially the overall layers (excluding a surface oxidized layer if any) should preferably
5 have an extinction coefficient k of at least 0.4, especially at least 0.6 and up to 0.7, especially up to 0.65.

The halftone phase shift film is a single layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon,
10 nitrogen and oxygen, with an oxygen content being up to 6 at%, or a multilayer film including at least one layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen, with an oxygen content being up to 6 at%. The
15 silicon base material contains silicon and nitrogen and optionally oxygen. Elements other than these are permissible as long as their amount is at an impurity level. Preferably, transition metals such as molybdenum, zirconium, tungsten, titanium, hafnium, chromium and tantalum are not contained.
20 Use of such silicon base material overcomes the pattern size variation degradation problem associated with transition metal-containing silicon base materials. Also use of such silicon base material provides for improved chemical resistance against chemical cleaning.

25 In the embodiment wherein the halftone phase shift film is a multilayer film, the thickness of a layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and up to 6 at% of oxygen is preferably at least 60%, more
30 preferably at least 80% of the total thickness of the halftone phase shift film. If two or more such layers are included, the total thickness of these layers is preferably at least 60%, more preferably at least 80% of the total

thickness of the halftone phase shift film. Where a surface oxidized layer is included as will be described later, preferably all the layers of the film excluding the surface oxidized layer are layers composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and up to 6 at% of oxygen. Also in the embodiment wherein the halftone phase shift film is a multilayer film, the layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and up to 6 at% of oxygen may be disposed any level in the film selected from the side adjacent to the substrate, the side remote from the substrate, and the center in thickness direction.

When the halftone phase shift film is a single layer, the silicon base material of the overall single layer, or when the film is a multilayer film, the silicon base material of at least one layer, especially all the layers (excluding a surface oxidized layer if any) should preferably have a silicon content of at least 30 at%, more preferably at least 40 at%, even more preferably at least 44 at%, and up to 55 at%, more preferably up to 50 at%.

When the halftone phase shift film is a single layer, the silicon base material of the overall single layer, or when the film is a multilayer film, the silicon base material of at least one layer, especially all the layers (excluding a surface oxidized layer if any) should preferably have a nitrogen content of at least 44 at%, more preferably at least 50 at%, and up to 60 at%, more preferably up to 56 at%.

When the halftone phase shift film is a single layer, the silicon base material of the overall single layer, or when the film is a multilayer film, the silicon base material of at least one layer, especially all the layers (excluding a surface oxidized layer if any) should preferably have an

oxygen content of up to 6 at%, more preferably up to 3.5 at%, and even more preferably up to 1 at%.

When the halftone phase shift film is a single layer, the silicon base material of the overall single layer, or
5 when the film is a multilayer film, the silicon base material of at least one layer, especially all the layers (excluding a surface oxidized layer if any) should preferably contain silicon and nitrogen in a Si/N ratio from 3/3 to 3/4 on atomic basis.

10 Suitable silicon base materials include a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen, i.e., silicon nitride (SiN) and a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen, i.e., silicon oxynitride (SiON).

In order to form a halftone phase shift film as a thin
15 film, a silicon base material with a lower oxygen content is preferred, with an oxygen-free material being more preferred. From this aspect, the halftone phase shift film should preferably include a layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen. In this context,
20 the halftone phase shift film is advantageously a single layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen, or a multilayer film including at least one layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen, especially including at least one layer
25 composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen and at least one layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen.

While the halftone phase shift film may be deposited by any well-known film-forming techniques, the sputtering
30 technique is preferred because films of homogeneity are readily deposited. Either DC sputtering or RF sputtering may be employed. The target and sputtering gas may be selected as appropriate depending on the layer construction and

composition of the film. Suitable targets include a silicon target, a silicon nitride target, and a target containing silicon and silicon nitride. The contents of nitrogen and oxygen may be adjusted during reactive sputtering by using
5 nitrogen-containing gas, oxygen-containing gas, or nitrogen/oxygen-containing gas, and optionally carbon-containing gas, as the reactive gas, and adjusting the flow rate thereof. The reactive gas is, for example, nitrogen gas (N₂ gas), oxygen gas (O₂ gas), nitrogen oxide
10 gases (N₂O gas, NO gas, NO₂ gas). In the sputtering gas, a rare gas such as helium, neon or argon gas may also be used.

