



- (51) **International Patent Classification:**
H01L 29/82 (2006.01)
- (21) **International Application Number:**
PCT/US2013/022877
- (22) **International Filing Date:**
24 January 2013 (24.01.2013)
- (25) **Filing Language:** English
- (26) **Publication Language:** English
- (30) **Priority Data:**
13/406,972 28 February 2012 (28.02.2012) US
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- (81) **Designated States** (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of national protection available): AE, AG, AL, AM, AO, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BH, BN, BR, BW, BY,

BZ, CA, CH, CL, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DO, DZ, EC, EE, EG, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, GT, HN, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KM, KN, KP, KR, KZ, LA, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LY, MA, MD, ME, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NG, NI, NO, NZ, OM, PA, PE, PG, PH, PL, PT, QA, RO, RS, RU, RW, SC, SD, SE, SG, SK, SL, SM, ST, SV, SY, TH, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VC, VN, ZA, ZM, ZW.

- (84) **Designated States** (unless otherwise indicated, for every kind of regional protection available): ARIPO (BW, GH, GM, KE, LR, LS, MW, MZ, NA, RW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, RU, TJ, TM), European (AL, AT, BE, BG, CH, CY, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, HR, HU, IE, IS, IT, LT, LU, LV, MC, MK, MT, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, RS, SE, SI, SK, SM, TR), OAPI (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

Declarations under Rule 4.17:

- as to applicant's entitlement to apply for and be granted a patent (Rule 4.17(ii))
- as to the applicant's entitlement to claim the priority of the earlier application (Rule 4.17(iii))
- of inventorship (Rule 4.17(iv))

Published:

- with international search report (Art. 21(3))

(54) **Title:** HIGH THERMAL STABILITY REFERENCE STRUCTURE WITH OUT-OF-PLANE ANISOTROPY FOR MAGNETIC DEVICE APPLICATIONS

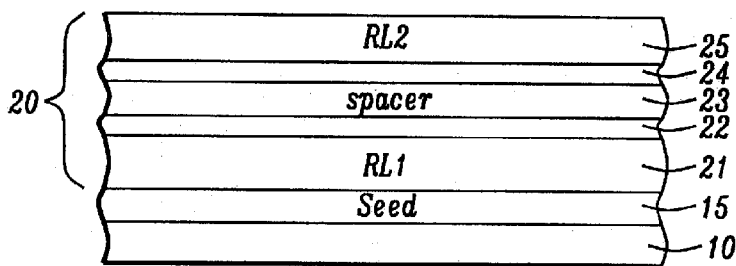


FIG. 1

(57) **Abstract:** Enhanced He and Hk in addition to higher thermal stability up to at least 400°C are achieved in magnetic devices by adding dusting layers on top and bottom surfaces of a spacer in a synthetic antiferromagnetic (SAF) structure to give a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 reference layer configuration where RL1 and RL2 layers exhibit perpendicular magnetic anisotropy (PMA), the spacer induces antiferromagnetic coupling between RL1 and RL2, and DL1 and DL2 are dusting layers that enhance PMA. Dusting layers are deposited at room temperature to 400°C. RL1 and RL2 layers are selected from laminates such as (Ni/Co)n, L1o alloys, or rare earth-transition metal alloys. The reference layer may be incorporated in STT-MRAM memory elements or in spintronic devices including a spin transfer oscillator. Dusting layers and a similar SAF design may be employed in a free layer for Ku enhancement and to increase the retention time of a memory cell for STT-MRAM designs.



HIGH THERMAL STABILITY REFERENCE STRUCTURE WITH OUT-OF-PLANE ANISOTROPY FOR MAGNETIC DEVICE APPLICATIONS

RELATED PATENT APPLICATION

This application is related to the following: Docket # HMG10-036, serial number 13/068,398, filing date 5/10/11; assigned to a common assignee and herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present disclosure relates to a magnetic devices that utilize thin films with perpendicular magnetic anisotropy (PMA) and a method for making the same, and in particular, to increasing Hc and thermal stability in the resulting multilayer magnetic stack to survive high temperature semiconductor processes up to 400°C or higher.

BACKGROUND

Magnetoresistive Random Access Memory (MRAM), based on the integration of silicon CMOS with MTJ technology, is a major emerging technology that is highly competitive with existing semiconductor memories such as SRAM, DRAM, and Flash. Similarly, spin-transfer (spin torque or STT) magnetization switching described by C. Slonczewski in "Current driven excitation of magnetic multilayers", *J. Magn. Mater.* V 159, L1-L7 (1996), has recently stimulated considerable interest due to its potential application for spintronic devices such as STT-MRAM on a gigabit scale. J-G. Zhu et al. has described another spintronic device called a spin transfer oscillator (STO) in "Microwave Assisted Magnetic Recording", *IEEE Trans. on Magnetics*, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 125-131 (2008) where a spin transfer

momentum effect is relied upon to enable recording at a head field significantly below the medium coercivity in a perpendicular recording geometry. The STO comprises a stack including a spin injection layer (SIL) with PMA character, an oscillating field generation layer (FGL) with in-plane anisotropy, and a spacer between the SIL and FGL.

Both MRAM and STT-MRAM may have a MTJ element based on a tunneling magneto-resistance (TMR) effect wherein a stack of layers has a configuration in which two ferromagnetic layers typically referred to as a reference layer and free layer are separated by a thin non-magnetic dielectric layer. The MTJ element is typically formed between a bottom electrode such as a first conductive line and a top electrode which is a second conductive line at locations where the top electrode crosses over the bottom electrode in a MRAM device. In another aspect, a MTJ element in a read head sensor may be based on a giant magnetoresistance (GMR) effect that relates to a spin valve structure where a reference layer and free layer are separated by a metal spacer. In sensor structures, the MTJ is formed between two shields and there is a hard bias layer adjacent to the MTJ element to provide longitudinal biasing for stabilizing the free layer magnetization.

A high performance MRAM MTJ element is characterized by a high tunneling magnetoresistive (TMR) ratio which is dR/R where R is the minimum resistance of the MTJ element and dR is the change in resistance observed by changing the magnetic state of the free layer. For Spin-MRAM (STT-MRAM), high anisotropy and greater thermal stability is achieved with a high H_c and high energy barrier $E_b = K_u V / K_B T$ where K_u is the magnetic anisotropy, V is the switching magnetic volume, K_B is the Boltzmann constant, and T is the measurement temperature.

Furthermore, a high TMR ratio and resistance uniformity $R_p(\text{cov})$, and a low switching current are desirable.

Materials with PMA are of particular importance for magnetic and magnetic-optic recording applications. Spintronic devices with perpendicular magnetic anisotropy have an advantage over MRAM devices based on in-plane anisotropy in that they can satisfy the thermal stability requirement and have a low switching current density but also have no limit of cell aspect ratio. As a result, spin valve structures based on PMA are capable of scaling for higher packing density which is one of the key challenges for future MRAM applications and other spintronic devices. Theoretical expressions predict that perpendicular magnetic devices have the potential to achieve a switching current lower than that of in-plane magnetic devices with the same magnetic anisotropy field according to S. Magnin et al. in *Nat. Mater.* 5, 210 (2006).

When the size of a memory cell is reduced, much larger magnetic anisotropy is required because the thermal stability factor is proportional to the volume of the memory cell. Generally, PMA materials have magnetic anisotropy larger than that of conventional in-plane soft magnetic materials which utilize shape anisotropy. Thus, magnetic devices with PMA are advantageous for achieving a low switching current and high thermal stability. For spin torque applications, a reference layer with high H_c and low stray field is required. Preferably, a synthetic antiferromagnetic (SAF) reference layer is employed with a coupling layer (spacer) formed between two ferromagnetic layers (RL1 and RL2) having PMA in opposite directions. Several PMA material systems for RL1 and RL2 have been reported and include various ordered (i.e. L10) alloys, unordered alloys, and laminates represented by $(\text{Pt/Fe})_n$, $(\text{Pd/Co})_n$, $(\text{Ni/Co})_n$, and the like, where n is the lamination

number. Magnetization direction for RL1 and RL2 is anti-parallel due to the RKKY coupling through the spacer layer which is typically Ru or Cu. However, there is a big challenge to increase the RKKY (anti-ferromagnetic) coupling strength to enhance magnetic stability and thermal stability of the reference layer to be compatible with semiconductor processes that reach as high as 400°C or higher. Note that a higher annealing temperature of >350°C is also useful in achieving an enhanced TMR ratio.

