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(54) **ULTRASOUND UNIT AND ULTRASOUND
ENDOSCOPE**

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(58) **Field of Classification Search**

None

See application file for complete search history.

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Primary Examiner — Thomas J Hong

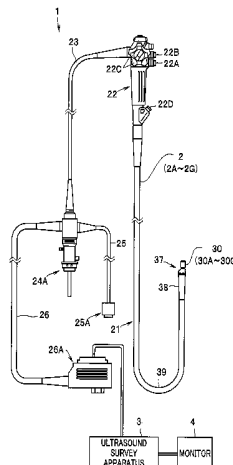
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

An ultrasound unit includes an ultrasound array that has a plurality of ultrasound elements, each of which has a first principal surface that is rectangular where a transmitting and receiving portion, a signal electrode terminal, and a ground electrode terminal are arranged in a longer side direction, longer sides of the ultrasound elements being coupled, one or more short-lines that are connected to a plurality of ground electrode terminals, a ground line that is connected to the short-line, and a plurality of signal lines, each of which is connected to one of the signal electrode terminals, and adjoining ultrasound elements of the ultrasound elements are coupled such that the signal electrode terminals are arranged alternately on opposite sides in the longer side direction of the transmitting and receiving portions that are rectangular.

11 Claims, 10 Drawing Sheets



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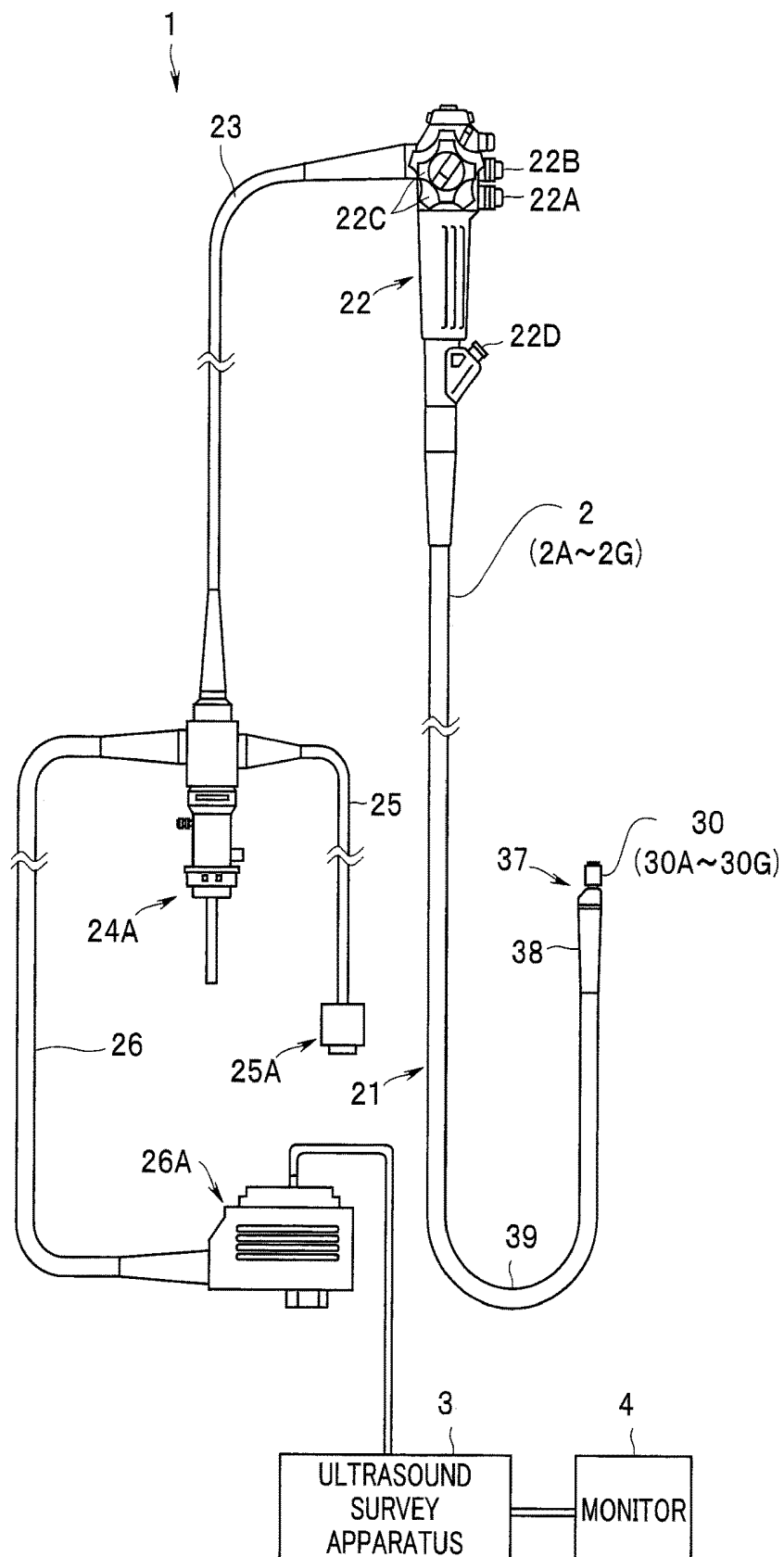
FIG.1

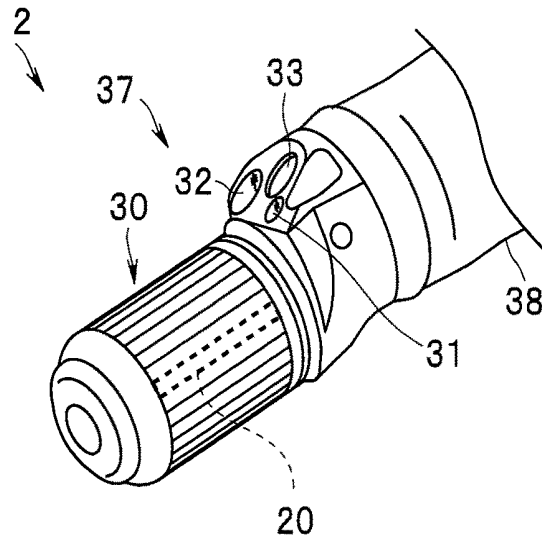
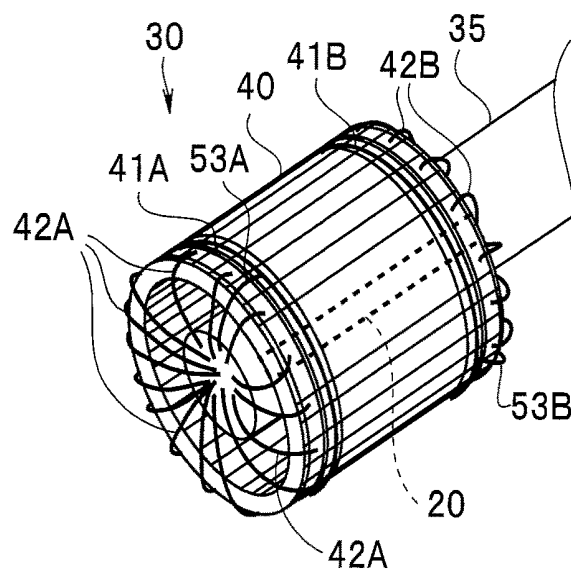
FIG.2**FIG.3**