In the embodiment wherein the halftone phase shift film is a multilayer film, the film may include a surface oxidized layer as the outermost layer on the surface side (disposed
15 remote from the substrate) in order to suppress any change in quality of the film. The surface oxidized layer may have an oxygen content of at least 20 at%, with even an oxygen content of at least 50 at% being acceptable. The surface oxidized layer may be formed by atmospheric or air oxidation
20 or forced oxidative treatment. Examples of forced oxidative treatment include treatment of a silicon-based material film with ozone gas or ozone water, and heating of a film at about 300°C in an oxygen-containing atmosphere, typically oxygen gas atmosphere by oven heating, lamp annealing or laser
25 heating. The surface oxidized layer preferably has a thickness of up to 10 nm, more preferably up to 5 nm, and even more preferably up to 3 nm. The oxidized layer exerts its effect as long as its thickness is at least 1 nm. Although the surface oxidized layer may also be formed by
30 increasing the amount of oxygen in the sputtering gas during the sputtering step, atmospheric oxidation or oxidative treatment as mentioned above is preferred for forming a less defective layer.

In the halftone phase shift mask blank of the invention, a second film of single layer or multilayer structure may be formed on the halftone phase shift film. Most often, the second film is disposed contiguous to the halftone phase shift film. Examples of the second film include a light-shielding film, a combination of light-shielding film and antireflective film, and an auxiliary film which functions as a hard mask during subsequent pattern formation of the halftone phase shift film. When a third film is formed as will be described later, the second film may be utilized as an auxiliary film (etching stop film) which functions as an etching stopper during subsequent pattern formation of the third film. The second film is preferably composed of a chromium-containing material.

One exemplary embodiment is a halftone phase shift mask blank illustrated in FIG. 2A. The halftone phase shift mask blank depicted at 100 in FIG. 2A includes a transparent substrate 10, a halftone phase shift film 1 formed on the substrate 10, and a second film 2 formed on the film 1.

The halftone phase shift mask blank may include a light-shielding film as the second film on the halftone phase shift film. A combination of a light-shielding film and an antireflective film may also be used as the second film. The provision of the second film including a light-shielding film ensures that a halftone phase shift mask includes a region capable of completely shielding exposure light. The light-shielding film and antireflective film may also be utilized as an auxiliary film during etching. The construction and material of the light-shielding film and antireflective film are known from many patent documents, for example, Patent Document 4 (JP-A 2007-033469) and Patent Document 5 (JP-A 2007-233179). One preferred film construction of the light-shielding film and antireflective

film is a structure having a light-shielding film of Cr-containing material and an antireflective film of Cr-containing material for reducing reflection by the light-shielding film. Each of the light-shielding film and the antireflective film may be a single layer or multilayer. Suitable Cr-containing materials of which the light-shielding film and antireflective film are made include chromium alone, chromium oxide (CrO), chromium nitride (CrN), chromium carbide (CrC), chromium oxynitride (CrON), chromium oxycarbide (CrOC), chromium nitride carbide (CrNC), chromium oxynitride carbide (CrONC) and other chromium compounds.

Where the second film is a light-shielding film or a combination of a light-shielding film and an antireflective film, the light-shielding film is made of a chromium base material having a chromium content of at least 40 at%, especially at least 60 at% and less than 100 at%, preferably up to 99 at%, and more preferably up to 90 at%. The chromium base material has an oxygen content of at least 0 at% and up to 60 at%, preferably up to 40 at%, with an oxygen content of at least 1 at% being preferred when an etching rate must be adjusted. The chromium base material has a nitrogen content of at least 0 at% and up to 50 at%, preferably up to 40 at%, with a nitrogen content of at least 1 at% being preferred when an etching rate must be adjusted. The chromium base material has a carbon content of at least 0 at% and up to 20 at%, preferably up to 10 at%, with a carbon content of at least 1 at% being preferred when an etching rate must be adjusted. The total content of chromium, oxygen, nitrogen and carbon is preferably at least 95 at%, more preferably at least 99 at%, and especially 100 at%.

