means for imaging a plurality of virtual images of the charged-particle source with a plurality of beamlets of the collimated primary beam, wherein the plurality of virtual images becomes the multiple sources which emit the plurality of beamlets respectively, wherein deflection angles of said plurality of beamlets are different or individually set;

means for varying currents of the plurality of beamlets, wherein varying the currents involves changing either or both a focusing power and position of a plane of a condenser lens; and

a beamlet-forming means closely arranged to an electron source.

43. The device according to claim 42, further comprising means for suppressing Coulomb effect due to the primary beam.

44. A multi-beam apparatus, comprising:

the device for providing the multiple sources according to claim 43;

means for projecting the plurality of virtual images on a sample surface such that a plurality of probe spots is formed thereon;

means for scanning the plurality of probe spots on the sample surface; and

means for receiving a plurality of signal particle beams generated from the sample surface due to plurality of probe spots.

45. The multi-beam apparatus according to claim 44, further comprising means for individually deflecting the plurality of beamlets to reduce aberrations of the plurality of probe spots respectively.

46. The multi-beam apparatus according to claim 45, further comprising means for individually compensating the aberrations of the plurality of probe spots.

47. The multi-beam apparatus according to claim 46, wherein the projecting means is a single objective lens.