

Book Review #1

*Casino Industry in Asia Pacific:
Development, Operation and Impact*

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The Haworth Hospitality Press

www.HaworthPress.com

ISBN: 0-7890-2346-9

ISBN-13: 978-0-7890-2346-9

230 pages. Indexed.

Reviewed by Betty McNeal

The impressive roster of 17 contributing authors to this compilation on Asian gaming reads like a Who's Who of gaming professors, consultants and researchers, some of whom function as all three. This book comes at an opportune time when casino gaming in Asia is on go and spreading. The triple coverage of development, operation and impact promises fact plus analysis making this a core book for your gaming library.

Countries discussed include those with long-established gaming as well as emerging venues and prohibitive jurisdictions. Covered are: Australia, Korea, Macao, Japan, a cluster of countries in Southeast Asia that includes Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Union of Myanmar (Burma), Republic of Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. China is showcased in the final chapter.

World societies being much alike in their struggle with gambling we are not surprised to find familiar issues at stake: licensing, regulation, revenue collection and disbursement, economic impacts, illegal gambling, criminal elements and problem gambling. The details make the difference with local or cultural characteristics offering special challenges. It is interesting to see gambling open to foreign visitors but closed to native inhabitants, gambling prohibited by the dominant religion, regulation at the national level vs. state level, and other variations.

Australia gets considerable attention and rightly so for its decades of experience in the modern era of regulated gaming. Of special note is Australia's research in problem gambling with its emphasis on public health rather than mental illness.

Macao is distinctive for its transition from a gambling monopoly to competitive corporations including U. S. casinos. Its proximity to mainland China and the gradual relaxing of China's travel restrictions are major factors in Macao's growth.

With table games a favorite among Asian players we are introduced in Chapter 9 to "Nonnegotiable chips: Their use and cost". The turnover in these chips is the basis for rebates or rewards paid to premium players for table play, including baccarat. We are treated to a rare public discussion of how these commissions are figured.

Some chapters are documented by reference lists for further reading. This is a book to skim the first time around to get the scope and flavor. Future use will be facilitated by zooming in on topics of interest for in-depth study. Background data for future studies on Asian gaming can be gleaned here as well.