Where the second film is a combination of a light-shielding film and an antireflective film, the antireflective film is preferably made of a

chromium-containing material having a chromium content of preferably at least 30 at%, more preferably at least 35 at% and preferably up to 70 at%, and more preferably up to 50 at%. The chromium-containing material preferably has an oxygen
5 content of up to 60 at%, and at least 1 at% and more preferably at least 20 at%. The chromium-containing material preferably has a nitrogen content of up to 50 at%, more preferably up to 30 at%, and at least 1 at%, more preferably at least 3 at%. The chromium-containing material preferably
10 has a carbon content of at least 0 at% and up to 20 at%, more preferably up to 5 at%, with a carbon content of at least 1 at% being preferred when an etching rate must be adjusted. The total content of chromium, oxygen, nitrogen and carbon is preferably at least 95 at%, more preferably at least 99 at%,
15 and especially 100 at%.

Where the second film is a light-shielding film or a combination of a light-shielding film and an antireflective film, the second film has a thickness of typically 20 to 100 nm, preferably 40 to 70 nm. Also the halftone phase shift
20 film combined with the second film should preferably have a total optical density of at least 2.0, more preferably at least 2.5, and even more preferably at least 3.0, with respect to exposure light of wavelength up to 200 nm.

In the halftone phase shift mask blank of the invention,
25 a third film of single layer or multilayer structure may be formed on the second film. Most often, the third film is disposed contiguous to the second film. Examples of the third film include a light-shielding film, a combination of light-shielding film and antireflective film, and an
30 auxiliary film which functions as a hard mask during subsequent pattern formation of the second film. The third film is preferably composed of a silicon-containing material, especially chromium-free silicon-containing material.

One exemplary embodiment is a halftone phase shift mask blank illustrated in FIG. 2B. The halftone phase shift mask blank depicted at 100 in FIG. 2B includes a transparent substrate 10, a halftone phase shift film 1 formed on the substrate 10, a second film 2 formed on the film 1, and a third film 3 formed on the second film 2.

Where the second film is a light-shielding film or a combination of a light-shielding film and an antireflective film, the third film may be an auxiliary film (etching mask film) which functions as a hard mask during subsequent pattern formation of the second film. When a fourth film is formed as will be described later, the third film may be utilized as an auxiliary film (etching stop film) which functions as an etching stopper during subsequent pattern formation of the fourth film. The auxiliary film is preferably composed of a material having different etching properties from the second film, for example, a material having resistance to chlorine dry etching applied to the etching of chromium-containing material, specifically a silicon-containing material which can be etched with fluoride gas such as SF_6 or CF_4 . Suitable silicon-containing materials include silicon alone, a material containing silicon and one or both of nitrogen and oxygen, a material containing silicon and a transition metal, and a material containing silicon, one or both of nitrogen and oxygen, and a transition metal. Exemplary of the transition metal are molybdenum, tantalum and zirconium.

Where the third film is an auxiliary film, it is preferably composed of a silicon-containing material having a silicon content of preferably at least 20 at%, more preferably at least 33 at% and up to 95 at%, more preferably up to 80 at%. The silicon-containing material has a nitrogen content of at least 0 at% and up to 50 at%, preferably up to 30 at%,

with a nitrogen content of at least 1 at% being preferred when an etching rate must be adjusted. The silicon-containing material has an oxygen content of at least 0 at%, preferably at least 20 at% and up to 70 at%, preferably up to 66 at%,
5 with an oxygen content of at least 1 at% being preferred when an etching rate must be adjusted. The silicon-containing material has a transition metal content of at least 0 at% and up to 35 at%, preferably up to 20 at%, with a transition metal content of at least 1 at% being preferred if present.
10 The total content of silicon, oxygen, nitrogen and transition metal is preferably at least 95 at%, more preferably at least 99 at%, and especially 100 at%.

Where the second film is a light-shielding film or a combination of a light-shielding film and an antireflective
15 film and the third film is an auxiliary film, the second film has a thickness of typically 20 to 100 nm, preferably 40 to 70 nm, and the third film has a thickness of typically 1 to 30 nm, preferably 2 to 15 nm. Also the halftone phase shift film combined with the second film should preferably have a
20 total optical density of at least 2.0, more preferably at least 2.5, and even more preferably at least 3.0, with respect to exposure light of wavelength up to 200 nm.