None of existing technology is known to provide high Hc and thermal stability in a PMA layer that will withstand high temperature processing up to 400°C or greater which is required in semiconductor fabrication methods. Therefore, a low cost multilayer with high PMA, high Hc, and improved thermal stability is needed to enable PMA materials to be more widely accepted in a variety of magnetic device applications.

SUMMARY

One objective of the present disclosure is to provide a multilayer MTJ stack in a magnetic device that has a Hc value greater than about 300 Oe after high temperature annealing to at least 400°C, and a high magnetoresistance and thermal stability factor (Δ) that is suitable for spintronic applications such as spin-torque MRAM (STT-MRAM), and microwave assisted magnetic recording (MAMR).

A second objective of the present disclosure is to provide a MTJ element with at least a reference layer and/or free layer having a SAF configuration and with high PMA that satisfies the first objective.

According to one embodiment of the present disclosure, these objectives are achieved by sequentially forming an underlayer (seed layer) and a composite

reference layer on a substrate wherein the reference layer has a RL1/dusting layer 1/spacer/ dusting layer 2/RL2 configuration in which the RL1 and RL2 ferromagnetic layers have PMA character, the spacer is Ru, Cu, Cr, or other metals that induce RKKY or antiferromagnetic (AFM) coupling between RL1 and RL2 layers, and the dusting layers enhance the RKKY coupling. The seed layer may be NiCr, Pd, Pt, Ta, Ru, or other materials that maintain or enhance PMA in an overlying RL1 layer. In one aspect, RL1 and RL2 are laminates such as (Ni/Co) $_n$, (Pt/Co) $_n$, (Pd/Co) $_n$, and the like where n is the lamination number which is from 2 to 30, and preferably 4 to 10. However, Co may be replaced by a Co-based alloy such as Co_xFe_y or $\text{Co}_x\text{Fe}_y\text{B}_z$ wherein $x > y$, and $x > z$, and Ni may be replaced by a Ni rich alloy such as NiFe or NiFeB. In an alternative embodiment, RL1 and RL2 are $L1_0$ ordered alloys including FePt, CoPt, and FePd. In yet another embodiment, RL1 and RL2 may be rare earth-transition metal (RE-TM) films such as TbFeCo, GdFeCo, and the like. A key feature is the dusting layer formed on top and bottom surfaces of the middle coupling layer. The dusting layer may be Co or an alloy thereof such as CoFe with a thickness between 1 and 50 Angstroms, and preferably from 1 to 10 Angstroms. The dusting layers may be deposited at room temperature or at elevated temperature up to 400°C. Subsequently, annealing up to 400°C or higher, and preferably 350°C, may be employed to further improve PMA properties and thereby increase H_c and H_k .

In a first embodiment that represents a bottom spin valve configuration, a seed layer, reference layer, tunnel barrier layer, free layer, and cap layer are sequentially formed on a substrate. The reference layer may have a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 configuration wherein RL1 and RL2 have a laminated structure, $L1_0$ ordered composition, or are made of a RE-TM film as described previously, and DL1 and

DL2 are dusting layers. In one aspect, the bottom spin valve configuration is a MTJ structure formed in a STT-MRAM. The free layer may have in-plane magnetization and serve as the field generation layer (FGL) in a MAMR structure while the RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 reference layer functions as a spin injection layer (SIL) in a STO embodiment with a seed layer/SIL/non-magnetic spacer/FGL/cap layer configuration. The present disclosure also encompasses an embodiment where both of the reference layer and free layer have a SAF configuration represented by RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2, and FL1/DL5/spacer/DL6/FL2, respectively, where FL1 and FL2 have PMA and are RKKY coupled through a spacer sandwiched between DL5 and DL6 dusting layers.

In another embodiment, the MTJ element has a top spin valve configuration in a STT-MRAM scheme represented by seed layer/free layer/tunnel barrier/reference layer/cap layer. In either bottom or top spin valve structures, the reference layer may have a dual SAF configuration that is represented by RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2/DL3/ spacer 2/DL4/RL3.

According to a third embodiment, there may be a transitional layer made of CoFeB/Co or the like inserted between the reference layer and tunnel barrier layer to improve magnetoresistance in the MTJ.

In all embodiments, we observe that a substantial coercivity (H_c) and RKKY exchange coupling strength is maintained even after annealing at 400°C for one hour. The dual SAF structure is believed to further improve H_c and thermal stability in the multilayer MTJ stack.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a cross-sectional view of a composite reference layer having a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 configuration formed according to an embodiment of the present disclosure.

FIG. 2 is a cross-sectional view of the multilayer stack shown in FIG. 1 with a transitional layer formed as the uppermost layer in the reference layer stack according to a second embodiment of the present disclosure.

FIG. 3 is a cross-sectional view of a composite reference layer having a dual synthetic antiferromagnetic (SAF) configuration represented by RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/ RL2/DL3/second spacer/DL4/RL3 formed according to a third embodiment of the present disclosure.

FIG. 4 is a cross-sectional view of a magnetic tunnel junction (MTJ) with a bottom spin valve configuration and containing a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 reference layer formed according to an embodiment of the present disclosure.

FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional view of a MTJ having a reference layer made of a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 stack and a free layer comprising a FL1/DL3/spacer/DL4/ FL2 multilayer stack according to another embodiment of the present disclosure.

FIG. 6 depicts a cross-sectional view of a top spin valve embodiment.

FIG. 7 shows MH loop results for a RL1/spacer/RL2 multilayer configuration (curve A) wherein RL1 is $(\text{Ni/Co})_{12}$, RL2 is $(\text{Co/Ni})_{10}$, and the spacer is Ru, and curve B shows H_c for a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 where RL1 is $(\text{Ni/Co})_{12}$, DL1 and DL2 are Co, RL2 is $(\text{Co/Ni})_{10}$, and the spacer is Ru according to an embodiment of the present disclosure, and curve C shows H_c for a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/ RL2

stack where DL1 and DL2 are CoFe according to an embodiment of the present disclosure.

FIG. 8 shows MH loop results with improved Hc for a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 multilayer stack where RL1 is (Ni/Co)₁₀ or (Pd/Co)₁₀, DL1 and DL2 are Co, RL2 is (Co/Ni)₈, and the spacer is Ru according to an embodiment of the present disclosure.

FIG. 9 shows the effect of annealing temperature on the MH loop of a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 stack of the present disclosure with a configuration that is [Ni6A/Co2.5A]10/Co4A/Ru4A/Co4A/[Co2.5A/Ni6A]8/CoFeB6A/Co4A/MgO/Ta.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

The present disclosure is a multilayer stack with perpendicular magnetic anisotropy that may be employed as a reference layer, free layer, or dipole layer in magnetic devices such as MRAM and STT-MRAM, in spintronic devices such as MAMR, in various designs of PMA spin valves including MTJ elements, and in PMA magnetic media used in magnetic sensors and data storage. The multilayer stack may be used in devices based on bottom spin valve, top spin valve, or dual spin valve designs as appreciated by those skilled in the art.

Referring to FIG. 1, a reference layer **20** with a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 configuration according to a first embodiment of the present disclosure is formed on an underlayer also referred to as seed layer **15** that has been deposited on a substrate **10**. Reference layer **20** may also be referred to as a reference layer stack and includes RL1 layer **21** and RL2 layer **25** as lower and upper PMA layers, respectively, a spacer **23** that induces RKKY coupling between the RL1 and RL2 layers, and dusting layers DL1 **22**, DL2 **24** which enhance the RKKY coupling between RL1 and RL2 layers. Layers **21-25** may be sequentially sputter deposited

on the seed layer. The substrate may be a bottom electrode in a MRAM, STT-MRAM, or STO, or a bottom shield in a sensor, for example. A seed layer **15** is selected that maintains or enhances PMA H_c and H_k in RL1 layer **21**. The seed layer material may be NiCr as disclosed in related patent application serial number 13/068,398, or Pd, Pt, Ta, Ru or other metals or alloys that maintain or enhance the PMA character of RL1.

