

## In the past

- Gambling was the most lucrative tax-farm in Singapore's early years. In 1826, it contributed to nearly half of the island's \$75,000 revenue.
- Secret societies controlled illegal gambling dens and farms, after laws to suppress these vices were introduced.

## Today

- Gambling is regulated by the Singapore government through the Singapore Totalisator (Tote) Board.
- The combined gross revenue of Singapore's two casinos was S\$7.66 billion in 2013.
- Singapore Pools' turnover was S\$6.34 billion in 2015.

Did you know?



Gambling is nothing new to Singapore. Since Singapore's early years, inhabitants of the island have been engaged in gambling activities such as betting at cockpits. The early colonial administrators held different views regarding gambling: William Farquhar and John Crawford saw gambling as a source of revenue, while Raffles and later administrators banned it on moral grounds. Subsequent bans drove gambling underground, and illegal gambling took the form of *chap ji kee* and illegal betting on race days.

## Issues and problems

Secret societies fought for control over gambling dens that sprouted in areas around Chinatown such as Duxton Road and China Street. Over time, illegal gambling spread to residential areas and public places. "Mini turf clubs" run by bookies in the 1970s and 1980s caused a din and made residents feel unsafe.

As seen through cases involving individuals and their families members reported in our local newspapers, gambling addiction can lead to poverty and other social issues. In addition, a 2004/2005 survey by the Ministry for Community, Youth and Sports (MCYS) indicated that 2.1 percent of respondents showed signs of gambling addiction.



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## Managing the problem

**Legislation:** Since the 1820s, laws and ordinances have been enacted to control and/or suppress illegal gambling. For instance, Raffles introduced Regulation No. IV of 1823, entitled *A Regulation Prohibiting Gaming-houses and Cockpits, and for Suppressing the Vice of Gaming of Singapore*. In 1913, the *Betting Ordinance* was introduced to control illegal bookies at the Turf Club.

**Tackling the Problem Gambling:** The National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) was set up in August 2005. Its functions include raising public awareness on problem gambling, and barring certain individuals from casinos through exclusion orders.

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## Search Tips

Looking for images?  
Use these keywords:

- **Gambling**
- **Gamblers**
- **Lottery**

## NewspaperSG articles

([eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers))

**Gaming and gambling.** (1911, November 8). *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (1884–1942)*, p. 12. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.

**Gaming raids.**(1926, November 3). *The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser (Weekly)*, p. 277. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.

## Book



Written by the then-Assistant Commissioner of Police (Malaya), this publication was an unofficial textbook for lawmen, identifying the common forms of gambling found in Malaya.

**C.T. Dobree (1955). *Gambling Games of Malaya*. Call no: RCLOS 795 DOB-[SEA]**

## Infopedia articles

([eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia](http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia))

**Chua, A. (2012). *Chap ji kee*. Infopedia. National Library Board.**

**Chia, J. et al (2007). *Gambling farms in the 19th century*. Infopedia. National Library Board.**

**Chia, J. (2015). *Gambling in Singapore*. Infopedia. National Library Board.**

## Images from the National Archives



### National Archives Online

[www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline](http://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline)

## REFERENCES

- 1) Blythe, W. (1969). *The impact of Chinese secret societies in Malaya: A historical study*, pp. 245, 476. London, Kuala Lumpur: Oxford U. P. (Call no.: RSEA 366.09595 BLY)
- 2) Dobree, C. T. (1955). *Gambling games of Malaya*, pp. 11, 42-44, 113-115. Kuala Lumpur: Caxton Press. (Call no.: 795 DOB -[SEA])
- 3) Law, A.K. (1987). "Bringing the bookies to book", in *Police Life Annual 1987*, p. 82-85. Singapore: Singapore Police Force. (Call no.: RSING 363.2095957 PLA year 1987)
- 4) Ying, Y. C. (1986). "Chap ji kee", in *Police Life Annual 1986*, p. 142-151. Singapore: Singapore Police Force. (Call no.: RSING 363.2095957 PLA year 1986)