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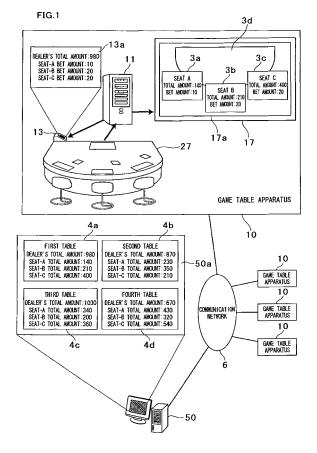
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(54) Game table apparatus

(57)A game table apparatus has a game table, a first placement region, a first identification data item reading means, a first calculating means, and a first display means. The first placement region is provided in one area of the game table where a dealer is located and for game value elements held by the dealer to be placed thereon. The first identification data item reading means reads an identification data item from each of the game value elements placed on the first placement region. The first calculating means calculates a total amount of the game value elements placed on the first placement region based on the identification data items. The first display means displays, to the dealer, the total amount of the game value elements calculated by the first calculating means.



EP 1 767 255 A2

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates to a game table apparatus that is used in a game arcade such as a casino.

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2. Description of Related Art

[0002] In a game which is played in a casino, such as a poker, a roulette and the like, a chip functions as a game value element. Within the casino, a value of the chips is equivalent to that of money. A player participates in a game by betting chips. Each time one game is finished, a dealer pays out chips to respective players. At this time, the dealer makes mental calculations a payout number of chips. Therefore, the payout number of chips may be mistaken due to miscalculation.

[0003] Japanese Patent Unexamined Publication No. 2003-70956 discloses a card-game monitoring system and a card-game table, in which, for the purpose of preventing a dealer from miscalculating, an IC tag storing therein identification data about a value is buried in each chip and an identification data reader that reads identification data of a chip value is provided in a bet region of a game table, which is a region where each player places chips to be bet, so that the amounts of chips bet by respective players are automatically calculated and displayed on a display device. By checking the display device that is displaying the amounts of chips bet by respective players, the dealer can correctly pay out chips.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0004] In the card-game table disclosed in the above-mentioned document, the amount of chips bet by each player is automatically calculated. However, the dealer has to calculate by himself/herself the total amount of chips he/she holds. Therefore, it is troublesome for the dealer to know increase and decrease in total amount of chips he/she holds, that is, to know his/her win-or-lose status.

[0005] An object of the present invention is to provide a game table apparatus that enables a dealer to easily know increase and decrease in a total amount of game value elements he/she holds.

[0006] According to a first aspect of the present invention, there is provided a game table apparatus comprising a game table, a first placement region, a first identification data item reading means, a first calculating means, and a first display means. In one area of the game table a dealer is located, and in the other area thereof a player is located. The first placement region is provided in the one area of the game table and for game value elements held by the dealer to be placed thereon. The first identification data item reading means, through a wireless

communication, reads an identification data item from each of the game value elements placed on the first placement region. Each of the game value elements stores therein its own identification data item. The first calculating means calculates a total amount of the game value elements placed on the first placement region based on the identification data items read by the first identification data item reading means. The first display means displays, to the dealer, the total amount of the game value elements calculated by the first calculating means.

[0007] In this aspect, identification data items of all game value elements placed on the first placement region are read through the wireless communication, and then a total amount of the game value elements is calculated and displayed on the first display means. Accordingly, the dealer can know the total amount of the game value elements he/she holds by seeing the first display means, without calculating it by himself/herself. Therefore, the dealer can easily know increase and decrease in total amount of his/her game value elements, that is, his/her win-or-lose status.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] Other and further objects, features and advantages of the invention will appear more fully from the following description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings in which:

FIG. 1 illustrates a state where game table apparatuses according to an embodiment of the present invention are connected to a center server via a communication network;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a game table that is included in the game table apparatus;

FIG. 3 is a partial sectional view of a chip that is used as a game value element in a game;

FIG. 4 is a block diagram showing an electrical construction of the game table apparatus;

FIG. 5 is an explanatory view showing a chip data table;

FIG. 6 is an explanatory view showing a management table;

FIG. 7 is a flowchart showing a main routine of the game table apparatus;

FIG. 8 is a flowchart showing a data processing routine of the game table apparatus; and

FIG. 9 is a flowchart showing a data processing routine of the center server.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0009] In the following, a certain preferred embodiment of the present invention will be described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

[0010] FIG. 1 illustrates a state where four game table apparatuses 10 according to an embodiment of the

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present invention are connected to a center server 50 via a communication network 6. The game table apparatuses 10 are placed in a hall of a casino, while the center server 50 is placed in a monitoring room of the casino. Each of the game table apparatuses 10 has a game table 27, a small monitor 13 that serves as a first display means, a large monitor 17 that serves as a second display means, and a computer 11.