The RL1 and RL2 layers **21**, **25** may be a laminated structure such as $(Co/Ni)_n$, $(Co/Pd)_n$, $(Co/Pt)_n$, or other laminated stacks exhibiting PMA where n is between 2 and 30, and preferably from 4 to 10. It should be understood that the aforementioned laminated stacks may also be represented by $(Ni/Co)_n$, $(Pd/Co)_n$, and $(Pt/Co)_n$ depending on which of the metal layers is deposited first on the seed layer. The present disclosure also anticipates that one or more of the laminated layers may be a Co-based alloy such as CoFe or CoFeB as a replacement for Co, and a Ni-based alloy such as NiCo, NiFe, or NiFeB may be a replacement for Ni. Preferably, the Co-based alloy is Co rich wherein the Co content is > 50 atomic%, and the Ni-based alloy is Ni rich wherein the Ni content is > 50 atomic%. Thus, $(CoFe/Ni)_n$, $(CoFeB/Ni)_n$, $(Co/NiFe)_n$, $(Co/NiFeB)_n$, and $(NiCo/Co)_n$ are alternatives for RL1 and RL2 layers. Typically, the Co or Co alloy layer in the laminates has a thickness between 0.5 and 5 Angstroms while the Pd, Pt, Ni, or Ni alloy layer has a thickness from 2 to 10 Angstroms. Preferably, the Co or Co alloy layer is thinner than the Ni, Ni alloy, Pt, or Pd layer. Note that RL1 and RL2 layers may have the same composition or may be made of different laminated stacks. Furthermore, the number of laminations in the RL1 layer **21** may differ from the number of laminations in the RL2 layer **25**.

In another embodiment, RL1 layer **21** and RL2 layer **25** are comprised of L_{10} ordered alloys such as FePt, CoPt, FePd, NiPt, FeNi, FeCu, MnAl, MnPt, MnPd, CuAu, and the like that have PMA character. In this case, the RL1 and RL2 layers each have a thickness from 15 to 150 Angstroms. In yet another embodiment, RL1 and RL2 layers may be made of rare earth-transition metal (RE-TM) films including TbFeCo, GdFeCo, and the like that exhibit PMA. It should be understood that the present disclosure also anticipates that one of the RL1 and RL2 layers may be one of the aforementioned laminates, L_{10} alloy, or a RE-TM alloy while the other of the RL1 or RL2 layers is another of the laminates, L_{10} alloy, or a RE-TM alloy. In other words, RL1 layer **21** may be a laminate such as $(\text{Ni/Co})_n$ while RL2 layer **25** is $(\text{Pd/Co})_n$, $(\text{Pt/Co})_n$, a L_{10} alloy or RE-TM alloy, for example.

The spacer **23** is one of Ru, Cu, Cr, Rh, Ir, or other metals capable of inducing RKKY coupling between RL1 and RL2 layers **21**, **25**. Preferably, Ru is selected as the spacer because a higher coupling strength is achieved with a RL1/DL1/Ru/DL2/RL2 combination. According to the present disclosure, the thickness of the metal spacer is between 2 and 20 Angstroms with 4 or 9 Angstroms being preferred since either of these spacer thicknesses will lead to the largest RKKY anti-parallel coupling strength in a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 configuration, especially when DL1 and DL2 are made of Co or an alloy thereof, and RL1 and RL2 have PMA character.

D1 layer **22** and D2 layer **24** are referred to as dusting layers and contact bottom and top surfaces, respectively, of the spacer **23**. We have surprisingly found that inserting a dusting layer made of Co or a Co rich alloy such as CoFe, CoTa, CoZr, CoHf, CoMg, or CoNb between the spacer and RL1, and a second dusting layer of Co or a Co rich alloy between the spacer and RL2 layer provides

an advantage in substantially enhancing the RKKY coupling strength thereby improving thermal stability of the reference layer **20**. A Co rich alloy is defined as one having a Co content of 50 atomic% or greater. Furthermore, a subsequent anneal to at least 400°C, and preferably about 350°C, after all layers in the reference layer stack are deposited may be employed to further improve PMA properties by increasing Hc and Hk. DL1 layer **22** and DL2 layer **24** may be sputter deposited at room temperature (RT) or at elevated temperatures up to 400°C or even higher. The thickness of each of the DL1 and DL2 dusting layers is between 1 and 50 Angstroms, and preferably between 2 and 15 Angstroms. With dusting layer thicknesses greater than about 15 Angstroms, the pinned (reference) layer has in-plane anisotropy rather than PMA (90 degree angle to plane of layer) or a canted magnetization angle where the magnetic moment is between 0 and 90 degrees with respect to the plane of the reference layer. It should be understood that the present disclosure encompasses an embodiment wherein only one dusting layer **22** or **24** is employed in a reference layer stack. However, those skilled in the art will appreciate there is a substantial benefit in terms of higher RKKY coupling and greater thermal stability when using both dusting layers **22**, **24** rather than only one.

Referring to FIG. 2, a second embodiment of reference layer **20** is depicted and includes a transitional layer **26** formed as the uppermost layer in the reference layer stack. The transitional layer may be comprised of CoFeB, CoFe, or composites thereof, or with Co such as CoFeB/Co, and is beneficial in magnetic device designs where the reference layer is part of a MTJ and interfaces with a tunnel barrier layer made of an oxide as explained later with regard to FIG. 4. According to one embodiment, the transitional layer is formed between the (111)

PMA RL2 layer and a (100) MgO tunnel barrier, and is sufficiently thin to preserve the PMA property of the reference layer **20** and yet thick enough to provide a high magnetoresistance (MR ratio). Thus, in a CoFeB/Co transitional layer **26**, the CoFeB portion may be from 4 to 15 Angstroms thick, and preferably 6 Angstroms, while the Co layer portion is from 3 to 8 Angstroms, and preferably 4 Angstroms thick. In one aspect, the CoFeB portion of the transitional layer may have a $\text{Co}_{20}\text{Fe}_{60}\text{B}_{20}$ composition. Note that CoFeB/MgO/CoFeB reference layer/tunnel barrier/free layer configurations are known to yield a high MR ratio. However, Co may be used as the uppermost layer in the reference layer stack and the interface with the tunnel barrier layer since it is more resistant to oxidation than a CoFeB (or CoFe) layer. In other words, in a conventional MTJ it is possible for oxygen to migrate out of a MgO tunnel barrier layer into a reference layer thereby causing partial oxidation of CoFeB or the like, which leads to a degradation in the MR ratio.

Referring to FIG. 3, a third embodiment of the present disclosure is depicted wherein the reference layer has a dual SAF configuration. In this scheme, the SAF configuration in the first embodiment is employed as the bottom portion of the composite reference layer **20**. Additional layers including dusting layers DL3, DL4, a second spacer, and a third reference layer RL3 are formed on the RL2 layer to yield a configuration represented by RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2/DL3/second spacer/DL4/RL3. Thus, DL3 layer **27**, second spacer **28**, DL4 layer **29**, and RL3 layer **31** are sequentially formed on a top surface of the RL2 layer **25**. The second spacer **28** may be made of the same material as spacer **23**. Furthermore, DL3 and DL4 layers may be comprised of the same materials used for DL1 and DL2 layers, and RL3 layer **31** is selected from the same group of PMA materials as described with respect to RL1 layer **21** and RL2 layer **25**. It is believed that the dual SAF

reference layer design will further improve thermal stability and Hc of reference layer 20.

