At the closing reception of the First Indonesian National Science Conference in 1958, President Soekarno connected the ideals of the Indonesian Revolution (1945) to science, for the very first time. Soekarno proffered that science has always been revolutionary in its outlook as it is based on a medicina non-interupta. For him, it was noted that thirteen years since the commencement of the Indonesian Revolution, the country had not yet adequately applied science towards the realisation of the revolutionary ideals of a just and prosperous society (masjarakat jang adil dan makmoer), but that he had confidence in the contributions that science could make. However, in order for science to attain the revolutionary ideals, Soekarno urged that the Indonesians transform basic science into applied science. This study investigates the pivotal role of Indonesian medicine in furthering the idiomatic Bandung Spirit, which advocated liberation of the world from colonial domination and superpower hegemony, economic and technological self-sufficiency of newly-independent nations, and solidarity with newly-independent nations of Africa and Asia.

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Science in Indonesia was, firstly, a comprehensive programme of socio-cultural change intended to transform the prevalent mindset of the Indonesians. Secondly, it was the instrument to achieve a just and equitable society. Thirdly, and perhaps the most important, was to be mobilised to address the nation’s pressing problems, Indonesia needed to invest in technical expertise and turn the minds of the people and scientists alike towards both existing and emergent problems.

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Afro-Asian Congress of Paediatrics (Jakarta). At the opening of the world from colonial and superpower hegemony, and advocated peaceful coexistence between nations, liberation. The Conference gave birth to the Bandung Spirit, which could achieve fuller political, economic, and cultural cooperation.

The ways in which the people of those countries of common interest for countries of Asia and Africa and convened in 1955. The Conference considered problems of malnutrition, infant, and neonatal mortality from a holistic perspective; i.e., coordinating paediatrics with nutrition. Indonesia would become a strong and healthy nation (negara kekuatan dan sehat) if it could reduce infant and neonatal mortality. As Minister for Research between 1962 and 1966, Poesepongoro was in charge of the Department of National Research (DURENAS), which sought to coordinate research undertaken in Indonesian universities with the activities of the research institutes (particularly the Nutrition Institute, the Department of Agriculture, and the National Institute of Biology) that were under the jurisdiction of MPI. For example, the Department of Paediatrics at UI, under the leadership of Poesepongoro, initiated interdisciplinary research into nutrition in conjunction with the Nutrition Institute (Lembaga Makanan Rakyat), an autonomous research institute directed by Poerwono Soedarmo. The aim was to discover cost-effective substitutes for milk that would combat kwashiorkor (protein energy malnutrition) and xerophthalmia (vitamin A deficiency). Poesepongoro astutely aligned the concerns of Indonesian paediatrics with the socio-economic questions raised by the Asian African Conference at Bandung.

Poesepongoro demonstrated his statesmanship by successfully relating paediatrics to the socio-economic questions raised by the Asian African Conference at Bandung. Because of Poesepongoro's excellent interpersonal skills, DURENAS was able to liaise between Indonesian universities on one hand, and research institutes under the jurisdiction of MPI on the other. Unfortunately, DURENAS remained underfunded throughout the early 1960s, due to the diversion of financial resources to the warfront resulting from Indonesia's political confrontation with Malaysia, and because of the seventeen-fold depreciation of the Indonesian rupiah.

Conclusion

The salient features of Soekarno era science can be summed up in three points. First, Indonesian physicians used science to critique colonialism, enhance Indonesia’s respectability among the international scientific community, and marry intellectual endeavour with practical concerns of post-war national reconstruction. Second, Soekarno sought to contest the Western monopoly on scientific knowledge and he envisioned the development of Indonesia's local scientific capabilities. While entailing the transnational nature of modern science, the President also understood science in relation to furthering Indonesia's local scientific capabilities. To this end, he encouraged the stimulation of scientific curiosity among students through the independent study and identification of dominant health issues affecting the community. Poesepongoro was influenced by Soekarno's proposition that every citizen of Indonesia had a stake in the latest developments in technology. He acknowledged the utility of the dictum: 'science for society'.

In his inaugural lecture as Professor of Paediatrics at the UI on 7 February 1953, Poesepongoro presented paediatrics as a nation-building endeavour. He expressed hope that with the advancement of paediatrics as an academic discipline in Indonesia's medical schools, members of Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat (Indonesian House of Representatives) would become more thoughtful of children's health. And with women's organisations volunteering to address children's health issues, the Ministry of Health would hopefully come to approach malnutrition, infant, and neonatal mortality from a holistic perspective; i.e., coordinating paediatrics with nutrition.

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