[0011] As shown in FIG. 2, the game table 27 has such a planar shape that its rear side in the drawing is straight and its front side in the drawing is curved. Three players (not shown) are positioned on the curved side of the game table 27 which is the front side in the drawing, while one dealer 1 is positioned on the straight side of the game table 27 which is the rear side in the drawing, so that a card game or the like is played. Here, positions of the three left, center, and right players are defined sequentially as seats A, B, and C. The number of players is not limited to three.

[0012] Three bet regions 29, in which the respective players places their chips to be bet on a game, are defined on an upper face 27a of the game table 27. Each of the bet regions 29 is provided with an identification data reader 19. The identification data reader 19 is buried in the game table 27 and makes a wireless communication with a chip 21 that is placed on the corresponding bet region 29, thereby contactlessly reading identification data of the chip 21.

[0013] Three second placement regions 26, in which the respective players place chips 21 they hold, are defined on the upper face 27a of the game table 27. The three second placement regions 26 locate closer to the players than the bet regions 29 are. Each of the placement regions 26 is provided with an identification data reader 16 that serves as a second identification data item reading means. The identification data reader 16 is buried in the game table 27 and makes a wireless communication with a chip 21 that is placed on the corresponding placement region 26, thereby contactlessly reading identification data of the chip 21.

[0014] On the upper face 27a of the game table 27, a first placement region 25, in which the dealer 1 places chips 21 he/she holds, is defined at the rear side in the drawing. The placement region 25 is provided with an identification data reader 15 that functions as a first identification data item reading means. The identification data reader 15 is buried in the game table 27 and makes a wireless communication with a chip 21 that is placed on the placement region 25, thereby contactlessly reading identification data of the chip 21.

[0015] On the upper face 27a of the game table 27, a card case 30 that stores cards 9 therein is provided at the rear side in the drawing, too. During a game, the dealer 1 takes cards 9 out of the card case 30, and distributes the cards to the respective players and to the dealer 1 himself/herself.

[0016] Referring to FIG. 1 again, identification data of chips 21, which have been read by the respective iden-

tification data readers 15, 16, and 19, are transmitted to the computer 11 in real time. Based on the identification data read by the identification data reader 15, the computer 11 calculates a total amount of chips 21 that are placed on the placement region 25, and displays it on a display screen 13a of the small monitor 13. It should be noted that placed on the placement region 25 are all of the chips 21 the dealer 1 holds.

[0017] Based on the identification data read by each of the identification data readers 16, the computer 11 calculates a total amount of chips 21 that are placed on each of the placement regions 26. Then, the computer 11 displays, on a display screen 17a of the large monitor 17, the total amounts of chips 21 that are placed on the respective three placement regions 26 as a seat-A total amount, a seat-B total amount, and a seat-C total amount, respectively. It should be noted that placed on the placement regions 26 are all of the chips 21 the respective players hold.

[0018] Based on the identification data read by each of the identification data readers 19, the computer 11 calculates a total amount of chips 21 that are placed on each of the bet regions 29 (hereinafter referred to as a bet amount). Then, the computer 11 displays, on the display screen 13a of the small monitor 13 and on the display screen 17a of the large monitor 17, bet amounts corresponding to the three bet regions 29 as a seat-A bet amount, a seat-B bet amount, and a seat-C bet amount, respectively. It should be noted that each player places all of the chips 21 he/she bets on a game in each corresponding bet region 29.

[0019] The small monitor 13 is provided on a side face of the game table 27 with its display screen 13a facing the dealer 1. Displayed on the display screen 13a are, as described above, the total amount of dealer chips and the bet amounts of the respective players (i.e., the seat-A bet amount, the seat-B bet amount, and the seat-C bet amount). When paying out the chips 21, the dealer 1 checks the small monitor 13 for the bet amounts of the respective players. This enables the dealer 1 to pay out the chips 21 quickly and correctly.