Referring to FIG. 4, according to one embodiment of the present disclosure, the reference layer 20 with or without the transitional layer 26 is formed in a MTJ with a bottom spin valve configuration wherein the seed layer 15, reference layer 20, non-magnetic spacer 30, free layer 35, and a cap layer 50 are sequentially formed on substrate 10. In one aspect, the MTJ is part of a MRAM or STT-MRAM structure. For a bottom spin valve design, the resulting MTJ has a seed/RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2/ CoFeB/Co/non-magnetic spacer/free layer/cap layer configuration. Alternatively, the reference layer 20 serves as a spin injection layer and free layer 35 functions as a field generation layer in a STO device. The present disclosure also encompasses an embodiment with a top spin valve structure wherein the free layer 35, non-magnetic spacer 30, reference layer 20, and cap layer 50 are consecutively formed on seed layer 15 (not shown). When the reference layer with a transitional layer 26 is formed in a top spin valve structure, the Co portion of layer 26 contacts the non-magnetic spacer 30 and the CoFeB portion contacts the overlying reference layer to give a seed/free layer/non-magnetic spacer/Co/CoFeB/RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2/cap layer configuration.

Returning to FIG. 4 and a bottom spin valve structure, the non-magnetic spacer 30 forms a first interface with a top surface of reference layer 20 and a second interface with a bottom surface of the free layer 35. The non-magnetic spacer may be comprised of Cu or another high conductivity metal or metal alloy in a giant magnetoresistance (GMR) embodiment. The present disclosure also anticipates a GMR embodiment having a current confining path (CCP) structure in which a dielectric layer with metal paths therein is sandwiched between two metal layers

(i.e. Cu) as appreciated by those skilled in the art. Alternatively, the spacer **30** may be comprised of a dielectric material such as MgO, AlO_x, TiO_x, ZnO, or other metal oxides or metal nitrides in a tunnel magnetoresistance (TMR) configuration.

In one embodiment, the free layer **35** is a magnetic (ferromagnetic) layer such as CoFeB, CoFe, or combinations thereof having in-plane magnetization or out-of-plane magnetization in a MTJ for MRAM or STT-MRAM. However, the free layer may function as a field generation (oscillator) layer having a magnetic moment that is capable of switching from one direction along an easy axis (not shown) to an opposite direction when sufficient spin torque is applied in a STO design.

A cap layer **50** is formed on the free layer **35** and may have a Ru, Ta, Ru/Ta, or Ru/Ta/Ru configuration where the upper Ru layer is used to provide oxidation resistance and excellent electrical contact to an overlying second electrode (not shown) while the lower Ru layer is a barrier that prevents migration of Ta (oxygen gettering layer) into the free layer. Optionally, other capping layer materials used in the art may be selected as the cap layer **50**.

According to another embodiment shown in FIG. 5, the reference layer **20** has a multilayer stack with a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 configuration, and the free layer **40** is a second multilayer stack with a FL1/DL5/spacer/DL6/FL2 configuration where FL1 and FL2 are layers exhibiting perpendicular magnetic anisotropy. The spacer between the DL5 and DL6 layers induces RKKY coupling between the FL1 and FL2 layers and may be made of the same material as the spacer **23** between RL1 and RL2 layers. The dusting layers DL5 and DL6 enhance the RKKY coupling between FL1 and FL2 layers and each preferably has a thickness between 2 and 15 Angstroms. In the exemplary embodiment depicting a bottom spin valve structure, the seed layer **15**, reference layer **20**, non-magnetic spacer **30**, free layer

40, and cap layer **50** are sequentially formed on a substrate **10**. Free layer **40** comprises FL1 layer **41**, DL5 layer **42**, spacer **43**, DL6 layer **44**, and FL2 layer **45** wherein layers **41**, **45** may have the same composition as RL1 and RL2 layers in reference layer **20**. Therefore, one or both of the FL1 and FL2 layers may have a laminated structure represented by $(\text{Ni/Co})_m$, $(\text{Pd/Co})_m$, $(\text{Pt/Co})_m$, $(\text{Ni/CoFe})_m$, $(\text{Ni/CoFeB})_m$, $(\text{NiFe/Co})_m$, $(\text{NiCo/Co})_m$, or $(\text{NiFeB/Co})_m$. On the other hand, FL1 and FL2 layers may have a different composition and lamination number than that of RL1 and RL2 layers such that the lamination number "m" in the FL1 and FL2 layers is from 2 to 4, and preferably 3. Likewise, DL5 and DL6 layers may differ in composition but are preferably selected from Co, CoFe, or a Co alloy such as CoFeB. The multilayer stack employed as the free layer **40** advantageously reduces the magnetic interaction between free layer and reference layer **20** for minimizing the offset field of the free layer after patterning.

The K_u (anisotropy constant) for the free layer will impact the E_b (energy barrier) of the memory cell and it is believed that the insertion of dusting layers **42**, **44** could also increase the PMA K_u of the free layer thereby increasing E_b and enhancing the retention time of STT-MRAM designs. The lamination number "m" in free layer **40** is minimized to between 2 and 4 in order to prevent K_u from becoming too high and requiring a substantially higher write current when switching the free layer.

In one embodiment, the free layer has a $(\text{Co/Ni})_m/\text{Co}/\text{Ru}/\text{Co}/(\text{Co/Ni})_m$ configuration wherein the number of laminations "m" in the FL1 and FL2 layers is 3 and the Ru spacer thickness is preferably 9 Angstroms thick. Note that a synthetic antiferromagnetic coupling (SAF) structure is used for the free layer so that magnetostatic coupling between the reference layer and free layer will be

minimized. As mentioned previously, the RL1 layer **21** may not be the same material as that selected for RL2 layer **25**. Likewise, FL1 layer **41** may have a different composition than selected for FL2 layer **45**. For example, the FL1 layer may be (Pd/Co)_m while the FL2 layer is (Ni/Co)_m. According to one aspect of the present disclosure, all DL1, DL2, DL5, and DL6 layers are Co, CoFe, or a Co alloy. However, one or more of the dusting layers **22, 24, 42, 44** may have a composition different from the other dusting layers.

One skilled in the art will also appreciate that the reference layer **20** may have a dual SAF design as described previously in the same spin valve structure with composite free layer **40**.

The present disclosure also anticipates a top spin valve design as depicted in FIG. 6 wherein free layer **40**, non-magnetic spacer **30**, reference layer **20**, and cap layer **50** are consecutively formed on seed layer **15**. The resulting MTJ configuration with a single SAF reference layer scheme is represented as seed layer/FL1/DL3/spacer/ DL4/FL2/non-magnetic spacer/RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2/cap layer. Furthermore there may be a transitional layer such as Co/CoFeB inserted between the non-magnetic spacer and RL1 layer as described previously.

Once all of the layers in the one or more multilayer stacks and MTJ are formed, an annealing process may be performed that is comprised of a temperature between 200°C and 500°C, and preferably between 300°C and 400°C, for a period of 1 minute to 10 hours. Thereafter, the spin valve structure may be patterned to form a plurality of MRAM (or STT-MRAM) memory cells or STO elements on the substrate **10** by a well known photolithography and etch sequence. In an embodiment where the substrate is a bottom electrode, the

bottom electrode is patterned simultaneously with the overlying spin valve stack to enable a higher density of patterned structures for advanced technology designs.

Example 1

To demonstrate the benefits of the present disclosure, unpatterned multilayer stacks were fabricated with and without dusting layers DL1, DL2 described previously. Each multilayer structure has a seed layer/reference layer/cap layer configuration wherein a free layer and non-magnetic spacer have been omitted. In each case, there is a 50 Angstrom thick NiCr seed layer, and a 50 Angstrom thick Ta cap layer. All layers were deposited at RT and annealed at 300°C for 1 hour. In the (Ni/Co) laminates used for the reference layers, each Co layer is 2.5 Angstroms thick and each Ni layer is 6 Angstroms thick. The Ru spacer is maintained at 4 Angstroms thickness in all examples. Results were obtained by a vibrating sample magnetometer (VSM). FIG. 7 (curve A) shows MH curves for a conventional stack where the RL1/spacer/RL2 reference layer is (Ni/Co)₁₂/Ru/(Ni/Co)₁₀. Curves B and C in FIG. 5 show MH loop results for multilayer stacks according to an embodiment of the present disclosure wherein the reference layers are (Ni/Co)₁₂/Co4/Ru/Co4/(Ni/Co)₁₀ and (Ni/Co)₁₂/CoFe4/Ru/CoFe4/(Ni/Co)₁₀, respectively. In the curve B example, 4 Angstrom thick Co layers are used for DL1 and DL2, and in the curve C example, 4 Angstrom thick Co₇₅Fe₂₅ layers are employed for DL1 and DL2.