FIG.4

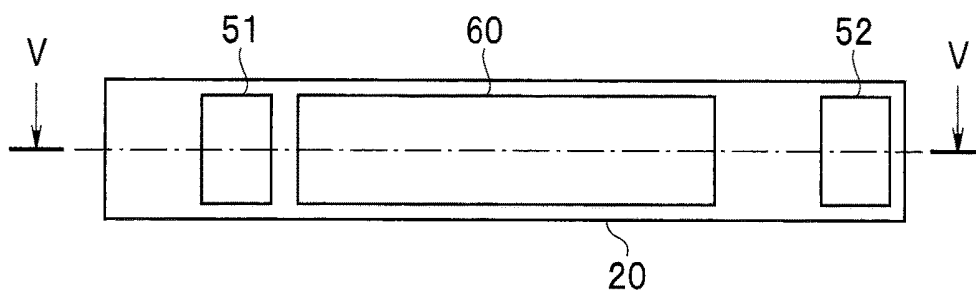


FIG.5

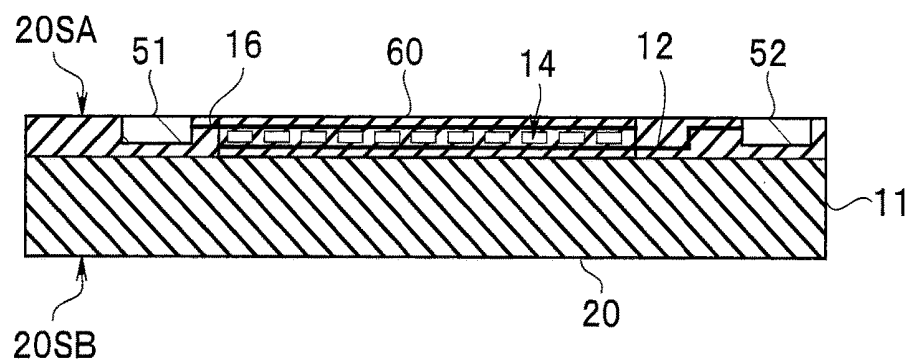


FIG.6

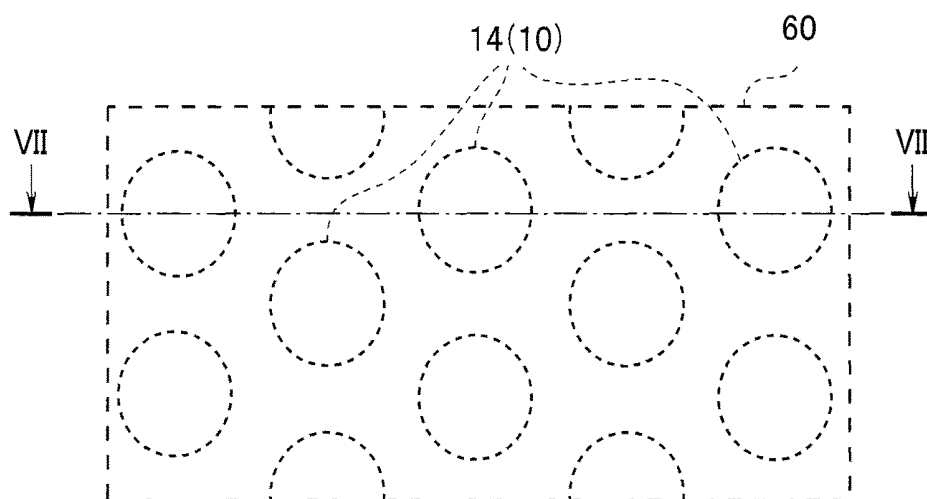


FIG.7

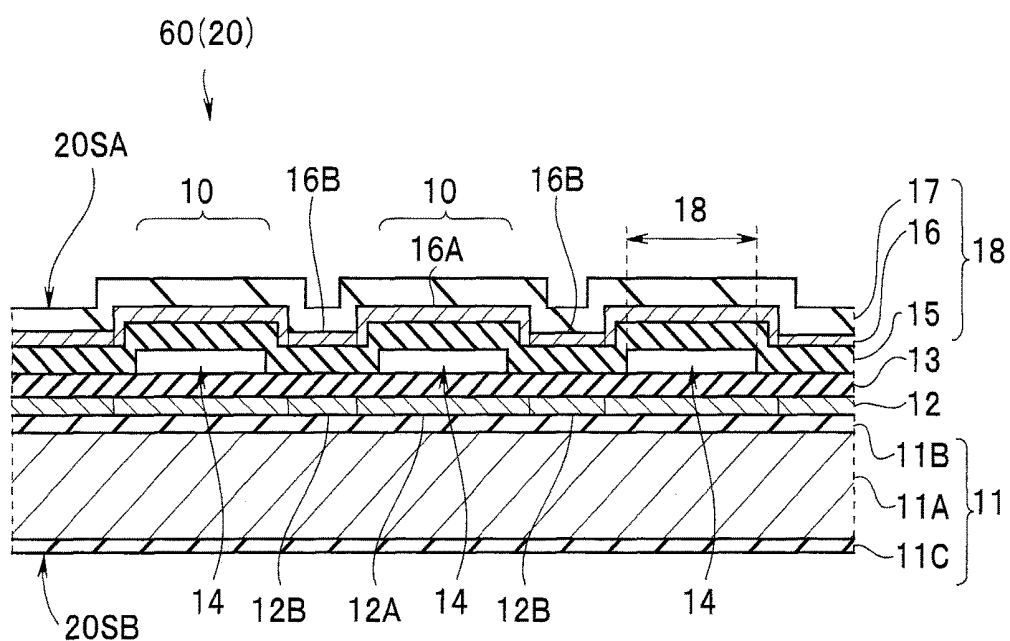


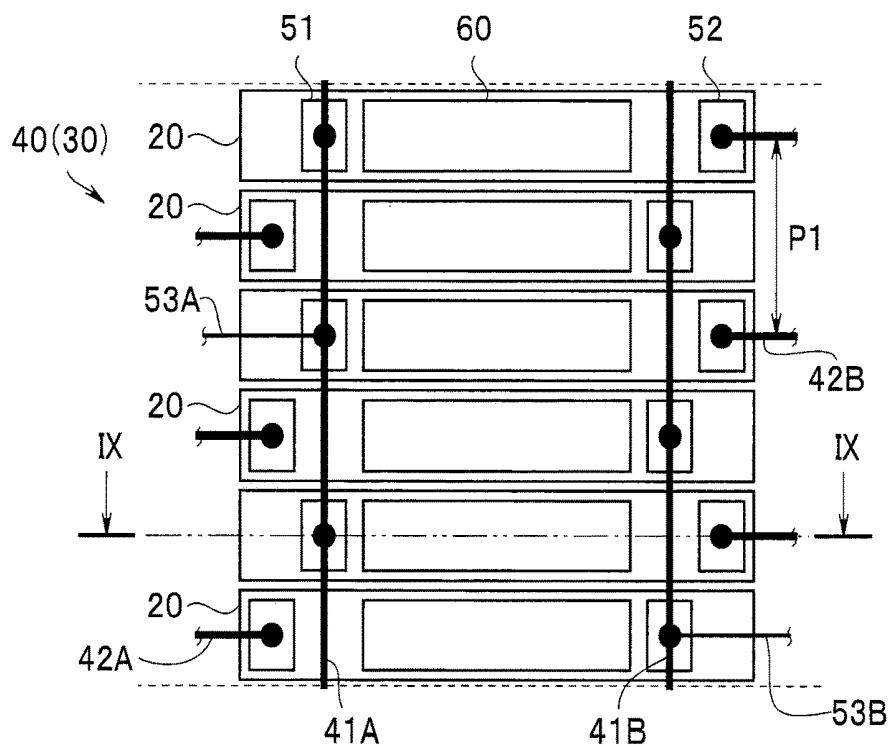
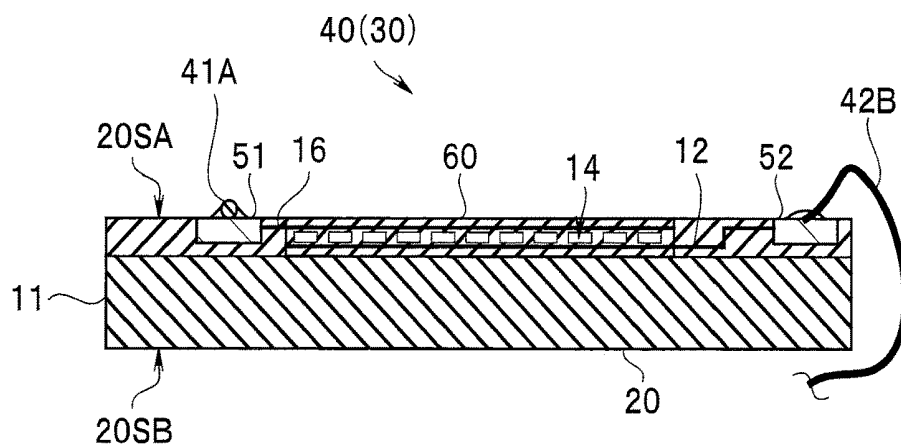
FIG. 8**FIG. 9**