[0020] The large monitor 17 (see FIG. 1) is provided behind the dealer 1 and away from the game table 27, with its display screen 17a facing the players. The large monitor 17 is visible not only to the players who are playing a game on the corresponding game table 27 but also to a large audience existing in the hall of the casino. Displayed on the display screen 17a of the large monitor 17 are a background design 3d depicting the game table 27, and split screens 3a, 3b, and 3c on a lower-left side, an under side, and a lower-right side, respectively. The split screen 3a shows a total amount of chips and a betamount of a player who is sitting on the seat A. The split screen 3b shows a total amount of chips and a bet amount of a player who is sitting on the seat B. The split screen 3c shows a total amount of chips and a bet amount of a player who is sitting on the seat C. Like this, the display screen 17a is configured so as to allow correspondence

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between the three split screens 3a to 3c and the players sitting on the respective seats A to C to be clearly recognized.

[0021] Data on a total amount of chips of a dealer and data on a total amount of chips of each player are transmitted from each game table apparatus 10 to the center server 50. A display device of the center server 50 displays thereon a display screen 50a including split screens 4a, 4b, 4c, and 4d which respectively shows information about first, second, third, and fourth tables. Here, the first to fourth tables mean the respective game table apparatuses 10 placed in the hall of the casino, and correspond to game table numbers which will be described later.

[0022] An observer who monitors the display device of the center server 50 can, by watching the display screen 50a, know a status of a game which is played in each game table 27.

[0023] Next, with reference to FIG. 3, the chip 21 used as a game value element in a game will be described in detail. FIG. 3 is a partial sectional view, showing a section at its right half. As shown in FIG. 3, the chip 21 has a coin-like shape, and an IC tag 23 and a transmitting antenna 22 are buried inside the chip 21.

[0024] An IC chip that stores therein identification data relating to a value of the chip 21, a tuning capacitor, a rectifier diode, a smoothing capacitor, etc. are incorporated into the IC tag 23. The transmitting antenna 22 includes an antenna coil that is, inside the chip 21, annularly wound several times. Elements of the IC tag 23 are connected to both ends of the transmitting antenna. The number of windings of the transmitting antenna 22, etc. is properly set depending on functions required.

[0025] The transmitting antenna 22 and the tuning capacitor of the IC tag 23 form a resonant circuit. An induction field caused by mutual induction functions as a transmission medium, and data are carried contactlessly by means of a wireless communication using resonance due to electromagnetic waves. Through this wireless communication, identification data relating to a value of the chip 21 which are stored in the IC chip is read by the identification data reader 15, 16, or 19. The identification data reader 15 is able to read identification data of all the chips 21, including piled-up ones, placed on the placement region 25. The same is applied to the identification data readers 16 and 19, too. Induced electromotive force caused by mutual induction serves to supply power necessary for operating the IC tag 23 and the transmitting antenna 22. The induced electromotive force is generated by a flux change which occurs upon movement of the chip 21 or data-reading by the identification data reader 15, 16, and 17.

[0026] The IC chip may store not only the identification data relating to a value of the chip 21 but also data such as a serial number of the chip 21, a color of the chip 21 and the like.

[0027] Next, an electrical construction of the game table apparatus 10 will be described with reference to FIG.

[0028] The computer 11 which controls an operation of the game table apparatus 10 has an interface circuit 34, an input/output bus 35, a CPU 31, a ROM 32, a RAM 33, a communication interface circuit 37, and a display controller 36.

[0029] The input/output bus 35 is connected to the CPU 31, and inputs/outputs a data signal, etc. to/from the CPU 31. The interface circuit 34 is connected to the input/output bus 35.

[0030] The identification data readers 15, 16, and 19 are connected to the interface circuit 34. Each of the identification data readers 15, 16, and 19 has a receiving antenna (not shown) and a receiver (not shown). The receiving antenna corresponds to the transmitting antenna 22 of the chip 21. The receiver converts a signal received from the transmitting antenna 22 into data and processes the data. As a modulation system, a common system such as the ASK method may be adopted. Identification data of the chips 21 that have been read by the identification data readers 15, 16, or 19 are inputted via the interface circuit 34 into the input/output bus 35, and then processed by the CPU 31.

[0031] The ROM 32 and the RAM 33 are connected to the input/output bus 35. The ROM 32 stores therein a control program, such as a main routine program, for a general control of the game table apparatus 10. The RAM 33 temporarily stores therein various information such as data about the number of chips 21 of each value. The various information relating to the chips 21, which is temporarily stored in the RAM 33, is stored in the form of a chip data table as will be described later.