Where the second film is an auxiliary film, a light-shielding film may be formed as the third film. Also,
25 a combination of a light-shielding film and an antireflective film may be formed as the third film. Herein the second film may be utilized as an auxiliary film (etching mask film) which functions as a hard mask during pattern formation of the halftone phase shift film, or an auxiliary film (etching
30 stop film) which functions as an etching stopper during pattern formation of the third film. Examples of the auxiliary film are films of chromium-containing materials as described in Patent Document 6 (JP-A 2007-241065). The

auxiliary film may be a single layer or multilayer. Suitable chromium-containing materials of which the auxiliary film is made include chromium alone, chromium oxide (CrO), chromium nitride (CrN), chromium carbide (CrC), chromium oxynitride (CrON), chromium oxycarbide (CrOC), chromium nitride carbide (CrNC), chromium oxynitride carbide (CrONC) and other chromium compounds.

Where the second film is an auxiliary film, the film preferably has a chromium content of preferably at least 40 at%, more preferably at least 50 at% and up to 100 at%, more preferably up to 99 at%, and even more preferably up to 90 at%. The film has an oxygen content of at least 0 at%, and up to 60 at%, preferably up to 55 at%, with an oxygen content of at least 1 at% being preferred when an etching rate must be adjusted. The film has a nitrogen content of at least 0 at%, and up to 50 at%, preferably up to 40 at%, with a nitrogen content of at least 1 at% being preferred when an etching rate must be adjusted. The film has a carbon content of at least 0 at% and up to 20 at%, preferably up to 10 at%, with a carbon content of at least 1 at% being preferred when an etching rate must be adjusted. The total content of chromium, oxygen, nitrogen and carbon is preferably at least 95 at%, more preferably at least 99 at%, and especially 100 at%.

On the other hand, the light-shielding film and antireflective film as the third film are preferably composed of a material having different etching properties from the second film, for example, a material having resistance to chlorine dry etching applied to the etching of chromium-containing material, specifically a silicon-containing material which can be etched with fluoride gas such as SF₆ or CF₄. Suitable silicon-containing materials include silicon alone, a material containing silicon and nitrogen and/or oxygen, a material containing silicon and a

transition metal, and a material containing silicon, nitrogen and/or oxygen, and a transition metal. Exemplary of the transition metal are molybdenum, tantalum and zirconium.

Where the third film is a light-shielding film or a
5 combination of a light-shielding film and an antireflective film, the light-shielding film and antireflective film are preferably composed of a silicon-containing material having a silicon content of preferably at least 10 at%, more preferably at least 30 at% and less than 100 at%, more preferably up to
10 95 at%. The silicon-containing material has a nitrogen content of at least 0 at% and up to 50 at%, preferably up to 40 at%, especially up to 20 at%, with a nitrogen content of at least 1 at% being preferred when an etching rate must be adjusted. The silicon-containing material has an oxygen
15 content of at least 0 at%, and up to 60 at%, preferably up to 30 at%, with an oxygen content of at least 1 at% being preferred when an etching rate must be adjusted. The silicon-containing material has a transition metal content of at least 0 at% and up to 35 at%, preferably up to 20 at%,
20 with a transition metal content of at least 1 at% being preferred if present. The total content of silicon, oxygen, nitrogen and transition metal is preferably at least 95 at%, more preferably at least 99 at%, and especially 100 at%.

Where the second film is an auxiliary film and the
25 third film is a light-shielding film or a combination of a light-shielding film and an antireflective film, the second film has a thickness of typically 1 to 20 nm, preferably 2 to 10 nm, and the third film has a thickness of typically 20 to 100 nm, preferably 30 to 70 nm. Also the halftone phase
30 shift film combined with the second and third films should preferably have a total optical density of at least 2.0, more preferably at least 2.5, and even more preferably at least 3.0, with respect to exposure light of wavelength up to 200 nm.

In the halftone phase shift photomask blank of the invention, a fourth film of single layer or multilayer structure may be formed on the third film. Most often, the fourth film is disposed contiguous to the third film.

5 Exemplary of the fourth film is an auxiliary film which functions as a hard mask during subsequent pattern formation of the third film. The fourth film is preferably composed of a chromium-containing material.