FIG.10

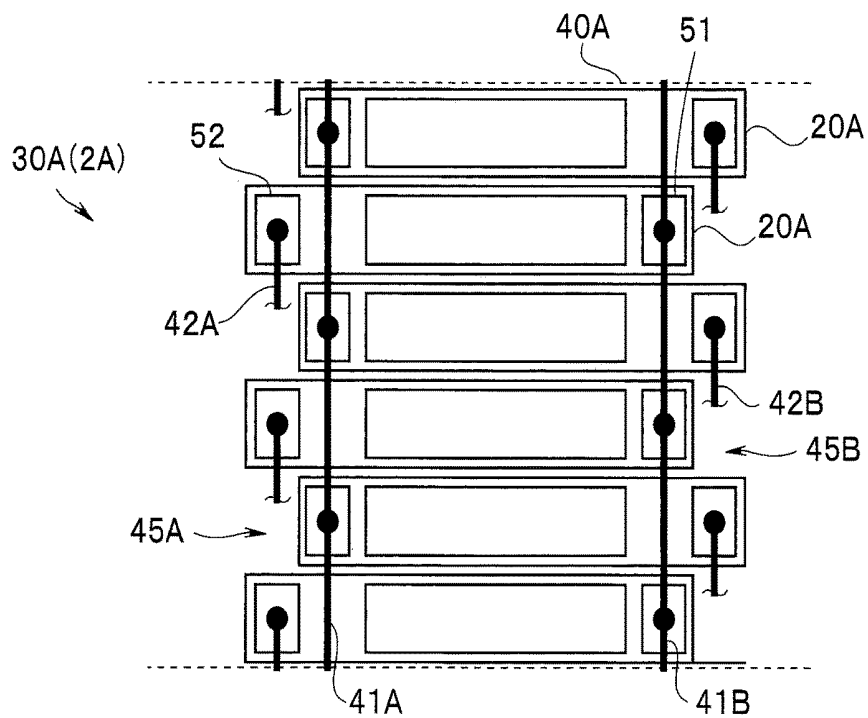


FIG.11

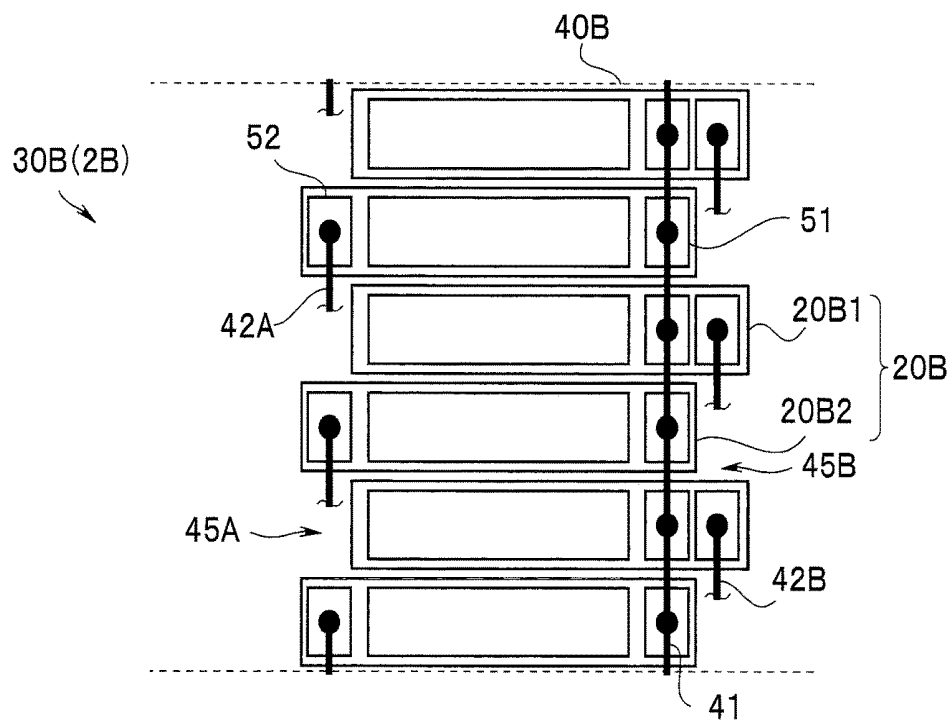


FIG.12

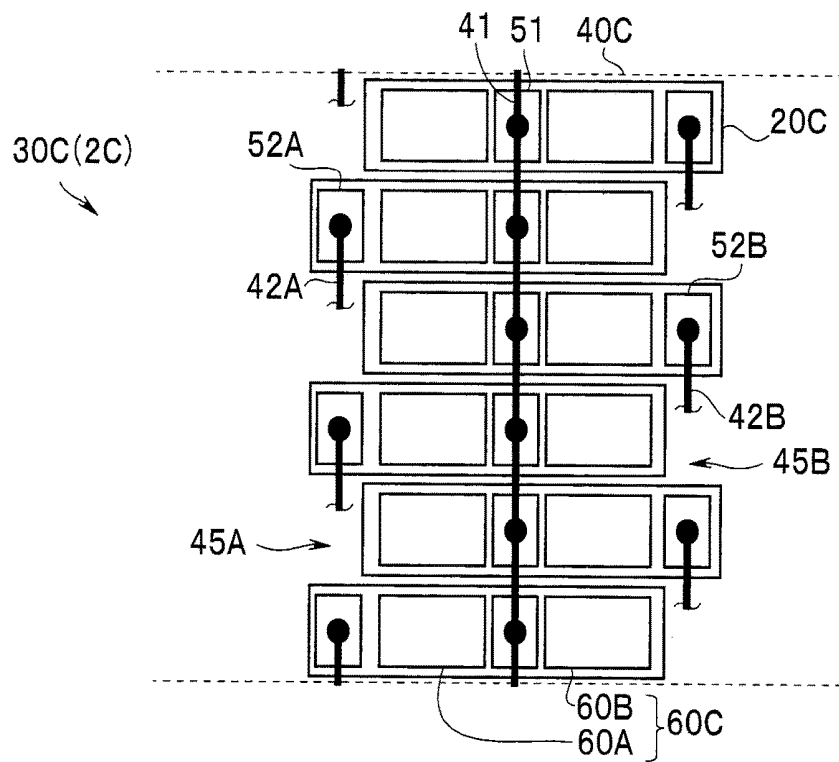


FIG.13

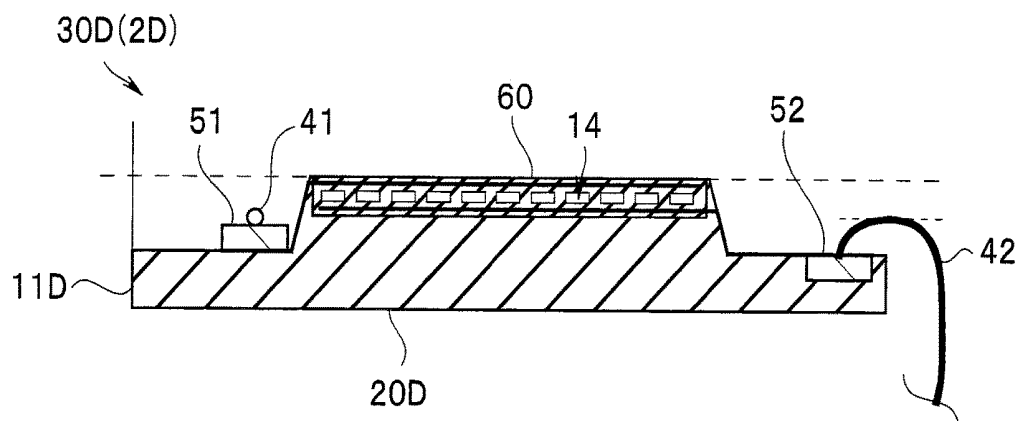


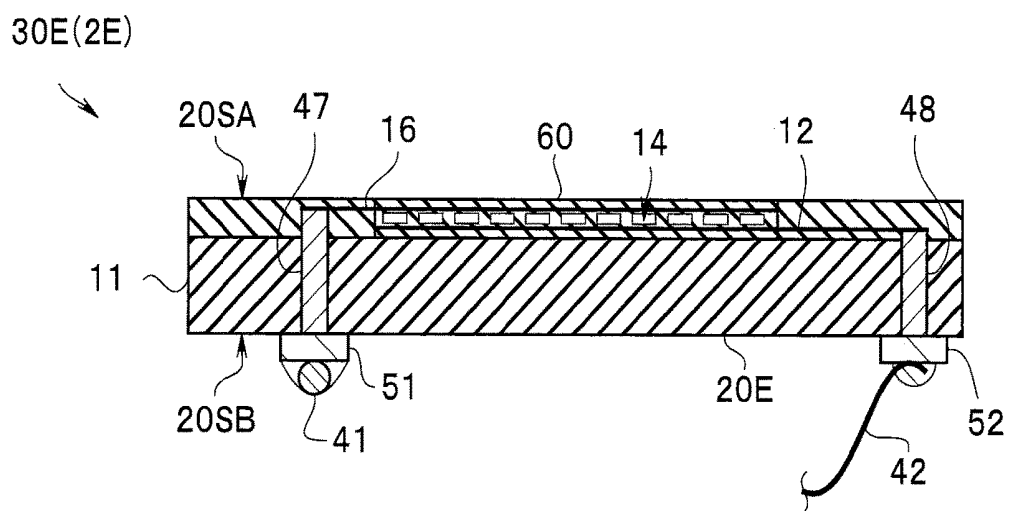
FIG.14

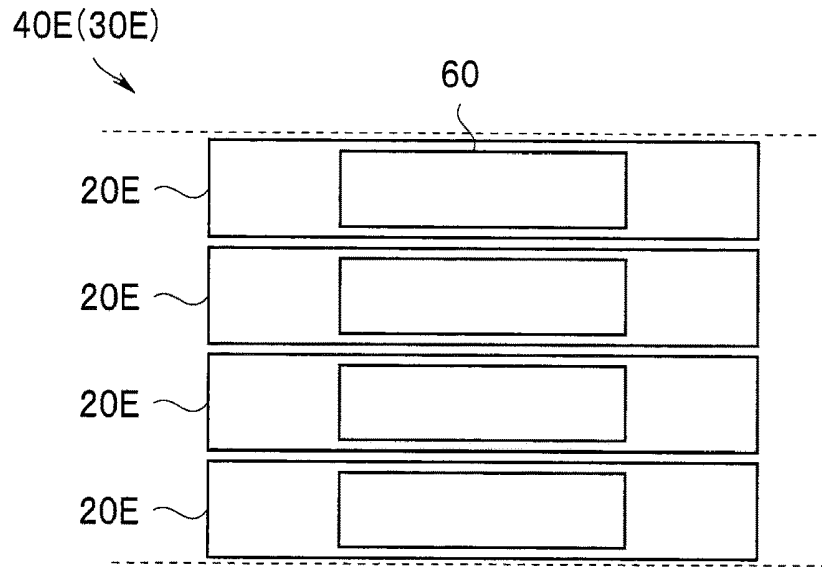
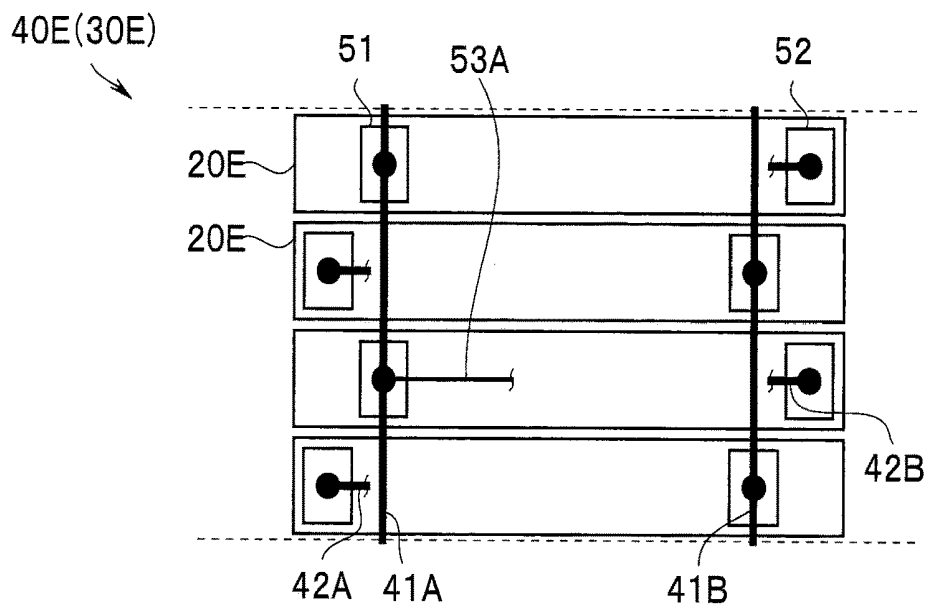
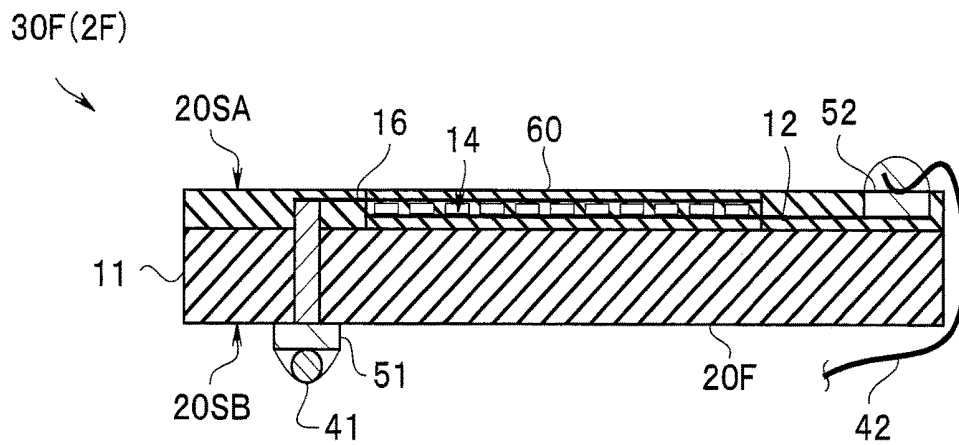
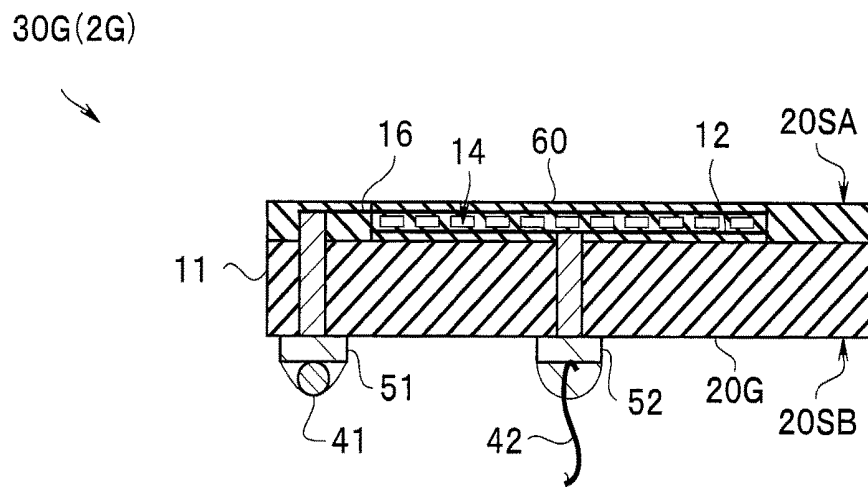
FIG.15**FIG.16**

FIG.17**FIG.18**

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ULTRASOUND UNIT AND ULTRASOUND ENDOSCOPE

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a continuation application of PCT/JP2012/065464 filed on Jun. 18, 2012 and claims benefit of Japanese Application No. 2011-148593 filed in Japan on Jul. 4, 2011, the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by this reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to an ultrasound unit having an ultrasound element and an ultrasound endoscope including the ultrasound unit.