[0032] The communication interface circuit 37 is connected to the input/output bus 35. The communication interface circuit 37 is connected to the center server 50 via the communication network 6. The communication interface circuit 37 is a circuit for communicating with the center server 50, and functions as a connection means of the present invention.

[0033] The display controller 36 is connected to the input/output bus 35. Based on the chip data table stored in the RAM 33, the display controller 36 generates drive signals for driving the small monitor 13 and the large monitor 17, and outputs the drive signals to the small monitor 13 and the large monitor 17, respectively. Thus, a total amount of chips of the dealer and amounts of chips bet by respective players are displayed on the display screen 13a of the small monitor 13, while total amounts of chips of the respective players and the amounts of chips bet by the respective players are displayed on the display screen 17a of the large monitor 17.

[0034] Next, the chip data table, which is stored in the RAM 33, is described with reference to FIG. 5.

[0035] The chip data table has a \$10 chip field, a \$50 chip field, \$100 chip field, a total chip field, a bet amount field, and a total game field. Stored in the \$10 chip field are the number of \$10 chips placed on the dealer's placement region 25, which have been read by the identification data reader 15, and the number of \$10 chips placed

on the placement regions 26 for the respective seats A, B and C, which have been read by the three identification data readers 16. The same is applied to the \$50 chip field and the \$100 chip field.

[0036] Stored in the total chip field is, with respect to each of the dealer, players sitting on the seats A, B and C, the total amount of chips 21 the number of which is stored in the \$10 chip field, the \$50 chip field, and the \$100 chip field. Stored in the bet amount field are the amounts of bets of respective players sitting on the seat A, seat B, and the seat C, which have been read by the three identification data readers 19. Stored in the total game field is the total number of games that have been played on the game table 27.

[0037] Next, a management table, which is stored in the center server, will be described with reference to FIG. 6

[0038] The management table has a game table number field, a \$10 chip field, a \$50 chip field, a \$100 chip field, a total chip field, and a total game field. The information on the chip data table (see FIG. 5), more specifically the number of chips 21 of each value, the total amount of chips, and the total number of games, is transmitted from each game table apparatus 10, and stored in one-to-one correspondence with each game table number. Here, the game table number means an identifier which has been in advance assigned to each game table apparatus 10. The management table is updated at the timing when one game ends based on a data processing routine of the game table apparatus 10 (see FIG. 8) and a data processing routine of the center server 50 (see FIG. 9) which will be described later. Accordingly, the management table does not contain information about the bet amount of each player. When no chips 21 have been placed on the bet regions 29 of all player's seats for a predetermined period of time (ten seconds in this embodiment), then it is determined that one game ends.

[0039] Next, a main routine of the game table apparatus 10 will be described with reference to FIG. 7. Respective steps included in the main routine, which will be described below, are executed by the CPU 31 (see FIG. 4). [0040] First, the identification data reader 15 senses the dealer's placement region 25 (S1). The numbers of all chips 21 of the respective values that are placed on the placement region 25 are registered in the \$10 chip field, the \$50 chip field, and \$100 chip field of the chip data table shown in FIG. 5 (S2). Then, the total amount of chips of the dealer is calculated based on the number of all the chips 21 of each value (S3), and registered in the total chip field of the chip data table (S4). Then, the total amount of chips of the dealer is displayed on the small monitor 13 (S5).

[0041] Accordingly, the dealer 1 can know the total amount of chips 21 he/she holds by seeing the small monitor 13, without calculating it by himself/herself. Therefore, the dealer 1 can easily know increase and decrease in total amount of his/her chips 21, that is,

his/her win-or-lose status.

[0042] Subsequently, a seat number "n" (where n is 1 to 3) is set to "1" (S6). Here, first, second, and third seats are the seats A, B, and C, respectively. Then, the identification data reader 19 senses the bet region 29 of the n-th seat (S7). The numbers of all chips 21 of the respective values that are placed on the n-th seat bet region 29 are stored in the RAM 33 (S8). Then, the identification data reader 16 senses the placement region 26 of the n-th seat (S9). The numbers of all chips 21 of the respective values that are placed on the n-th seat placement region 26 are registered in the \$10 chip field, \$50 chip field, and \$100 chip field of the chip data table (S10).

[0043] Then, whether the bet regions 29 and the placement regions 26 of all the player's seats have been sensed or not is determined (S11). When it is determined that sensing has not yet been made on the bet regions 29 and the placement regions 26 of all the player's seats (S11: NO), "1" is added to "n" (S12) and the processing returns to S7.