One exemplary embodiment is a halftone phase shift mask
10 blank illustrated in FIG. 2C. The halftone phase shift mask blank depicted at 100 in FIG. 2C includes a transparent substrate 10, a halftone phase shift film 1 formed on the substrate 10, a second film 2 formed on the film 1, a third film 3 formed on the second film 2, and a fourth film 4
15 formed on the third film 3.

Where the third film is a light-shielding film or a combination of a light-shielding film and an antireflective film, the fourth film may be an auxiliary film (etching mask film) which functions as a hard mask during subsequent
20 pattern formation of the third film. The auxiliary film is preferably composed of a material having different etching properties from the third film, for example, a material having resistance to fluorine dry etching applied to the etching of silicon-containing material, specifically a
25 chromium-containing material which can be etched with oxygen-containing chloride gas. Suitable chromium-containing materials include chromium alone, chromium oxide (CrO), chromium nitride (CrN), chromium carbide (CrC), chromium oxynitride (CrON), chromium oxycarbide (CrOC), chromium
30 nitride carbide (CrNC), chromium oxynitride carbide (CrONC) and other chromium compounds.

Where the fourth film is an auxiliary film, the film has a chromium content of at least 40 at%, preferably at

least 50 at% and up to 100 at%, preferably up to 99 at%, and more preferably up to 90 at%. The film has an oxygen content of at least 0 at% and up to 60 at%, preferably up to 40 at%, with an oxygen content of at least 1 at% being preferred when an etching rate must be adjusted. The film has a nitrogen content of at least 0 at% and up to 50 at%, preferably up to 40 at%, with a nitrogen content of at least 1 at% being preferred when an etching rate must be adjusted. The film has a carbon content of at least 0 at% and up to 20 at%, preferably up to 10 at%, with a carbon content of at least 1 at% being preferred when an etching rate must be adjusted. The total content of chromium, oxygen, nitrogen and carbon is preferably at least 95 at%, more preferably at least 99 at%, and especially 100 at%.

Where the second film is an auxiliary film, the third film is a light-shielding film or a combination of a light-shielding film and an antireflective film, and the fourth film is an auxiliary film; the second film has a thickness of typically 1 to 20 nm, preferably 2 to 10 nm, the third film has a thickness of typically 20 to 100 nm, preferably 30 to 70 nm, and the fourth film has a thickness of typically 1 to 30 nm, preferably 2 to 20 nm. Also the halftone phase shift film combined with the second and third films should preferably have a total optical density of at least 2.0, more preferably at least 2.5, and even more preferably at least 3.0, with respect to exposure light of wavelength up to 200 nm.

The second and fourth films of chromium-containing materials may be deposited by reactive sputtering using a chromium target or a chromium target having one or more of oxygen, nitrogen and carbon added thereto, and a sputtering gas based on a rare gas such as Ar, He or Ne, to which a reactive gas selected from oxygen-containing gas,

nitrogen-containing gas and carbon-containing gas is added depending on the desired composition of a film to be deposited.

The third film of silicon-containing material may be deposited by reactive sputtering using a silicon target,
5 silicon nitride target, target containing silicon and silicon nitride, transition metal target, or composite silicon/transition metal target, and a sputtering gas based on a rare gas such as Ar, He or Ne, to which a reactive gas selected from oxygen-containing gas, nitrogen-containing gas
10 and carbon-containing gas is added depending on the desired composition of a film to be deposited.

The mask blank may be processed into a mask by a standard technique. For example, a halftone phase shift mask blank comprising a halftone phase shift film and a second
15 film of chromium-containing material deposited thereon may be processed as follows. First, a resist film adapted for electron beam (EB) lithography is formed on the second film of the halftone phase shift mask blank, exposed to a pattern of EB, and developed in a conventional way, forming a resist
20 pattern. While the resist pattern thus obtained is used as etching mask, oxygen-containing chlorine base dry etching is carried out for transferring the resist pattern to the second film, obtaining a pattern of the second film. Next, while the second film pattern is used as etching mask, fluorine
25 base dry etching is carried out for transferring the pattern to the halftone phase shift film, obtaining a pattern of the halftone phase shift film. If any region of the second film is to be left, a resist pattern for protecting that region is formed on the second film. Thereafter, the portion of the
30 second film which is not protected with the resist pattern is removed by oxygen-containing chlorine base dry etching. The resist pattern is removed in a conventional manner, yielding a halftone phase shift mask.