The MH curves show that the H_c (coercivity) of the reference structure without dusting layers is about 2000 Oe (curve A). H_c is increased to over 4000 Oe by including Co dusting layers (curve B) or CoFe dusting layers (curve C). There is clearly an improved perpendicular H_c component in a reference (SAF) structure by

adding a dusting layer on top and bottom surfaces of the Ru spacer which confirms an enhanced RKKY coupling strength with the added dusting layers DL1 and DL2.

Example 2

A second experiment was performed to demonstrate that the dusting layers of the present disclosure are also effective in achieving high Hc for laminated RL1 and RL2 layers other than (Ni/Co)_n. Two additional multilayer structures were fabricated similar to those described in Example 1. FIG. 8 (curve 60) shows a MH loop for a stack having a NiCr/(Ni/Co)₁₀/Co4/Ru/Co4/(Ni/Co)₈/Ta configuration wherein the RL1 layer has 10 laminations and the RL2 layer has 8 laminations of (Ni/Co). In FIG. 8 (curve 61), a MH loop is illustrated for a multilayer structure in which the RL1 layer in the multilayer stack related to curve 60 is replaced with a (Pd/Co)₁₀ laminate to give a NiCr/(Pd/Co)₁₀/Co4/Ru/Co4/(Ni/Co)₈/Ta configuration. The complete stacks are

substrate/NiCr50/(Ni6/Co2.5)_{x10}/Co4/Ru4/Co4/(Co2.5/Ni6)_{x8}/Ta50 and
substrate/NiCr50/(Pd8/Co3)_{x10}/Co4/Ru4/Co4/(Co2.5/Ni6)_{x8}/Ta50, respectively.

The resulting films have a 4 Angstrom thick Co dusting layer on top and bottom surfaces of a 4 Angstrom thick Ru spacer and both display high coercivity of > 4000 Oe and good squareness. It is believed that dusting layers DL1 and DL2 will also be effective in enhancing Hc of PMA reference layers RL1 and RL2 comprised of L1₀ phase materials or RE-TM materials as described earlier.

Example 3

In a third experiment, a reference layer was fabricated with a CoFeB/Co transitional layer as the uppermost layer in the reference layer stack according to

an embodiment mentioned previously. The RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 multilayer stack was formed on a Si/SiO₂ substrate and is suitable to be used as a reference layer in a MTJ exhibiting PMA in a STT-MRAM device. The test structure also includes a NiCr seed layer, a MgO tunnel barrier, and a Ta cap layer and has the following configuration where the number following each layer is the thickness in Angstroms: NiCr50/(Co_{2.5}/Ni₆)₁₀/Co4/Ru4/Co4/(Co_{2.5}/Ni₆)₈/CoFeB6/Co4/MgO11//Ta50. The transitional layer is thin enough to preserve the PMA property in the reference layer and yet has sufficient thickness to provide high magnetoresistance.

Annealing was carried out at temperatures from 150°C to 400°C for 1 hour and the resulting MH loop results are illustrated in FIG. 9. As indicated by curve 74, high H_c above 3500 Oe can be maintained in the reference layer even after a 400°C anneal process. There is essentially no change in H_c when comparing annealing at 150°C to 250°C (curve 71 vs. 72). A slight reduction in H_c occurs when the annealing temperature reaches 300°C as indicated in curve 73. As a result, the MTJ with a reference layer including dusting layers as described herein will be compatible with high temperature semiconductor back end of line (BEOL) processing, a significant improvement over current MTJ technology. We observed that a conventional reference layer without a dusting layer did not maintain stability after a 400°C one hour anneal since the H_c was reduced to less than 300 Oe.

The benefits of the present disclosure are an improved PMA (H_c and H_k) for a reference layer in a magnetic device, and improved compatibility with high temperature processing up to at least 400°C that makes the multilayer stacks described herein suitable for a variety of applications including advanced STT-MRAM devices. Furthermore, a multilayer stack with a dusting layer may be used

as a free layer for Ku enhancement and increasing the retention time of the memory cell for STT-MRAM designs.

While this disclosure has been particularly shown and described with reference to, the preferred embodiment thereof, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes in form and details may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of this disclosure.

We claim:

1. A multilayer stack having a thermal stability to at least 400°C in a magnetic device, comprising:
 - (a) a seed layer formed on a substrate;
 - (b) a first reference (RL1) layer and a second reference (RL2) layer each exhibiting perpendicular magnetic anisotropy;
 - (c) a spacer that induces RKKY (antiferromagnetic) coupling between the RL1 and RL2 layers; and
 - (d) a first dusting layer (DL1) and a second dusting layer (DL2) that enhance the RKKY coupling between the RL1 and RL2 layers, the multilayer stack has a configuration in which RL1, DL1, spacer, DL2, and RL2 layers are consecutively deposited on the seed layer to give a seed/RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 configuration.
2. The multilayer stack of claim 1 wherein the RL1 and RL2 layers are made of a laminate that is (Ni/Co)_n, (Pd/Co)_n, (Pt/Co)_n, (Ni/CoFe)_n, (Ni/CoFeB)_n, (NiFe/Co)_n, (NiFeB/Co)_n, or (NiCo/Co)_n where n is the number of laminations and n is between about 2 and 30.
3. The multilayer stack of claim 1 wherein the spacer is Ru, Rh, Ir, Cu, or Cr and has a thickness from about 2 to 20 Angstroms.
4. The multilayer stack of claim 1 wherein RL1 and RL2 layers are a L1₀ alloy that is FePt, CoPt, FePd, NiPt, FeNi, FeCu, MnAl, MnPt, MnPd, or CuAu.
5. The multilayer stack of claim 1 wherein the RL1 and RL2 layers are made of a rare earth-transition metal (RE-TM) alloy.
6. The multilayer stack of claim 1 wherein the DL1 and DL2 dusting layers are made of Co, CoFe, or a Co alloy.

7. The multilayer stack of claim 1 wherein the seed layer is comprised of NiCr, Ta, Pd, Pt, or Ru.

8. The multilayer stack of claim 1 further comprising a transitional layer made of CoFeB/Co as the uppermost layer in the multilayer stack, the CoFeB layer contacts the RL2 layer.

9. A magnetic device having at thermal stability to at least 400°C, comprising:

(a) a reference layer having a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 configuration wherein RL1 and RL2 are reference layers exhibiting perpendicular magnetic anisotropy, the spacer induces RKKY (antiferromagnetic) coupling between the RL1 and RL2 layers, and DL1 and DL2 are dusting layers that enhance the RKKY-coupling;

(b) a free layer; and

(c) a non-magnetic spacer formed between the reference layer and free layer.

10. The magnetic device of claim 9 that has a bottom spin valve structure wherein the reference layer, non-magnetic spacer, and free layer are sequentially formed on a seed layer.

11. The magnetic device of claim 9 that has a top spin valve configuration wherein the free layer, non-magnetic spacer, and reference layer are sequentially formed on a seed layer.

12. The magnetic device of claim 10 wherein the reference layer further comprises a transitional layer made of CoFeB/Co in which the Co layer interfaces with the non-magnetic spacer and the CoFeB layer contacts the RL2 layer to give a seed/RL1/DL1/ spacer/DL2/RL2/CoFeB/Co/non-magnetic spacer/free layer configuration.

13. The magnetic device of claim 11 wherein the reference layer further comprises a transitional layer made of Co/CoFeB in which the Co layer interfaces with the non-magnetic spacer and the CoFeB layer contacts the RL1 layer to give a seed/free layer/ non-magnetic spacer/Co/CoFeB/RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 configuration.

14. The magnetic device of claim 9 wherein one or both of the RL1 and RL2 layers have a laminated structure represented by (Ni/Co)_n, (Pd/Co)_n, (Pt/Co)_n, (Ni/CoFe)_n, (NiFe/Co)_n, or (NiCo/Co)_n where n is the number of laminations and n is between about 2 and 30.