[0044] When it is determined that sensing has been made on the bet regions 29 and the placement regions 26 of all the player's seats (S11: YES), the processing proceeds to S13 in which the amount of bets in each seat is calculated based on data that have been stored in RAM 33 in the previous step S8, and also in which the total amount of chips in each seat is calculated based on the numbers of chips 21 of the respective values that have been registered in the previous step S10. The amount of bets and the total amount of chips thus calculated in S13 are, with respect to each seat, registered in the bet amount field and the total chip field of the chip data table, respectively (S14). Then, the amounts of bets in the respective player's seats are displayed on the small monitor 13 (S15), while the total amounts of chips and the amounts of bets in the respective player's seats are displayed on the large monitor 17 (S16). After S16, the processing returns to S1.

[0045] This enables each player to know, by seeing the large monitor 17, the total amount of chips 21 he/she holds without calculating it by himself/herself. Therefore, each player can easily know increase and decrease in total amount of his/her chips 21, that is, his/her win-or-lose status.

[0046] The large monitor 17 is visible to a large audience existing in the hall of the casino, too. The audience is able to, even at a position remote from the game table 27, see the large monitor 17 to know the total amount of chips and the amount of bets of each player who is playing a game on the game table 27. Accordingly, there is little need that the audience should gather around the game table 27. This can avoid making a crowd around the game table 27. In addition, a player who is winning in a game can feel high superiority because his/her winning is known even to a distant audience.

[0047] The CPU 31 of the computer 11 executes a data processing routine shown in FIG. 8, independently of the main routine shown in FIG. 7.

[0048] First, a timer is reset (A1), and then started (A2). The identification data readers 19 sense the bet regions 29 of the respective player's seats (A3), and whether a chip 21 exists in any of the bet regions 29 is determined (A4). When a chip 21 exists in any of the bet regions 29 (A4: YES), it is determined that a gaming is being played, and the processing returns to A1.

[0049] When a chip 21 does not exist in any of the bet regions 29 (A4: NO), whether a predetermined period of time (ten seconds in this embodiment) has elapsed or not is determined based on the timer (A5). When a predetermined period of time has not elapsed yet (A5: NO), the processing returns to A3. When a predetermined period of time has elapsed (A5: YES), it is determined that one game has ended. Thus, the total number of games, which is stored in the chip data table in the RAM 33 (see FIG. 5), is counted up by "1" (A6). Various information, except the amounts of bets, is acquired from the chip data table (A7).

[0050] In A8, produced is an information signal including, in addition to the various information acquired in A7, a game table number which is an identifier of the game table apparatus 10. The information signal is transmitted to the center server 50 via the communication network 6 (A9). After A9, the processing returns to A1.

[0051] In the center server 50 which receives the information signal from each game table apparatus 10, a data processing routine as shown in FIG. 9 is executed. [0052] First, whether the information signal is received from any game table apparatus 10 or not is determined (B1). When the information signal is not received (B1: NO), the processing returns to B1 in which the server 50 waits for the information signal to be received. When the information signal is received (B1: YES), a game table number that is included in the information signal is recognized (B2). In B3, various information included in the information signal, more specifically the number of chips 21 of each value, the total amount of chips, and the total number of games, is registered in the fields of a corresponding game table number in the management table shown in FIG. 6. Then, the total amounts of chips of the dealer and of the respective players are displayed on the display device of the center server 50 (B4). After B4, the processing returns to B1.

[0053] Consequently, the observer who monitors the center server 50 can, by watching the display screen 50a, check increase and decrease in total amount of chips 21 the dealer 1 holds, that is, whether the dealer 1 is winning or losing. Thus, in a case where the dealer 1 is losing, the observer can surely give an instruction to change the dealer 1 or instruct someone, for example a staff of the hall, to restock chips 21 for the dealer 1.

[0054] In the above-described embodiment, the small monitor 13 displays thereon the total amount of chips of the dealer and the amount of bets of each player. However, it may display thereon only the total amount of chips of the dealer, or alternatively it may additionally display thereon the total amount of chips of each player. With

such a construction as well, the dealer 1 can, by checking the total amount of dealer's chips, easily know increase and decrease in total amount of chips 21 he/she holds, that is, his/her win-or-lose status.

[0055] In the above-described embodiment, the large monitor 17 displays thereon the total amounts of chips and the amounts of bets of all players. However, it may also be possible that only the total amounts of chips of all players are displayed thereon. With such a construction as well, each player can, by checking the total amount of chips, easily know increase and decrease in total amount of chips 21 he/she holds, that is, his/her winor-lose status.