In another example, a halftone phase shift mask blank comprising a halftone phase shift film, a light-shielding film or a light-shielding film/antireflective film of chromium-containing material deposited thereon as a second film, and an auxiliary film of silicon-containing material deposited thereon as a third film may be processed as follows. First, a resist film adapted for EB lithography is formed on the third film of the halftone phase shift mask blank, exposed to a pattern of EB, and developed in a conventional way, forming a resist pattern. While the resist pattern thus obtained is used as etching mask, fluorine base dry etching is carried out for transferring the resist pattern to the third film, obtaining a pattern of the third film. While the third film pattern thus obtained is used as etching mask, oxygen-containing chlorine base dry etching is carried out for transferring the third film pattern to the second film, obtaining a pattern of the second film. The resist pattern is removed at this point. Further, while the second film pattern is used as etching mask, fluorine base dry etching is carried out for transferring the second film pattern to the halftone phase shift film to define a pattern of the halftone phase shift film and at the same time, removing the third film pattern. If any region of the second film is to be left, a resist pattern for protecting that region is formed on the second film. Thereafter, the portion of the second film which is not protected with the resist pattern is removed by oxygen-containing chlorine base dry etching. The resist pattern is removed in a conventional manner, yielding a halftone phase shift mask.

In a further example, a halftone phase shift mask blank comprising a halftone phase shift film, an auxiliary film of chromium-containing material deposited thereon as a second film, and a light-shielding film or a light-shielding

film/antireflective film of silicon-containing material deposited on the second film as a third film may be processed as follows. First, a resist film adapted for EB lithography is formed on the third film of the halftone phase shift mask blank, exposed to a pattern of EB, and developed in a conventional way, forming a resist pattern. While the resist pattern thus obtained is used as etching mask, fluorine base dry etching is carried out for transferring the resist pattern to the third film, obtaining a pattern of the third film.

While the third film pattern thus obtained is used as etching mask, oxygen-containing chlorine base dry etching is carried out for transferring the third film pattern to the second film, whereby a pattern of the second film is obtained, that is, a portion of the second film where the halftone phase shift film is to be removed is removed. The resist pattern is removed at this point. A resist pattern for protecting a portion of the third film to be left is formed on the third film. Further, while the second film pattern is used as etching mask, fluorine base dry etching is carried out for transferring the second film pattern to the halftone phase shift film to define a pattern of the halftone phase shift film and at the same time, removing the portion of the third film which is not protected with the resist pattern. The resist pattern is removed in a conventional manner. Finally, oxygen-containing chlorine base dry etching is carried out to remove the portion of the second film where the third film has been removed, yielding a halftone phase shift mask.

In a still further example, a halftone phase shift mask blank comprising a halftone phase shift film, an auxiliary film of chromium-containing material deposited thereon as a second film, a light-shielding film or a light-shielding film/antireflective film of silicon-containing material deposited on the second film as a third film, and an

auxiliary film of chromium-containing material deposited on the third film as a fourth film may be processed as follows. First, a resist film adapted for EB lithography is formed on the fourth film of the halftone phase shift mask blank,
5 exposed to a pattern of EB, and developed in a conventional way, forming a resist pattern. While the resist pattern thus obtained is used as etching mask, oxygen-containing chlorine base dry etching is carried out for transferring the resist pattern to the fourth film, obtaining a pattern of the fourth
10 film. While the fourth film pattern thus obtained is used as etching mask, fluorine base dry etching is carried out for transferring the fourth film pattern to the third film, obtaining a pattern of the third film. The resist pattern is removed at this point. A resist pattern for protecting a
15 portion of the third film to be left is formed on the fourth film. Further, while the third film pattern is used as etching mask, oxygen-containing chlorine base dry etching is carried out for transferring the third film pattern to the second film, obtaining a pattern of the second film and at
20 the same time, removing the portion of the fourth film which is not protected with the resist pattern. Next, while the second film pattern is used as etching mask, fluorine base dry etching is carried out for transferring the second film pattern to the halftone phase shift film to define a pattern
25 of the halftone phase shift film and at the same time, removing the portion of the third film which is not protected with the resist pattern. The resist pattern is removed in a conventional manner. Finally, oxygen-containing chlorine base dry etching is carried out to remove the portion of the
30 second film where the third film has been removed and the portion of the fourth film where the resist pattern has been removed, yielding a halftone phase shift mask.