2. Description of the Related Art

An ultrasound endoscope can clearly visualize a wall of a digestive tract, a deep organ, or the like with good image quality free of influence of gas or a bone in a body. In an electron scanning type ultrasound endoscope, an ultrasound unit having an ultrasound array is disposed at a distal end portion. The ultrasound array is constructed by coupling longer sides of a plurality of ultrasound elements, each of which has a first principal surface that is elongated and rectangular. In each ultrasound element, a transmitting and receiving portion, a signal electrode terminal for transmitting and receiving a signal, and a ground electrode terminal at a ground potential are arranged in a longer side direction.

One signal line (coaxial cable core wire) is connected to the signal electrode terminal of each ultrasound element by, e.g., soldering, and one ground line (coaxial cable shielding wire) is connected to the ground electrode terminal.

A specification of Japanese Patent No. 4377787 discloses a transducer which connects an ultrasound array and coaxial cables by using a hollow cylindrical member having a relay electrode. In the transducer, electrode terminals of ultrasound elements and relay electrode terminals are connected with wires, and the coaxial cables are connected to the relay electrode terminals.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An ultrasound unit according to an embodiment of the present invention includes an ultrasound array that has a plurality of ultrasound elements, in each of which a transmitting and receiving portion including a signal electrode for transmitting and receiving ultrasound and a ground electrode, a signal electrode terminal connected to the signal electrode, and a ground electrode terminal connected to the ground electrode are disposed, longer sides of the plurality of ultrasound elements being coupled, one or more short-lines that are connected to a plurality of the ground electrode terminals, a ground line that is connected to the short-line, and a plurality of signal lines, each of which is connected to one of the signal electrode terminals, and

adjoining ultrasound elements of the ultrasound elements are coupled such that the signal electrode terminals are arranged alternately on opposite sides in a longer side direction of the transmitting and receiving portions that are rectangular.

An ultrasound endoscope according to another embodiment includes an ultrasound unit which includes an ultrasound array that has a plurality of ultrasound elements, in each of which a transmitting and receiving portion including

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a signal electrode for transmitting and receiving ultrasound and a ground electrode, a signal electrode terminal connected to the signal electrode, and a ground electrode terminal connected to the ground electrode are disposed at a first principal surface, longer sides of the plurality of ultrasound elements being coupled, one short-line that is connected to a plurality of the ground electrode terminals, a ground line that is connected to the short-line, and a plurality of signal lines, each of which is connected to one of the signal electrode terminals, in which adjoining ultrasound elements of the ultrasound elements are coupled to bend in a convex shape or a radial shape in a coupling direction such that the signal electrode terminals are arranged alternately on opposite sides in a longer side direction of the transmitting and receiving portions that are rectangular, and in which the plurality of ground electrode terminals are laid out in a straight line shape.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is an external view for explaining an endoscope system including an ultrasound endoscope according to a first embodiment;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view for explaining a distal end portion of the ultrasound endoscope according to the first embodiment;

FIG. 3 is a perspective view for explaining a configuration of an ultrasound unit according to the first embodiment;

FIG. 4 is a top view of an ultrasound element of the ultrasound unit according to the first embodiment;

FIG. 5 is a cross-sectional view of the ultrasound element of the ultrasound unit according to the first embodiment, taken along line V-V in FIG. 4;

FIG. 6 is a top view of a transmitting and receiving portion of the ultrasound unit according to the first embodiment;

FIG. 7 is a cross-sectional view of the transmitting and receiving portion of the ultrasound unit according to the first embodiment, taken along line VII-VII in FIG. 6;

FIG. 8 is a plan developed view of an ultrasound array of the ultrasound unit according to the first embodiment;

FIG. 9 is a cross-sectional view of the ultrasound array of the ultrasound unit according to the first embodiment, taken along line IX-IX in FIG. 8;

FIG. 10 is a plan developed view of an ultrasound array of an ultrasound unit according to a second embodiment;

FIG. 11 is a plan developed view of an ultrasound array of an ultrasound unit according to a third embodiment;

FIG. 12 is a plan developed view of an ultrasound array of an ultrasound unit according to a fourth embodiment;

FIG. 13 is a cross-sectional view of an ultrasound element of an ultrasound unit according to a fifth embodiment;

FIG. 14 is a cross-sectional view of an ultrasound element of an ultrasound unit according to a sixth embodiment;

FIG. 15 is a top view of an ultrasound array of the ultrasound unit according to the sixth embodiment;

FIG. 16 is a bottom view of the ultrasound array of the ultrasound unit according to the sixth embodiment;

FIG. 17 is a cross-sectional view of an ultrasound element of an ultrasound unit according to a modification 1 of the sixth embodiment; and

FIG. 18 is a cross-sectional view of an ultrasound element of an ultrasound unit according to a modification 2 of the sixth embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

First Embodiment

An ultrasound unit (hereinafter referred to as a “US unit”) **30** according to a first embodiment and an ultrasound endoscope (hereinafter referred to as a “US endoscope”) **2** having the US unit **30** will be described below with reference to the drawings.

<Configuration of Ultrasound Endoscope>

As shown in FIG. 1, the US endoscope **2** together with an ultrasound survey apparatus **3** and a monitor **4** constitutes an ultrasound endoscope system **1**. The US endoscope **2** includes an elongated insertion portion **21** to be inserted into a body, an operation portion **22** which is placed at a proximal end of the insertion portion **21**, and a universal cord **23** which extends from a side portion of the operation portion **22**.

A connector **24A** which is connected to a light source apparatus (not shown) is disposed at a proximal end portion of the universal cord **23**. A cable **25** which is detachably connected to a camera control unit (not shown) via a connector **25A** and a cable **26** which is detachably connected to the ultrasound survey apparatus **3** via a connector **26A** extend from the connector **24A**. The monitor **4** is connected to the ultrasound survey apparatus **3**.

The insertion portion **21** is composed of a distal end rigid portion (hereinafter referred to as a “distal end portion”) **37**, a bending portion **38** located at a rear end of the distal end portion **37**, and a thin, long, flexible tube portion **39** with flexibility located at a rear end of the bending portion **38** and leading to the operation portion **22**, which are provided to be linked in order from a distal end side. The ultrasound unit **30** serving as an ultrasound transmitting and receiving portion is disposed on a distal end side of the distal end portion **37**.

An angle knob **22A** which bends and controls the bending portion **38** in a desired direction, an air/water feeding button **22B** which performs air feeding and water feeding operation, a suction button **22C** which performs suction operation, a treatment instrument insertion port **22D** which serves as an inlet for a treatment instrument to be introduced into a body, and the like are disposed at the operation portion **22**.

As shown in FIG. 2, a lens cover **31** for illumination which constitutes an illumination optical system, a lens cover **32** for observation of an observation optical system, a forceps port **33** which doubles as a suction port, and an air/water feeding nozzle (not shown) are disposed at the distal end portion **37** where the US unit **30** that transmits and receives ultrasound is provided.

As shown in FIG. 3, the US unit **30** includes an ultrasound array (hereinafter referred to as a “US array”) **40**, short-lines **41A** and **41B**, ground lines **53A** and **53B**, and signal lines **42A** and **42B**. Note that, to refer to each of identical components, a reference numeral obtained by omitting an alphabetic character at an end of any one of reference characters denoting the identical components is used. For example, each of the short-lines **41A** and **41B** is referred to as the short-line **41**. For example, the short-line **41A** is the short-line **41** on a distal end side, and the short-line **41B** is the short-line **41** on a proximal end side.

The US array **40** is a group of radial type transducers in which longer sides of a plurality of elongated US elements **20** are coupled, and the US elements **20** are arranged to bend in a hollow cylindrical shape. That is, in the US array **40**, for

example, 200 US elements **20** with shorter sides of not more than 0.1 mm are disposed at a side face of a hollow cylinder having a diameter of 2 mm.

Note that although the US array **40** is a group of radial type transducers, the US array **40** may be a group of convex type transducers which bends in a convex shape.

A plurality of signal lines **42** are each connected to a signal electrode terminal **52** of one US element **20**. The short-line **41** is a short-line which connects ground electrode terminals **51** of the plurality of US elements **20** and is connected to the ground line **53**.

The plurality of US elements **20** and a coaxial cable bundle **35** are connected via the short-lines **41**, the ground lines **53**, the signal lines **42**, and a cable connection substrate portion (not shown). That is, the coaxial cable bundle **35** is made up of coaxial cables with core wires equal in number to the plurality of signal lines **42**.