[0056] While this invention has been described in conjunction with the specific embodiments outlined above, it is evident that many alternatives, modifications and variations will be apparent to those skilled in the art. Accordingly, the preferred embodiments of the invention as set forth above are intended to be illustrative, not limiting. Various changes may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined in the following claims.

25 Claims

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1. A game table apparatus comprising:

a game table on one area of which a dealer is located and on the other area of which a player is located;

a first placement region that is provided in the one area of the game table and for game value elements held by the dealer to be placed thereon;

a first identification data item reading means that, through a wireless communication, reads an identification data item from each of the game value elements placed on the first placement region, each of the game value elements storing therein its own identification data item;

a first calculating means that calculates a total amount of the game value elements placed on the first placement region based on the identification data items read by the first identification data item reading means; and

a first display means that displays, to the dealer, the total amount of the game value elements calculated by the first calculating means.

2. The game table apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising:

a second placement region that is provided in the other area of the game table and for game value elements held by the player to be placed thereon;

a second identification data item reading means

that, through a wireless communication, reads an identification data item from each of the game value elements placed on the second placement region, each of the game value elements storing therein its own identification data item; a second calculating means that calculates a total amount of the game value elements placed on the second placement region based on the identification data items read by the second identification data item reading means; and a second display means that displays, to the player and an audience, the total amount of the game value elements calculated by the second calculating means.

3. The game table apparatus according to claim 1 or 2, further comprising:

a connection means connected to a center server that manages game information; and a transmission means that, at a predetermined timing, transmits to the center server a signal relating to the total amount of the game value elements calculated by the first calculating means.

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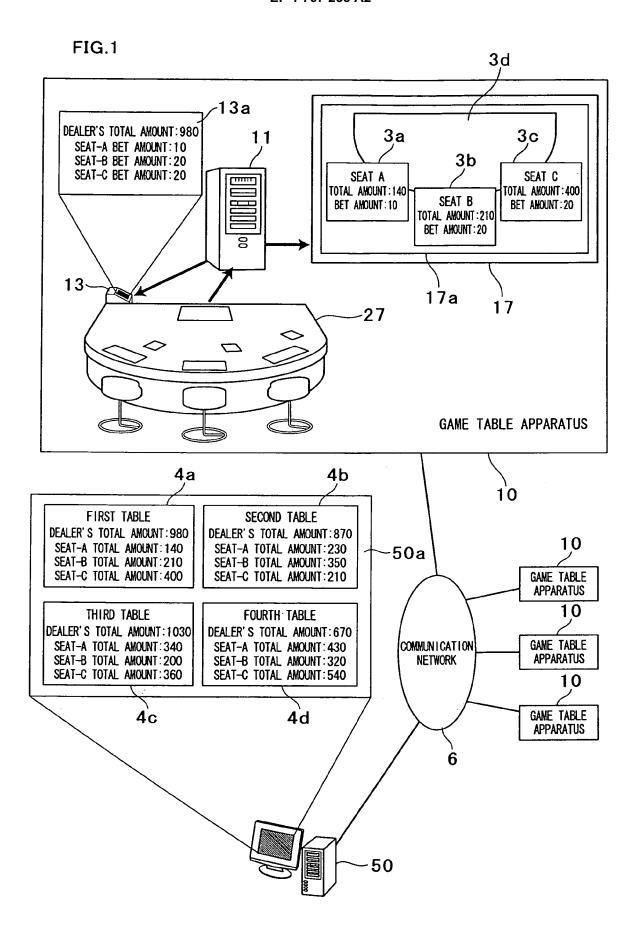