In a photolithographic method for forming a pattern with a half pitch of up to 50 nm, typically up to 30 nm, and more typically up to 20 nm on a processable substrate, comprising the steps of forming a photoresist film on the processable substrate and exposing the photoresist film to light of wavelength up to 200 nm, typically ArF excimer laser (193 nm) or F₂ laser (157 nm), through a patterned mask for transferring the pattern to the photoresist film, the halftone phase shift mask of the invention is best suited for use in the exposure step.

The halftone phase shift mask obtained from the mask blank is advantageously applicable to the pattern exposure method comprising projecting light to the photomask pattern including the pattern of halftone phase shift film for transferring the photomask pattern to an object (photoresist film) on the processable substrate. The irradiation of exposure light may be either dry exposure or immersion exposure. The pattern exposure method of the invention is effective particularly when a wafer of at least 300 mm as the processable substrate is exposed to a photomask pattern of light by the immersion lithography with the tendency that a cumulative irradiation energy dose increases within a relatively short time in commercial scale microfabrication.

EXAMPLE

Examples are given below for further illustrating the invention although the invention is not limited thereto.

Example 1

On a quartz substrate of 152 mm squares and 6.35 mm thick, a halftone phase shift film of SiN was deposited by reactive sputtering using a silicon target as the sputtering target, and nitrogen and argon gases as the sputtering gas.

The deposition time was adjusted such that the film might have a phase shift of 178° with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm (ArF excimer laser, same hereinafter). Then the film had a transmittance of 6% with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm and a thickness of 61 nm. On X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS), the film had a Si:N atomic ratio of 48:52. Also the film had a refractive index n of 2.6 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.64 with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm. The film was examined for chemical resistance by immersing it in an AMP cleaning liquid (28 wt% aqueous ammonia : 30 wt% hydrogen peroxide : water = 1:1:100 by volume) at room temperature (23°C) for 120 minutes, after which a change of phase shift was less than 0.10° .

Example 2

On a quartz substrate of 152 mm squares and 6.35 mm thick, a halftone phase shift film of SiN was deposited by reactive sputtering using a silicon target as the sputtering target, and nitrogen and argon gases as the sputtering gas. The deposition time was adjusted such that the film might have a phase shift of 180° with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm. Then the film had a transmittance of 12% with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm and a thickness of 60 nm. On XPS, the film had a Si:N atomic ratio of 47:53. Also the film had a refractive index n of 2.6 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.46 with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm. The film was examined for chemical resistance as in Example 1, with a change of phase shift of 0.40° being detected.

Example 3

On a quartz substrate of 152 mm squares and 6.35 mm thick, a halftone phase shift film of SiON was deposited by reactive sputtering using a silicon target as the sputtering

target, and oxygen, nitrogen and argon gases as the sputtering gas. The deposition time was adjusted such that the film might have a phase shift of 177° with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm. Then the film had a transmittance of 7% with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm and a thickness of 62 nm. On XPS, the film had a Si:N:O atomic ratio of 46:50:4. Also the film had a refractive index n of 2.6 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.59 with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm. The film was examined for chemical resistance as in Example 1, with a change of phase shift of 0.24° being detected.

Example 4

On a quartz substrate of 152 mm squares and 6.35 mm thick, a halftone phase shift film of SiON was deposited by reactive sputtering using a silicon target as the sputtering target, and oxygen, nitrogen and argon gases as the sputtering gas. The deposition time was adjusted such that the film might have a phase shift of 177° with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm. Then the film had a transmittance of 6% with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm and a thickness of 67 nm. On XPS, the film had a Si:N:O atomic ratio of 46:45:9. Also the film had a refractive index n of 2.6 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.59 with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm. The film was examined for chemical resistance as in Example 1, with a change of phase shift of 0.13° being detected.