15. The magnetic device of claim 9 wherein one or both of the RL1 and RL2 layers are a L₁₀ alloy that is FePt, CoPt, FePd, NiPt, FeNi, FeCu, MnAl, MnPt, MnPd, or CuAu, or are made of a rare earth-transition metal (RE-TM) alloy.

16. The magnetic device of claim 9 wherein the DL1 and DL2 dusting layers are Co, CoFe, or a Co alloy with a thickness from about 2 to 15 Angstroms.

17. A magnetic device having a thermal stability to at least 400°C, comprising:

(a) a reference layer with a first multilayer stack in a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 configuration wherein RL1 and RL2 are reference layers exhibiting perpendicular magnetic anisotropy (PMA), the spacer induces RKKY (antiferromagnetic) coupling between the RL1 and RL2 layers, and DL1 and DL2 are dusting layers that enhance the RKKY coupling;

(b) a free layer with a second multilayer stack having a FL1/DL5/spacer/DL6/FL2 configuration wherein FL1 and FL2 are ferromagnetic layers that exhibit PMA, the spacer induces RKKY coupling between the FL1 and FL2 layers, and DL5 and DL6 are dusting layers that enhance the RKKY coupling between the FL1 and FL2 layers; and

(c) a non-magnetic spacer formed between the reference layer and free layer.

18. The magnetic device of claim 17 that has a bottom spin valve structure wherein the reference layer, non-magnetic spacer, and free layer are sequentially formed on a seed layer.

19. The magnetic device of claim 17 that has a top spin valve configuration wherein the free layer, non-magnetic spacer, and reference layer are sequentially formed on a seed layer.

20. The magnetic device of claim 17 wherein the reference layer further comprises a transitional layer made of CoFeB/Co in which the Co layer interfaces with the non-magnetic spacer and the CoFeB layer contacts the RL2 layer.

21. The magnetic device of claim 17 wherein one or both of the RL1 and RL2 layers have a laminated structure represented by $(\text{Ni/Co})_n$, $(\text{Pd/Co})_n$, $(\text{Pt/Co})_n$, $(\text{Ni/CoFe})_n$, $(\text{Ni/CoFeB})_n$, $(\text{NiFe/Co})_n$, $(\text{NiFeB/Co})_n$, or $(\text{NiCo/Co})_n$ where n is the number of laminations and n is between about 2 and 30.

22. The magnetic device of claim 17 wherein one or both of the FL1 and FL2 layers have a laminated structure represented by $(\text{Ni/Co})_m$, $(\text{Pd/Co})_m$, $(\text{Pt/Co})_m$, $(\text{Ni/CoFe})_m$, $(\text{Ni/CoFeB})_m$, $(\text{NiFe/Co})_m$, $(\text{NiFeB/Co})_m$, or $(\text{NiCo/Co})_m$ where m is the number of laminations and m is between about 2 and 4.

23. The magnetic device of claim 17 wherein one or more of the RL1, RL2, FL1, and FL2 layers are a $L1_0$ alloy that is FePt, CoPt, FePd, NiPt, FeNi, FeCu, MnAl, MnPt, MnPd, or CuAu, or are made of a rare earth-transition metal (RE-TM) alloy.

24. The magnetic device of claim 17 wherein the dusting layers DL1, DL2, DL5, and DL6 are comprised of Co, CoFe, or a Co alloy.

25. A spin transfer oscillator (STO) device having a thermal stability to at least 400°C , comprising:

- (a) a seed layer formed on a substrate;
- (b) a spin injection layer having a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 configuration wherein RL1 and RL2 are layers exhibiting perpendicular magnetic anisotropy, the spacer induces RKKY (antiferromagnetic) coupling between the RL1 and RL2 layers, and DL1 and DL2 are dusting layers that enhance the RKKY coupling;
- (c) a field generation layer; and
- (d) a non-magnetic spacer formed between the spin injection layer and field generation layer.

26. A multilayer stack having a thermal stability to at least 400°C in a magnetic device, comprising:

- (a) a seed layer formed on a substrate; and
- (b) a dual synthetic antiferromagnetic (SAF) reference layer formed on the seed layer, the dual SAF reference layer comprises:
 - (1) a first reference (RL1) layer and a second reference (RL2) layer each exhibiting perpendicular magnetic anisotropy;
 - (2) a first spacer that induces RKKY (antiferromagnetic) coupling between the RL1 and RL2 layers;
 - (3) a first dusting layer (DL1) and a second dusting layer (DL2) that enhance the RKKY coupling between the RL1 and RL2 layers;
 - (4) a third reference layer (RL3) formed as the uppermost layer in the multilayer stack;
 - (5) a second spacer that induces RKKY coupling between the RL3 and RL2 layers;

(6) third (DL3) and fourth (DL4) dusting layers that enhance RKKY coupling between the RL2 and RL3 layers, the multilayer stack has a configuration in which RL1, DL1, first spacer, DL2, RL2, DL3, second spacer, DL4, and RL3 layers are consecutively deposited on the seed layer to give a configuration represented by seed/RL1/DL1/first spacer/DL2/RL2/DL3/second spacer/DL4/RL3.

27. The multilayer stack of claim **26** wherein the RL1, RL2, and RL3 layers are made of a laminate that is (Ni/Co)_n, (Pd/Co)_n, (Pt/Co)_n, (Ni/CoFe)_n, (Ni/CoFeB)_n, (NiFe/Co)_n, (NiFeB/Co)_n, or (NiCo/Co)_n where n is the number of laminations and n is between about 2 and 30.

28. The multilayer stack of claim **26** wherein the spacer is Ru, Rh, Ir, Cu, or Cr and has a thickness from about 2 to 20 Angstroms.

29. The multilayer stack of claim **26** wherein RL1, RL2, and RL3 layers are a L₁₀ alloy that is FePt, CoPt, FePd, NiPt, FeNi, FeCu, MnAl, MnPt, MnPd, or CuAu, or are made of a rare earth-transition metal (RE-TM) alloy.

30. The multilayer stack of claim **26** wherein the DL1, DL2, DL3, and DL4 dusting layers are made of Co, CoFe, or a Co alloy.

31. A method of forming a magnetic device having high perpendicular magnetic anisotropy (PMA) comprising:

- (a) depositing a seed layer on a substrate;
- (b) forming a reference layer on the seed layer wherein the reference layer has a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 configuration in which the RL1 and RL2 layers exhibit perpendicular magnetic anisotropy, the spacer induces RKKY (antiferromagnetic coupling) between the RL1 and RL2 layers, and DL1 and

DL2 are dusting layers which enhance the RKKY coupling between the RL1 and RL2 layers:

- (c) forming a non-magnetic spacer on the reference layer;
 - (d) depositing a free layer on the non-magnetic spacer;
 - (e) depositing a cap layer on the free layer to give a multilayer stack with a seed/ reference layer/non-magnetic spacer/free layer/cap layer configuration;
- and
- (f) annealing the multilayer stack.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein the dusting layers are comprised of Co, CoFe, or a Co alloy and are deposited at room temperature or at a temperature up to at least 400°C.

33. The method of claim 31 wherein the annealing step comprises heating the multilayer stack to a temperature between 200°C and 500°C for about 1 minute to 10 hours.

34. The method of claim 31 wherein one or both of the RL1 and RL2 layers have a laminated structure represented by (Ni/Co)_n, (Pd/Co)_n, (Pt/Co)_n, (Ni/CoFe)_n, (Ni/CoFeB)_n, (NiFe/Co)_n, (NiFeB/Co)_n, or (NiCo/Co)_n where n is the number of laminations and n is between about 2 and 30.

35. The method of claim 31 wherein one or more of the RL1 and RL2 layers are a L1₀ alloy that is FePt, CoPt, FePd, NiPt, FeNi, FeCu, MnAl, MnPt, MnPd, or CuAu, or are made of a rare earth-transition metal (RE-TM) alloy.

36. The method of claim 31 further comprising the formation of a transitional layer as the uppermost layer in the reference layer, the transitional layer is comprised of CoFeB/Co and the reference layer has a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2/CoFeB/Co configuration.