FIG.2

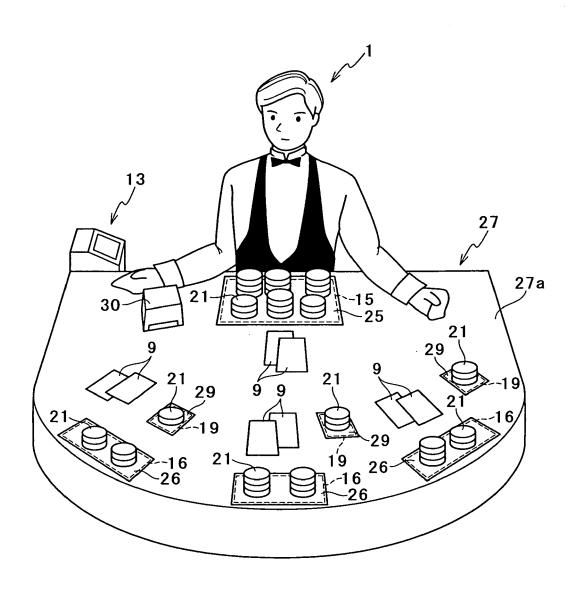
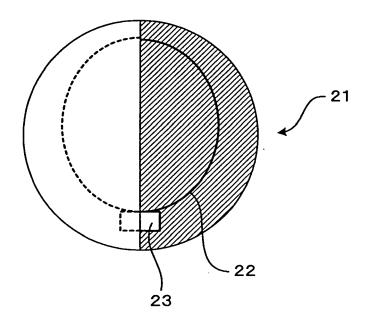


FIG. 3



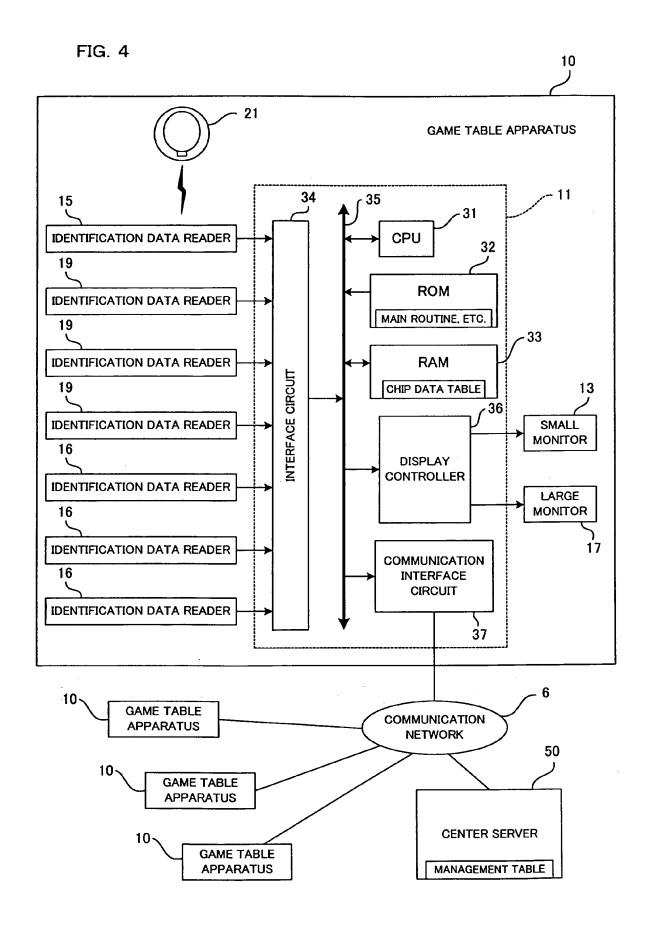


FIG. 5

CHIP DATA TABLE

TOTAL NUMBER OF GAMES 57 **BET AMOUNT** 0 20 20 TOTAL AMOUNT OF CHIPS 210 980 140 400 THE NUMBER OF \$100 CHIPS N 4 0 THE NUMBER OF \$50 CHIPS თ 0 ო THE NUMBER OF \$10 CHIPS <u>ი</u> 4 ဖ ß SEAT A DEALER SEAT B SEAT C

FIG. 6

MANAGEMENT TABLE

GAME TABLE NUMBER		THE NUMBER OF \$10 CHIPS	THE NUMBER OF \$50 CHIPS	THE NUMBER OF \$100 CHIPS	TOTAL AMOUNT OF CHIPS	TOTAL NUMBER OF GAMES
1	DEALER	13	9	4	980	57
	SEAT A	4	2	0	140	
	SEAT B	6	1	1	210	
	SEAT C	5	3	2	400	
2	DEALER	7	6	5	870	68
	SEAT A	8	3	0	230	
	SEAT B	10	1	2	350	
	SEAT C	6	1	1	210	
3	DEALER	8	7	6	1030	49
	SEAT A	14	2	1	340	
	SEAT B	10	2	0	200	
	SEAT C	11	3	1	360	
4	DEALER	12	3	4	670	74
	SEAT A	8	3	2	430	
	SEAT B	17	1	1	320	
	SEAT C	9	3	3	540	