The coaxial cable bundle **35** is inserted through the distal end portion **37**, the bending portion **38**, the flexible tube portion **39**, the operation portion **22**, the universal cord **23**, and the ultrasound cable **26** and is connected to the ultrasound survey apparatus **3** via the ultrasound connector **26A**.
<Configuration of Ultrasound Array>

As shown in FIGS. 4 and 5, a transmitting and receiving portion **60**, the signal electrode terminal **52**, and the ground electrode terminal **51** are arranged in a longer side direction at a first principal surface **20SA** that is rectangular of each US element **20**. Note that the drawings are all schematic views for explanation and that ratios of thickness, size, and the like are different from actual ratios.

In the US element **20**, the signal electrode terminal **52** and the ground electrode terminal **51** are arranged across the transmitting and receiving portion **60** from each other. A space where the ground electrode terminal **51** can be arranged is present between the transmitting and receiving portion **60** and the signal electrode terminal **52**, and a space where the signal electrode terminal **52** can be arranged is present between the ground electrode terminal **51** and an end face. In other words, the transmitting and receiving portion **60**, two signal electrode terminals **52**, and two ground electrode terminals **51** can be arranged in the longer side direction at the first principal surface **20SA** of the US element **20**.

The signal electrode terminal **52** is connected to a lower electrode **12** which is a signal electrode of the transmitting and receiving portion **60**. The ground electrode terminal **51** is connected to an upper electrode **16** which is a ground electrode of the transmitting and receiving portion **60**.

The transmitting and receiving portion **60** generates ultrasound by a signal for driving applied between the lower electrode **12** and the upper electrode **16**. The transmitting and receiving portion **60** also generates an electrical signal between the lower electrode **12** and the upper electrode **16** upon receipt of ultrasound.

<Configuration of Transmitting and Receiving Portion>

A configuration of the transmitting and receiving portion **60** will be described with reference to FIGS. 6 and 7.

As shown in FIG. 6, a plurality of capacitance type ultrasound cells (hereinafter referred to as “US cells”) **10** are arranged in a matrix at the transmitting and receiving portion **60** of the ultrasound unit **30**. The US cells **10** may be arranged in a regular pattern, such as a grid pattern, a staggered pattern, or a triangular mesh pattern, or may be randomly arranged.

As shown in FIG. 7, the US cell **10** has, on a silicon substrate **11** as a base, the lower electrode **12** connected to the signal electrode terminal **52**, a first insulating layer

(lower insulating layer) 13, a second insulating layer (upper insulating layer) 15 in which a cavity 14 in a hollow cylindrical shape is formed, the upper electrode 16 connected to the ground electrode terminal 51, and a protective layer 17, which are stacked in order.

That is, each US cell 10 has a lower electrode portion 12A that is a circular signal electrode portion and a circular upper electrode portion 16A that is a ground electrode portion, which are arranged to face each other via the cavity 14. A plurality of lower electrode portions 12A constitute the lower electrode 12 serving as the signal electrode, and a plurality of upper electrode portions 16A constitute the upper electrode 16 serving as the ground electrode. That is, the lower electrode portions 12A of the plurality of US cells 10 arranged at the identical US element 20 are connected to one another, and the upper electrode portions 16A are also connected to one another.

The silicon substrate 11 is a substrate in which silicon thermal oxide films 11B and 11C are formed on surfaces of silicon 11A. The lower electrode 12 formed on one surface of the silicon substrate 11 is made of a conductive material, such as metal or silicon. A film of the conductive material is formed over the whole surface of the silicon substrate 11 by, e.g., sputtering. The lower electrode 12 is formed by partially removing the film through etching after forming a mask pattern through photolithography.

For example, the lower electrode 12 is made up of the circular lower electrode portions 12A and a wiring portion 12B which is provided to extend from an edge portion of the lower electrode 12. The lower electrode portion 12A is connected to the lower electrode portions of the other US cells of the identical US element 20 by the wiring portion 12B.

The first insulating layer 13 that is made of an insulating material, such as SiN, is formed by, e.g., CVD (chemical vapor deposition) so as to cover the lower electrode 12.

A sacrificial layer in a shape of the cavity 14 (a solid cylindrical shape) is formed by forming a film of a sacrificial layer material on the first insulating layer 13 and patterning the film.

Since a thickness of the sacrificial layer corresponds to a height of the cavity 14, the thickness is, for example, 0.05 to 0.3 μm , preferably 0.05 to 0.15 μm . For example, phosphorus glass (PSG: phosphorus-containing silicon oxide), silicon dioxide, polysilicon, metal, or the like is used as the sacrificial layer material.

The second insulating layer 15 is formed on an upper surface of the first insulating layer 13 where a sacrificial layer pattern is formed by, for example, the same method using the same material as the first insulating layer 13.

An opening portion (not shown) for admission of an etchant is formed at a predetermined position of the second insulating layer 15 to remove the sacrificial layer.

The cavity 14 is formed by etching the sacrificial layer. For example, if phosphorus glass is used for the sacrificial layer, and SiN is used for the first insulating layer 13 and the second insulating layer 15, a hydrofluoric acid solution (buffered HF solution) is used as the etchant.

The upper electrode 16 that is made up of the upper electrode portion 16A and a wiring portion 16B is formed in the same manner as the lower electrode 12. For example, the upper electrode portion 16A and the lower electrode portion 12A have substantially identical diameters as the cavity 14.

The cavity 14 is not limited to a solid cylindrical shape and may have, e.g., a polygonal column shape. If the cavity

14 has a polygonal column shape, shapes of the upper electrode portion 16A and the lower electrode portion 12A are preferably polygonal.

Finally, the protective layer 17 that covers the upper electrode 16 is formed. The protective layer 17 is an insulating layer which is formed by the same method using the same material as the second insulating layer 15. Note that the protective layer 17 may have a double-layered structure in which a skin film with biocompatibility of, e.g., polyparaxylylene is further formed on an insulating layer made of, e.g., SiN.

In the US cell 10 with the above-described structure shown in FIG. 7, the second insulating layer 15, the upper electrode 16, and the protective layer 17 in a region immediately above the cavity 14 constitute a membrane 18 serving as a vibration portion.

<Configurations of Ultrasound Array and Ultrasound Unit>

FIG. 8 is a plan developed view of the US unit 30, i.e., an explanatory view showing the plurality of US elements 20 laid out on a radial surface (a side face of a hollow cylinder) in a planar state. FIG. 9 is a cross-sectional view taken along line IX-IX in FIG. 8.

As has already been described, the longer sides of the plurality of US elements 20 of the US array 40 are coupled. As shown in FIG. 8, the plurality of US elements 20 with an identical configuration are coupled in a state where the US elements 20 are alternately rotated by 180° along the longer side direction such that the signal electrode terminal 52 of each US element 20 and the ground electrode terminal 51 of the adjoining US element 20 adjoin.

That is, the US array 40 is fabricated by linking the plurality of US elements 20 with an identical structure while changing disposition directions. Thus, the US array 40 is easy to fabricate.

The signal electrode terminals 52 are laid out in a straight line shape at every other US element on both end face sides of the US array 40. Therefore, a disposition spacing (pitch) P1 for the signal electrode terminals 52 on each end face side is twice a disposition pitch in a conventional US array in which the signal electrode terminals 52 are continuously laid out. The ground electrode terminals 51 are laid out in a straight line shape at every other US element on the left and on the right of the transmitting and receiving portions 60.

Note that the US array 40 is arranged in a three-dimensional curved surface shape. Strictly, the term "straight line shape" means "an arc shape" or that "arrangement at the time of projection onto a two-dimensional plane has a straight line shape."

Since the US unit 30 has the wider disposition pitch P1 for the signal electrode terminals 52, connection of the signal line 42 and the signal electrode terminal 52 is easy. Thus, the ultrasound unit 30 is easy to manufacture, and the ultrasound endoscope 2 having the US unit 30 is easy to manufacture.

Note that the plurality of signal lines 42 may be each one cable (wire) or the plurality of signal lines 42 may be disposed at a flexible wiring board. A connection method is, for example, solder joining. Since it is easy to enhance connection strength of a connection portion, the ultrasound unit 30 and the ultrasound endoscope 2 are high in reliability.

Since the plurality of ground electrode terminals 51 are laid out in a straight line shape, all the ground electrode terminals 51 can be connected by the two short-lines 41A and 41B. Each short-line 41 is only connected to the ground line 53 at at least one site.

