

## Advance Praise

To think about the geographies of the Round Table Conference is to appreciate that what occurred ‘behind the scenes’ was absolutely consequential to 20th century global imperial history. Legg shows how critical a variety of infrastructures – from palaces, flats and tearooms to gavels, coat racks and washstands – were to both official and subaltern diplomacy during this watershed interwar event. If London was the great unacknowledged delegate to the conference, its most public and most intimate spaces are key to understanding the role of cultural relations in the history of India’s pathway to full political sovereignty. Thanks to Legg’s amazing footwork, we have a whole new understanding of all the rooms where it happened.

**Antoinette Burton, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign**

Legg radically reimagines the Round Table Conference (RTC), often relegated to a stodgier sideshow of state-making and nationalism on the ground, by focusing on the politics of representation, labour, infrastructure and space that went into making the RTC. In doing so, he shows how Indian delegates at the RTC innovated new spaces of internationalist politics and challenged Western stereotypes of backwardness. Elegantly crafted, and engagingly written, Legg offers us rich theoretical tools and incisive methods to understand the production of internationalism in the 20th century.

**Rohit De, Yale University**

This compelling, beautifully written and detailed account of the Round Table Conference brings together geographies of colonialism and diplomacy to exemplify how colonial democracy was practised. Stephen Legg brings to attention a largely overlooked conference and the deliberations that occurred and extended beyond the meeting venue itself, providing captivating insights into how representation, communication and decision-making unfolded. The book includes evocative details of how the Indian delegates negotiated the simultaneously racist and hospitable landscape of 1930s London and draws on archival material to illuminate their experiences of being lavishly entertained at tea parties, receptions and soirees. Legg offers a distinctly geographical exploration of a unique historical event that highlights how liberalism and imperialism were being played out in the interwar period. In bringing together geo-political debates with the intricacies of practices and encounters, this book both delights and challenges the reader.

**Uma Kothari, University of Manchester**

Legg helps us understand the contentious relationship between empire and democratisation through an underappreciated forum – the conference. With forensic and careful argumentation, Legg provides an intimate political geography of power and representation.

**Robbie Shilliam, Johns Hopkins University**

## ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE GEOGRAPHIES

*Round Table Conference Geographies* explores a major international conference in 1930s London which determined India's constitutional future in the British Empire. Pre-dating the decolonising conferences of the 1950s–1960s, the Round Table Conference laid the blueprint for India's future federal constitution. Despite this the conference is unanimously read as a failure, for not having comprehensively reconciled the competing demands of liberal and Indian National Congress politicians, of Hindus and Muslims, and of British versus Princely India. This book argues that the conference's three sessions were vital sites of Indian and imperial politics that demand serious attention. It explores the spatial politics of the conference in terms of its imaginary geographies, infrastructures, host city and how the conference was contested and represented. The book concludes by asking who gained through representing the conference as a failure and explores it, instead, as a teeming political, social and material space.

**Stephen Legg** is Professor of Historical Geography at the University of Nottingham, United Kingdom. He is a specialist on interwar colonial India with a particular interest in the politics of urban space within imperial and international frames. He has analysed these spaces and frames by drawing upon theoretical approaches from memory scholarship, postcolonialism, political theory and governmentality studies. He co-edited, with Deana Heath, *South Asian Governmentalities: Michel Foucault and the Question of Postcolonial Orderings*, which was published by Cambridge University Press in 2018. He is also the author of *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi's Urban Governmentalities* (2007), *Prostitution and the Ends of Empire: Scale, Governmentalities, and Interwar India* (2014) and editor of *Spatiality, Sovereignty and Carl Schmitt: Geographies of the Nomos* (2011).

# ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE GEOGRAPHIES



CONSTITUTING COLONIAL INDIA IN  
INTERWAR LONDON

STEPHEN LEGG



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**Stephen Legg**  
**Nottingham, August 2021**



**NOTE ON CONVERSIONS,  
SPELLINGS AND ABBREVIATIONS**



So as to give a handle on many of the costings in the chapters that follow, I have used the UK National Archive’s currency convertor to give 2017 purchasing power equivalents for 1930 costs.<sup>1</sup> These are marked in [£] next to the historical values. Names are given as included in official conference directories unless in quotation.

**ARCHIVAL REFERENCES**

BIK	Ganga Singhji Memorial Trust archive in Bikaner
BL/IOR	British Library, London, India Office Records
BL/IOR/Eur.Mss.	British Library, London, India Office Records European Manuscripts
CSAS/Benthall	Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge, Papers of E. C. Benthall
NAI	National Archives of India, New Delhi
NLA/Sapru	National Library of Australia, Papers of Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru collected by D. A. Low, National Library of Australia, MS 9823
NMML	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi
NMML/Moonje	Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi papers of Dr B. S. Moonje
UKNA	The National Archives, London

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UM/RMD	University of Manchester, John Rylands Library, Ramsay MacDonald papers
UO/Sankey	University of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. Hist., Sankey Papers

ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
FSC	Federal Structure Committee
INC	Indian National Congress
IPI	Indian Political Intelligence
LAI	League against Imperialism
MP	member of parliament
NWFP	Northwest Frontier Province
RTC	Round Table Conference
YMCA	Young Men’s Christian Association