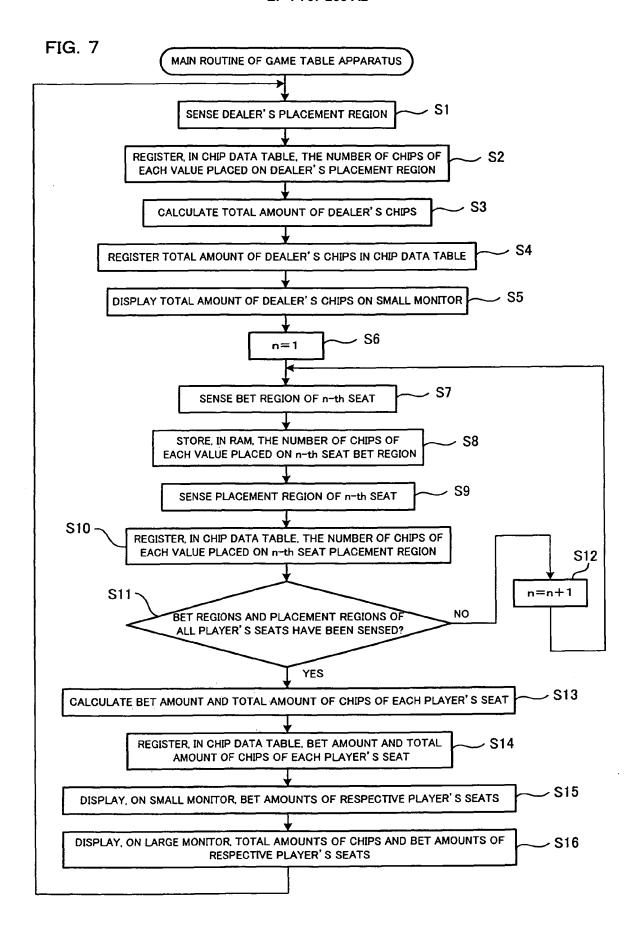


FIG. 8

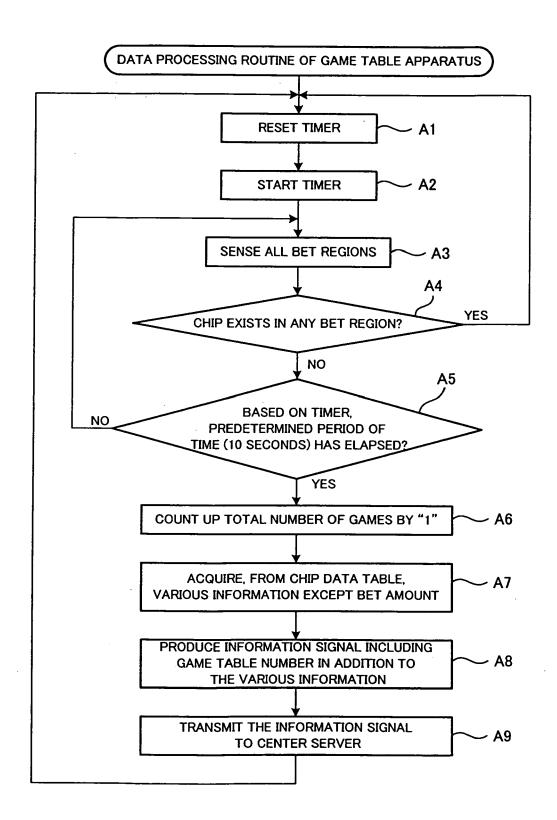
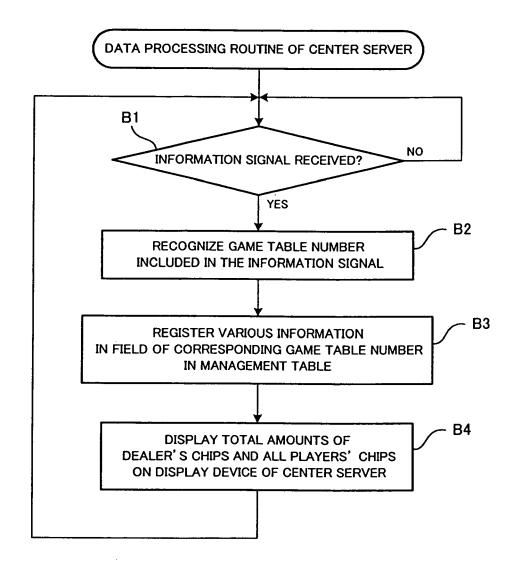


FIG. 9



EP 1 767 255 A2

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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