The short-line 41 is made of a conductor in a line shape or a ribbon shape, such as aluminum or copper, and is

connected to the ground electrode terminal **51** by a known method, such as ultrasound or heat. Alternatively, the short-line **41** may be formed by forming a conductive film made of a conductor, such as aluminum or copper, via, for example, a metal mask. The conductive film can be formed by sputtering, an evaporation method, or an electroplating method.

Since the plurality of ground electrode terminals **51** need not be connected to respective ground lines **53**, the ultrasound unit **30** is easy to manufacture, and the ultrasound endoscope **2** having the ultrasound unit **30** is easy to manufacture.

Note that it is apparent that even if each ultrasound element has a transmitting and receiving portion in which piezoelectric layers of, e.g., PZT are stacked, instead of the transmitting and receiving portion **60**, in which the plurality of capacitance type US cells **10** are laid out, the ultrasound element has same effects.

Second Embodiment

A US unit **30A** according to a second embodiment and a US endoscope **2A** having the US unit **30A** will be described below. Since the US unit **30A** and the US endoscope **2A** are similar to the US unit **30** and the US endoscope **2**, respectively, identical components are denoted by identical reference numerals, and a description of the components will be omitted.

As shown in FIG. **10**, in a US array **40A** of the US unit **30A**, a plurality of ultrasound elements **20A** are coupled such that shorter sides of the ultrasound elements **20A** are positioned in a zigzag manner at both end faces of the ultrasound array **40A**. Therefore, notch portions **45A** and **45B** are formed at the both end faces of the ultrasound array **40A**. A signal line **42** is provided to extend to a second principal surface **20SB** side, i.e., an inner portion side of the ultrasound array **40A** in a hollow cylinder shape via the notch portion **45**.

The US unit **30A** has the same effects as the US unit **30**. Additionally, the signal lines **42** do not protrude from the both end faces of the ultrasound array **40A**. Thus, a dimension of a longer side of the US element **20A** is shorter in the US unit **30A**. The US endoscope **2A** including the US unit **30A** has a shorter distal end portion **37**.

In addition, the US unit **30A** can reduce interference between the adjacent signal lines **42**. That is, in the US unit **30** shown in FIG. **8**, the signal lines **42A** and **42B** are led out in parallel with a longitudinal direction of the US element **20**. Therefore, the signal lines **42A** and **42B** become arched, and deflection or the like occurs. If the amount of deflection of the adjoining signal lines **42A** and **42B** is large, the signal lines **42A** and **42B** may interfere with one another.

In contrast, in the US unit **30A** shown in FIG. **10**, the signal lines **42A** and **42B** are each passed through the notch **45A** or **45B** that is an empty space at a predetermined site, and thus the signal lines **42A** and **42B** are in no danger of interfering with one another.

Third Embodiment

A US unit **30B** according to a third embodiment and a US endoscope **2B** having the US unit **30B** will be described below. Since the US unit **30B** and the US endoscope **2B** are similar to the US unit **30** and the US endoscope **2**, respectively, identical components are denoted by identical reference numerals, and a description of the components will be omitted.

As shown in FIG. **11**, there are two types of ultrasound elements **20B** constituting a US array **40B** of the US unit **30B**. That is, the ultrasound element **20B** is either a first ultrasound element **20B1** or a second ultrasound element **20B2**. In the first ultrasound element **20B1**, a ground electrode terminal **51** is arranged between a signal electrode terminal **52** and a transmitting and receiving portion **60** at a first principal surface **20SA**. In the second ultrasound element **20B2**, the transmitting and receiving portion **60** is arranged between the ground electrode terminal **51** and the signal electrode terminal **52** at the first principal surface **20SA**. The first ultrasound element **20B1** and the second ultrasound element **20B2** are coupled such that the ground electrode terminals **51** adjoin each other.

Additionally, since the two different ultrasound elements **20B1** and **20B2** are coupled such that shorter sides are positioned in a zigzag manner, a plurality of notch portions **45A** and **45B** are formed at both end faces of the US array **40B**. A signal line **42** is provided to extend to a second principal surface **20SB** side via the notch portion **45**.

As shown in FIG. **11**, one short-line **41** is enough in the US unit **30B**. Thus, a dimension in a longer side direction of the US element **20B** is shorter than the US element **20**.

The US unit **30B** has effects which the US unit **30** and the like have and is even shorter. The US endoscope **2B** has effects which the US endoscope **2** has and has an even shorter distal end portion **37**.

As has been described above, an ultrasound unit according to the embodiment may have the configuration below.

An ultrasound unit wherein the plurality of ultrasound elements are made up of a plurality of first ultrasound elements, in each of which the ground electrode terminal is arranged between the signal electrode terminal and the transmitting and receiving portion, and a plurality of second ultrasound elements, in each of which the transmitting and receiving portion is arranged between the ground electrode terminal and the signal electrode terminal, and the first ultrasound elements and the second ultrasound elements are coupled such that the ground electrode terminals adjoin one another.

Fourth Embodiment

A US unit **30C** according to a fourth embodiment and a US endoscope **2C** having the US unit **30C** will be described below. Since the US unit **30C** and the US endoscope **2C** are similar to the US unit **30** and the US endoscope **2**, respectively, identical components are denoted by identical reference numerals, and a description of the components will be omitted.

As shown in FIG. **12**, in a US element **20C** of the US unit **30C**, a signal electrode terminal **52** is arranged at one end portion, and a ground electrode terminal **51** is arranged at a center of a transmitting and receiving portion **60C** which is divided into two, a first transmitting and receiving portion **60A** and a second transmitting and receiving portion **60B**.

A signal line (a piece of signal wiring) **42** is provided to extend to a second principal surface **20SB** side via a notch portion **45** at an end portion. A plurality of ground electrode terminals **51** are connected by one short-line **41**. Note that a ground line (not shown) connected to the short-line **41** is led out via a coupling portion (between the adjoining transmitting and receiving portions **60C**) of the adjoining US elements **20C** or is led out via a piece of through-wiring.

The US unit 30C and the US endoscope 2C have effects which the US unit 30B and the like have.

Fifth Embodiment

A US unit 30D according to a fifth embodiment and a US endoscope 2D having the US unit 30D will be described below. Since the US unit 30D and the US endoscope 2D are similar to the US unit 30 and the US endoscope 2, respectively, identical components are denoted by identical reference numerals, and a description of the components will be omitted.

As shown in FIG. 13, in a US element 20D of the US unit 30D, a surface where a signal electrode terminal 52 is disposed and a surface where a ground electrode terminal 51 is disposed are lower than a surface of a transmitting and receiving portion 60. A height of the surface of the transmitting and receiving portion 60 is higher than a maximum height of a signal line 42 and a maximum height of a ground line 53 (not shown). That is, a silicon substrate 11D as a base is stepped at end portions such that, even if the signal line 42 is connected to the signal electrode terminal 52, a short-line 41 and the ground line 53 are connected to the ground electrode terminal 51, the height of each of the components does not exceed the height of the transmitting and receiving portion 60.

The US unit 30D and the US endoscope 2D have effects which the US unit 30 and the like have. Additionally, in the US unit 30D with a plurality of US elements 20D disposed in a hollow cylindrical shape, a piece of wiring (wire) and the like do not protrude beyond the surface of the transmitting and receiving portion 60. Thus, the US unit 30D and a distal end portion 37 of the US endoscope 2D have smaller outer diameters.

Sixth Embodiment

A US unit 30E according to a sixth embodiment and a US endoscope 2E having the US unit 30E will be described below. Since the US unit 30E and the US endoscope 2E are similar to the US unit 30 and the US endoscope 2, respectively, identical components are denoted by identical reference numerals, and a description of the components will be omitted.

As shown in FIG. 14, in a US element 20E of the US unit 30E, a transmitting and receiving portion 60 is disposed at a first principal surface 20SA, and a ground electrode terminal 51 and a signal electrode terminal 52 are disposed at a second principal surface 20SB. The ground electrode terminal 51 and an upper electrode 16 are connected via a piece 47 of through-wiring which pierces through a silicon substrate 11 as a base, and the signal electrode terminal 52 and a lower electrode 12 are connected via a piece 48 of through-wiring.