Comparative Example 1

On a quartz substrate of 152 mm squares and 6.35 mm thick, a halftone phase shift film of MoSiON was deposited by reactive sputtering using a molybdenum/silicon target having a Mo:Si molar ratio of 1:2 and a silicon target as the

sputtering target, and oxygen, nitrogen and argon gases as the sputtering gas. The deposition time was adjusted such that the film might have a phase shift of 177° with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm. Then the film had a
5 transmittance of 6% with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm and a thickness of 75 nm. On XPS, the film had a Mo:Si:N:O atomic ratio of 9:36:45:10. Also the film had a refractive index n of 2.3 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.54 with respect to light of wavelength 193 nm. The film
10 was examined for chemical resistance as in Example 1, with a change of phase shift of 3.91° being detected.

CLAIMS:

1. A halftone phase shift mask blank comprising a transparent substrate and a halftone phase shift film thereon
5 having a phase shift of 150 to 200° and a transmittance of 3 to 12% with respect to light of wavelength up to 200 nm, wherein

said halftone phase shift film is a single layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and
10 nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen, with an oxygen content being up to 6 at%, the single layer having a refractive index n of at least 2.4 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.4 to 0.7, or a multilayer film including at least one layer composed of a
15 silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen, with an oxygen content being up to 6 at%, the at least one layer having a refractive index n of at least 2.4 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.4 to 0.7, and said
20 halftone phase shift film has a thickness of up to 67 nm.

2. The mask blank of claim 1 wherein said halftone phase shift film is a single layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen.
25

3. The mask blank of claim 1 wherein said halftone phase shift film is a multilayer film including at least one layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen and at least one layer composed of a silicon base
30 material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen.

4. The mask blank of any one of claims 1 to 3, which is to be processed into a halftone phase shift mask, the mask being

suited in a photolithography method for forming a pattern with a half pitch of up to 50 nm in a processable substrate, comprising the steps of forming a photoresist film on the processable substrate and exposing the photoresist film to
5 light of wavelength up to 200 nm for transferring the pattern to the photoresist film.

5. A halftone phase shift mask comprising a transparent substrate and a pattern of halftone phase shift film thereon
10 having a phase shift of 150 to 200° and a transmittance of 3 to 12% with respect to light of wavelength up to 200 nm, wherein

said halftone phase shift film is a single layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and
15 nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen, with an oxygen content being up to 6 at%, the single layer having a refractive index n of at least 2.4 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.4 to 0.7, or a multilayer film including at least one layer composed of a
20 silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen, with an oxygen content being up to 6 at%, the at least one layer having a refractive index n of at least 2.4 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.4 to 0.7, and said
25 halftone phase shift film has a thickness of up to 67 nm.

6. The mask of claim 5 wherein said halftone phase shift film is a single layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen.

30

7. The mask of claim 5 wherein said halftone phase shift film is a multilayer film including at least one layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and

nitrogen and at least one layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen.

8. The mask of any one of claims 5 to 7, suited in a
5 photolithography method for forming a pattern with a half pitch of up to 50 nm in a processable substrate, comprising the steps of forming a photoresist film on the processable substrate and exposing the photoresist film to light of wavelength up to 200 nm for transferring the pattern to the
10 photoresist film.

9. A method of exposing a photoresist film on a processable substrate to light of wavelength up to 200 nm through a mask for pattern transfer, the method being a photolithography for
15 forming a pattern with a half pitch of up to 50 nm on the processable substrate, wherein

said mask is a halftone phase shift mask comprising a transparent substrate and a pattern of halftone phase shift film thereon having a phase shift of 150 to 200° and a
20 transmittance of 3 to 12% with respect to light of wavelength up to 200 nm,

said halftone phase shift film is a single layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a silicon base material consisting of silicon,
25 nitrogen and oxygen, with an oxygen content being up to 6 at%, the single layer having a refractive index n of at least 2.4 and an extinction coefficient k of 0.4 to 0.7, or a multilayer film including at least one layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen or a
30 silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen, with an oxygen content being up to 6 at%, the at least one layer having a refractive index n of at least 2.4

and an extinction coefficient k of 0.4 to 0.7, and said halftone phase shift film has a thickness of up to 67 nm.

10. The pattern exposure method of claim 9 wherein said
5 halftone phase shift film is a single layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen.

11. The pattern exposure method of claim 9 wherein said
halftone phase shift film is a multilayer film including at
10 least one layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon and nitrogen and at least one layer composed of a silicon base material consisting of silicon, nitrogen and oxygen.