37. The method of claim 31 wherein the free layer is a multilayer stack with a RL3/DL3/spacer/DL4/RL4 configuration in which RL3 and RL4 layers exhibit PMA, the spacer induces RKKY coupling between the RL3 and RL4 layers, and DL3 and DL4 are dusting layers that enhance the RKKY coupling between the RL3 and RL4 layers.

38. A method of forming a magnetic device having high perpendicular magnetic anisotropy (PMA) comprising:

- (a) depositing a seed layer on a substrate;
- (b) depositing a free layer on the seed layer;
- (c) forming a non-magnetic spacer on the free layer;
- (d) forming a reference layer on the non-magnetic spacer wherein the reference layer has a RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 configuration in which the RL1 and RL2 layers exhibit perpendicular magnetic anisotropy, the spacer induces RKKY (antiferromagnetic coupling) between the RL1 and RL2 layers, and DL1 and DL2 are dusting layers which enhance the RKKY coupling between the RL1 and RL2 layers:
 - (e) depositing a cap layer on the reference layer to give a multilayer stack with a seed layer/free layer/non-magnetic spacer/reference layer/cap layer configuration; and
 - (f) annealing the multilayer stack.

39. The method of claim 38 wherein the DL1 and DL2 dusting layers are comprised of Co, CoFe, or a Co alloy and are deposited at room temperature or at a temperature up to about 400⁰C.

40. The method of claim 38 wherein the annealing comprises heating the multilayer stack to a temperature between 200°C and 500°C for about 1 minute to 10 hours.

41. The method of claim 38 wherein one or both of the RL1 and RL2 layers have a laminated structure represented by (Ni/Co)_n, (Pd/Co)_n, (Pt/Co)_n, (Ni/CoFe)_n, (Ni/CoFeB)_n, (NiFe/Co)_n, (NiFeB/Co)_n, or (NiCo/Co)_n where n is the number of laminations and n is between about 2 and 30.

42. The method of claim 38 wherein one or more of the RL1 and RL2 layers are a L1₀ alloy that is FePt, CoPt, FePd, NiPt, FeNi, FeCu, MnAl, MnPt, MnPd, or CuAu, or are made of a rare earth-transition metal (RE-TM) alloy.

43. The method of claim 38 further comprising the formation of a transitional layer made of Co/CoFeB as the bottom most layer in the reference layer stack, the reference layer has a Co/CoFeB/RL1/DL1/spacer/DL2/RL2 configuration.

44. The method of claim 38 wherein the free layer is a multilayer stack with a FL1/DL5/spacer/DL6/FL2 configuration in which FL1 and FL2 layers exhibit PMA, the spacer induces RKKY coupling between the FL1 and FL2 layers, and DL5 and DL6 are dusting layers that enhance the RKKY coupling between the FL1 and FL2 layers.

