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Nationalism in Late Colonial Indonesia: The Urban Struggle for Political
Representation

Abstract

Indonesian nationalism in the early 20th century was not solely shaped by ideological movements or confrontations with the colonial state, but was also significantly influenced by urban politics in colonial cities like Surabaya. Nationalist leaders such as Doctor Soetomo, navigated between formal political institutions and grassroots activism to challenge European dominance in the city governance. Their participants in city councils highlighted the broader struggle for native Indonesians political rights and urban welfare, often using compromise and confrontation to influence colonial policies. While colonial cities were structured around racial and class segregation, the growth of political institutions in urban environments provided nationalists with a platform to advocate for improved conditions for the nation for the native population. This urban based nationalist engagement reshaped the local and political landscape and contributed to a broader anticolonial narrative, reflecting the intertwined nature of urban modernity and the Indonesian nationalist movement. The rise of city-based activism was key aspects of broader fight for equality & independence.