That is, in the US element 20E, the transmitting and receiving portion 60 is formed at the first principal surface 20SA of the base having the first principal surface 20SA and the second principal surface 20SB, and the signal electrode terminal 52 and the ground electrode terminal 51 are formed at the second principal surface 20SB. Note that a piece of wiring may be provided to extend to the second principal surface 20SB of the silicon substrate 11 by using a different wiring method, such as pieces of side face wiring, instead of the pieces 47 and 48 of through-wiring.

As shown in FIGS. 15 and 16, in a US array 40E, the transmitting and receiving portion 60 is arranged substantially at a center of the first principal surface 20SA. The

signal electrode terminals 52 disposed at the second principal surfaces 20SB are laid out alternately at end portions on opposite sides of the transmitting and receiving portions 60 disposed at the first principal surfaces 20SA to have a straight line shape. A plurality of ground electrode terminals 51 are laid out in a straight line shape in two rows closer to a center than the signal electrode terminals 52.

As in the US array 40 shown in FIG. 8, a plurality of signal lines 42 are each connected to the signal electrode terminal 52 of one US element 20E. Two short-lines 41 each connect the ground electrode terminals 51 of a plurality of US elements 20E and are each connected to a corresponding ground line 53 at one site.

Note that the signal lines 42 and the ground lines 53 are provided to extend to an inner side of the US array 40E so as not to protrude from end faces of the US array 40E.

The US unit 30E and the US endoscope 2E have effects which the US unit 30 and the like have and have even smaller outer diameters.

Modifications of Sixth Embodiment

US units 30F and 30G according to a modification 1 and a modification 2 of the sixth embodiment and US endoscopes 2F and 2G having the US units 30F and 30G will be described below. Since the US units 30F and 30G and the US endoscopes 2F and 2G are similar to the US unit 30E and the US endoscope 2E, respectively, identical components are denoted by identical reference numerals, and a description of the components will be omitted.

As shown in FIG. 17, in a US element 20F of the US unit 30F, a transmitting and receiving portion 60 and a signal electrode terminal 52 are disposed at a first principal surface 20SA, and a ground electrode terminal 51 is disposed at a second principal surface 20SB.

A plurality of US elements 20F are coupled in a state where the US elements 20F are alternately rotated by 180° along a longer side direction. Therefore, the signal electrode terminals 52 connected to signal lines 42 are arranged alternately at end portions on the first principal surface 20SA side. The ground electrode terminals 51 connected to short-lines 41 are arranged alternately at both end portions on the second principal surface 20SB side to have a straight line shape.

The US unit 30F and the US endoscope 2F have effects which the US unit 30E and the like have and are even shorter.

As shown in FIG. 18, in a US element 20G of the US unit 30G, a transmitting and receiving portion 60 is disposed substantially at a center portion of a first principal surface 20SA, and a ground electrode terminal 51 and a signal electrode terminal 52 are disposed at a second principal surface 20SB. The signal electrode terminal 52 here is disposed substantially at a center portion of the second principal surface 20SB.

A plurality of US elements 20G are coupled in a state where the US elements 20G are alternately rotated by 180° along a longer side direction. Therefore, the ground electrode terminals 51 connected to a short line 41 are arranged alternately at end portions on the second principal surface 20SB side. The signal electrode terminals 52 connected to signal lines 42 are arranged in a straight line shape at a center portion on the second principal surface 20SB side. Thus, all the ground electrode terminals 51 can be connected by the one short-line 41.

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The US unit 30G and the US endoscope 2G have effects which the US unit 30E and the like have and are even shorter.

As has been described above, at least one of a signal electrode terminal and a ground electrode terminal and a transmitting and receiving portion may be disposed at a first principal surface of an ultrasound element.

The present invention is not limited to the above-described embodiments or modifications. Various changes, alterations, and the like can be made without departing from spirit of the present invention.

What is claimed is:

1. An ultrasound unit comprising:

an ultrasound array having a plurality of separated ultrasound elements, each of the plurality of ultrasound elements comprising:

a rectangular substrate having a pair of short sides and a pair of long sides, the long sides being longer than the short sides;

a transmitting and receiving portion disposed on a surface of the substrate for transmitting and receiving ultrasound;

a ground electrode and a ground electrode terminal connected to the ground electrode, the ground electrode terminal being disposed on the surface of the substrate adjacent to one of the pair of short sides; and

a signal electrode and a signal electrode terminal connected to the signal electrode, the signal electrode terminal being disposed on the surface of the substrate adjacent to an other one of the pair of short sides;

one or more common lines that are connected to the ground electrode terminal for each of the plurality of ultrasound elements;

a ground line that is connected to each of the one or more common lines; and

a signal line connected to each of the signal electrode terminals,

wherein the plurality of ultrasound elements are coupled together along adjacent long sides such that adjoining first and second ultrasound elements of the plurality of ultrasound elements are configured such that:

the first ultrasound element having the ground electrode terminal disposed adjacent to a first short side of the pair of short sides and having the signal electrode terminal disposed adjacent to a second short side of the pair of short sides opposite to the first short side;

the second ultrasound element having the signal electrode terminal disposed adjacent to the first short side and the ground electrode terminal disposed adjacent to the second short side; and

the first short side of the first ultrasound element is adjacent the second short side of the second ultrasound element and the second short side of the first ultrasound element is adjacent the first short side of the second ultrasound element.

2. The ultrasound unit according to claim 1, wherein the one or more common lines are laid out in a straight line shape when viewed in a radial direction.

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3. The ultrasound unit according to claim 2, wherein the plurality of ultrasound elements, when coupled together along the adjacent long sides, form a cylindrical shape.

4. The ultrasound unit according to claim 3, wherein at least one of the signal electrode terminal and the ground electrode terminal, and the transmitting and receiving portion are disposed at a first principal surface of each of the plurality of ultrasound elements.

5. The ultrasound unit according to claim 4, wherein the transmitting and receiving portion, the signal electrode terminal, and the ground electrode terminal are disposed at the first principal surface of each of the plurality of ultrasound elements.

6. The ultrasound unit according to claim 5, wherein a first set of the plurality of ultrasound elements identical in a form in which the transmitting and receiving portion, the signal electrode terminal, and the ground electrode terminal are arranged are coupled in a state where the ultrasound elements are alternately rotated by 180° along a long side direction as compared to a second set of the plurality of ultrasound elements.

7. The ultrasound unit according to claim 6, wherein a plurality of ultrasound cells are disposed at the transmitting and receiving portion, each of the plurality of ultrasound cells has a signal electrode portion and a ground electrode portion that are arranged to face each other across a cavity, a plurality of the signal electrode portions comprise the signal electrode, and a plurality of the ground electrode portions comprise the ground electrode.

8. The ultrasound unit according to claim 5, wherein the plurality of ultrasound elements are coupled together such that the short sides are positioned in a zigzag manner at either end face of the ultrasound array to form a plurality of notch portions, and the signal line is provided to extend to a second principal surface side via the notch portion.

9. The ultrasound unit according to claim 5, wherein a height of a surface of the transmitting and receiving portion is higher than a maximum height of the signal line and a maximum height of the ground line.

10. The ultrasound unit according to claim 9, wherein a first set of the plurality of ultrasound elements identical in a form in which the transmitting and receiving portion, the signal electrode terminal, and the ground electrode terminal are arranged are coupled in a state where the ultrasound elements are alternately rotated by 180° along a long side direction as compared to a second set of the plurality of ultrasound elements.

11. The ultrasound unit according to claim 10, wherein a plurality of ultrasound cells are disposed at the transmitting and receiving portion, the signal electrode terminal and the ground electrode terminal for the adjoining first and second ultrasound elements are arranged to oppose each other across a cavity, a plurality of the signal electrode portions comprise the signal electrode, and a plurality of the ground electrode portions comprise the ground electrode.

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摘要(译)

超声单元包括具有多个超声元件的超声阵列，每个超声元件具有矩形的第一主表面，在该主表面上沿长边方向布置有发射和接收部分，信号电极端子和接地电极端子。超声波元件的长边被耦合，连接到多个接地电极端子的一条或多条短线，连接到该短线的地线以及多条信号线，超声电极连接到信号电极端子之一，并且相邻的超声元件被耦合，使得信号电极端子在矩形的发射和接收部分的长边方向上交替地布置在相对侧上。