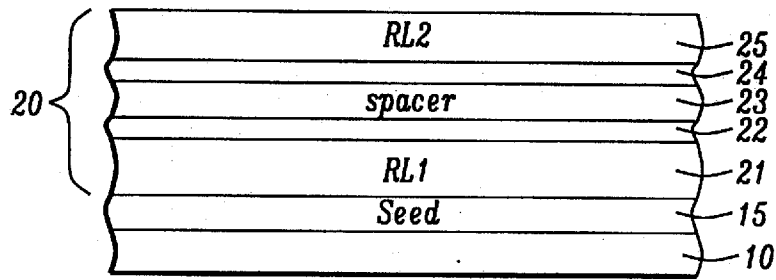


FIG. 1

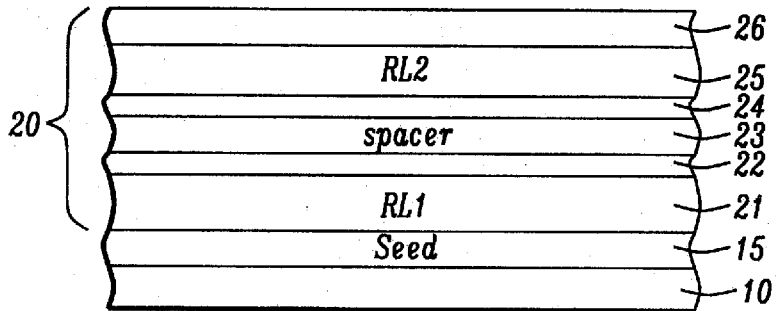


FIG. 2

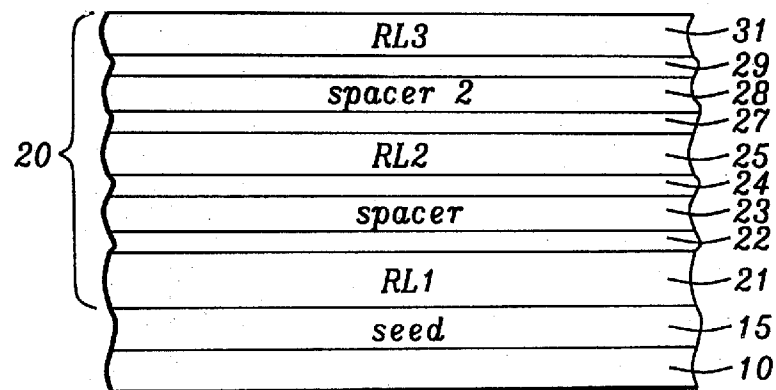


FIG. 3

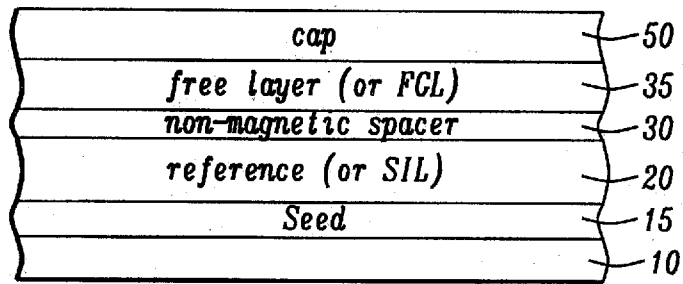


FIG. 4

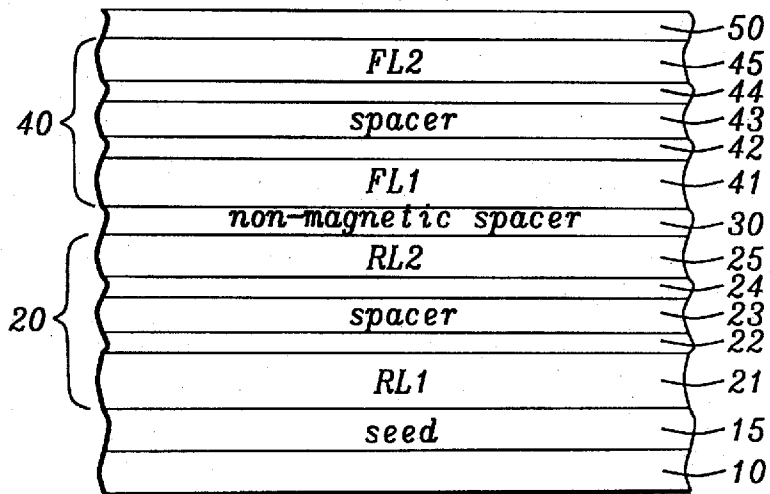


FIG. 5

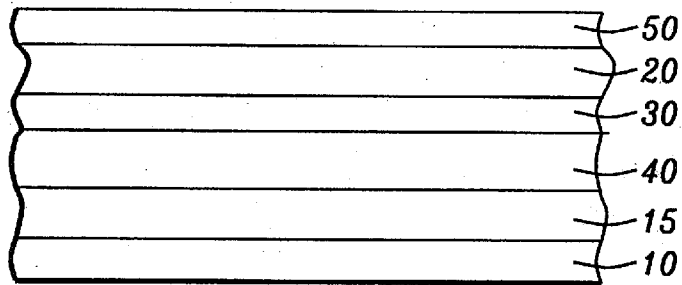


FIG. 6

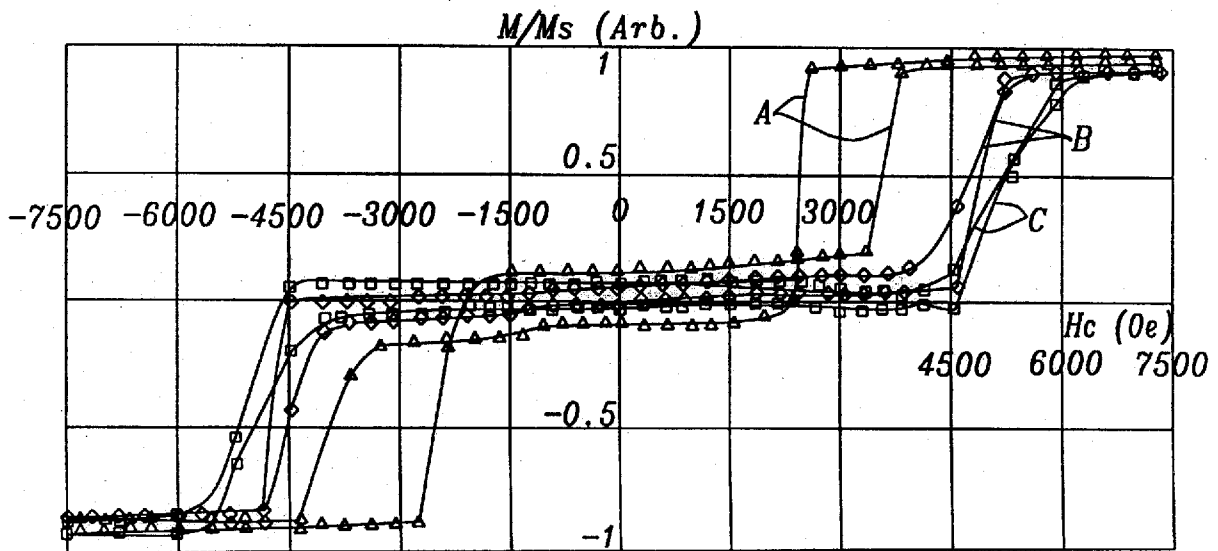


FIG. 7

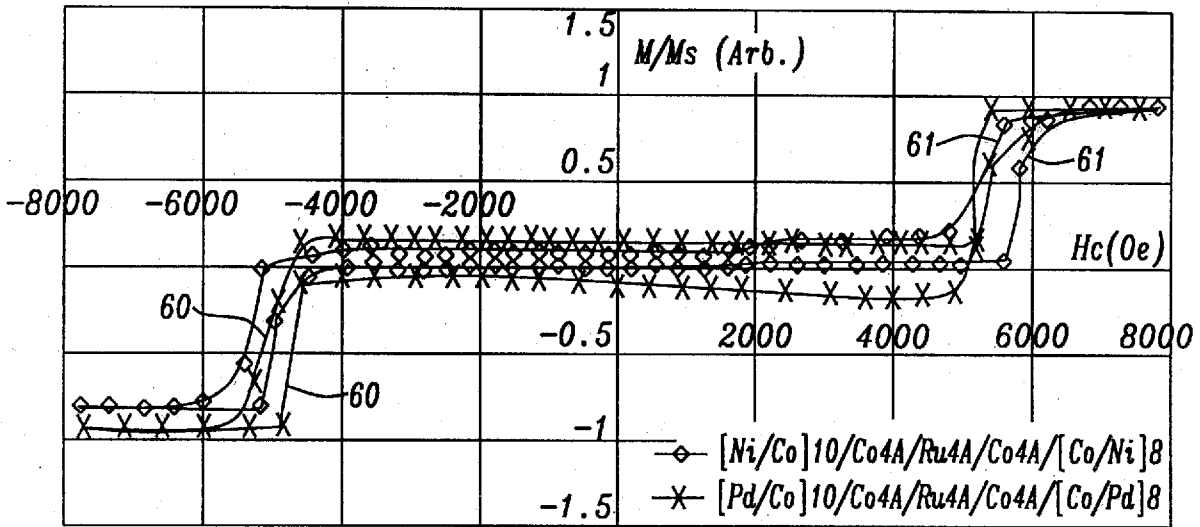


FIG. 8

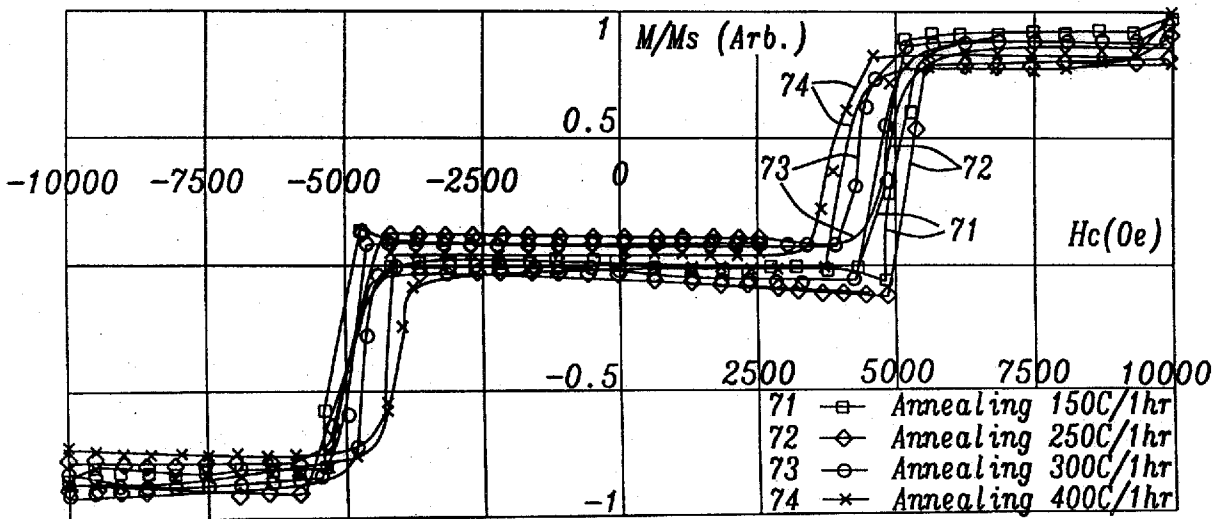


FIG. 9

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US 13/22877

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IPC(8) - H01L 29/82 (2013.01) USPC - 257/421 According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) IPC(8) - H01L 29/82 (2013.01) USPC - 257/421 Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched USPC - 257/E21.002, 257/E29.323, 438/3 (keyword delimited) Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used) PatBase, FreePatentsOnline, GoogleScholar Search Terms - Perpendicular, thermal, stab*, seed, antifer*, cofe, cofeb, ni/co, pd/co, pt/co, ni/cofe, ni/cofeb, nife/co, nifeb/co, nico/co, fept, copt, fepd, nipt, feni, fecu, mnal, mnpt, mnpd, cuau, spin, stack, anisotropy, dust, layer, magnetic, random, access, memory, space*		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 2010/0109110 A1 (Wang et al.) 06 May 2010 (06.05.2010); entire document, especially para [0024]-[0039], [0077]; Fig 4B	1-44
Y	US 2009/0021869 A1 (Kamiguchi et al.) 22 January 2009 (22.01.2009); entire document, especially para [0097], [0137]-[0154], [0204]; Fig 1	1-44
Y	US 2011/0293967 A1 (Zhang et al.) 01 December 2011 (01.12.2011); entire document, especially, para [0034]-[0045], [0060], [0066]	1-44
A	US 2009/0257151 A1 (Zhang et al.) 15 October 2009 (15.10.2009); entire document	1-44
A	US 2005/0164414 A1 (Deak) 28 July 2005 (28.07.2005), Fig. 1; para [0027]-[0033]	1-44
<input type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. <input type="checkbox"/>		
* Special categories of cited documents: "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance "E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified) "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art "&" document member of the same patent family		
Date of the actual completion of the international search 07 March 2013 (07.03.2013)		Date of mailing of the international search report 09 APR 2013
Name and mailing address of the ISA/US Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US, Commissioner for Patents P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450 Facsimile No. 571-273-3201		Authorized officer: Lee W. Young PCT Helpdesk: 571-272-4300 PCT OSP: 571-272-7774