



Introducing Traditional Herb-based Medicine 'Boreh' on Wellness Tourism in Bali

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ABSTRACT

Since ancient times, people have recorded their knowledge of processing various herbs into medicine. In Bali, it can be found scattered on the island under the term Lontar Usadha, written on dried-Borassus leaves. From many types of traditional medicine and treatments in Lontar Usadha, Boreh has endured through centuries. There are three types of Boreh known by Balinese folks. It is classified according to their effect on the body: *Boreh anget*, *Boreh miyik*, and *Boreh tis*. Despite its popularity as a health treatment that has endured throughout time, it should be admitted that society's understanding regarding the ingredient's composition, processing steps, and the applying method is strongly influenced by the available information sources around them, as well as the ingredients. To appreciate and conserve the knowledge of Boreh making, the Bali Provincial Culture Office held a Boreh-making competition. On the spot, the public could see various Boreh ingredients that most Balinese rarely find today. On the other hand, the Government has a strategic plan to develop Wellness tourism as a new activity option when tourists visit Bali. In line with the effort to introduce Boreh as a traditional medicine from Bali, tourists can experience traditional treatment from their hotel or spa.

Keywords: Boreh, Medicine, Wellness Tourism.

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BACKGROUND

Since ancient times, people have recorded their knowledge of processing various herbs into medicine. In Bali, it can be found scattered on the island under the term Lontar Usadha, written on dried-Borassus leaves.¹ From many types of traditional medicine and treatments in Lontar Usadha, Boreh has endured through centuries. The term refers to a paste-like, traditional medicine made from herbs, spices, flowers, and sometimes fruits. Those ingredients would mostly be dried first or directly mashed and ground by the practitioner. Then, a solution would be added to the ground herbs and mixed before smeared on the skin. Meboreh is the process of applying Boreh to the body. The activity was popular in the past since it was viewed as the easiest method to maintain one's health and vitality and cure certain illnesses. As an external medicine, some health problems that Boreh can cure are muscle pain, pinched tendons, bone aches, muscle pain, and headaches.² At the same time, the medicine acts as a warming agent to the body and promotes better blood circulation.

For the Balinese, Meboreh was a staple before the millennium. Following the Usadha manuscript's guidelines, the folks incorporate various herbal plants to rejuvenate their body after work. It is a common scene in Balinese villages, where the people rub their bodies in the morning before their activities or at dusk after they return from work.³ Some argued

that a farmer first introduced the habit of rejuvenating the body after hourly work in the field. From the historical finding, the term has been known since the 10th century. Meboreh was adapted from Old Javanese Culture. Many artifacts, such as stone grinders or gingingan, pestles, and mortars, were scattered around Java and Bali. Written instruction on Lontar



Figure 1.⁵ Meboreh is the process of applying Boreh to the body. The activity was popular in the past since it was viewed as the easiest method to maintain one's health and vitality and cure certain illnesses.

Usadha dated from the 16th century mentioned some prominent figures, such as Mpu Kuturan and Danghyang Nirartha. These two figures said they contributed to introducing the island's culture. Since then, it has become a habit in society.⁴ Hitherto, the habit is only being practiced by some Balinese, as modern health treatment becomes more accessible and less hassle than the old one.

Geographical Influence on Boreh Development

Balinese folks generally classified several types of Boreh according to their effect on the body: Boreh anget, Boreh miyik, and Boreh tis.⁶ Boreh anget is a type of Boreh with its warm sensation characteristic when applied on the body, often referred to as the original Balinese Boreh. Mostly, this type of Boreh works to treat disease or illness. Its warm sensation helps to relax the body, improve blood circulation, and reduce muscle pain, bone pain, fever, chills, and headaches. Further, the other types, Boreh miyik and Boreh tis, are generally referred to as beauty products. The final product of this type is often as scrubs to exfoliate dead skin cells, brighten skin, and as hair fertilizer. The differences between Boreh miyik and tis are its ingredients. The word miyik means fragrant; therefore, it is mostly made from flowers such as Jempiring (*Gardenia jasminoides*), lavender, rose, or fragrant herbs. This boreh is commonly used by highborn to maintain their beauty and health. At the same time, Boreh tis is made from vegetables, fruits such as avocado, papaya, cucumber, carrot, yam, jicama (*Pachyrhizus erosus*),⁷ or a mild sensation herb. Boreh tis, instead of a beauty product, also works as an effective medicine to ease several types of illness.

Despite its popularity as a health treatment that has endured throughout time, it should be admitted that society's understanding regarding the ingredient's composition, processing steps, and the applying method is strongly influenced by the available information sources around them, as well as the ingredients.^{8,9} Commonly, Boreh is a homemade medicine. The ingredients were formulated at the household level to be used by family members. Most of the



Figure 2.¹³ In making the medicine paste, the dried or freshly acquired herbs would be measured and then pounded, known as Meintuk or Meuyeg, in mortar.



Figure 3.¹⁵ Common Boreh Ingredients.

family did not have the manual at home, relying on the information they heard from others. In some circumstances, the presence of Balian (witch doctor) becomes important to make a high-accuracy medicine. In addition, the geographical settlement condition provides a suitable place for particular herbs to grow. Therefore, each community uses what they may find around the area to make herbal medicine. One of the old traditional Balinese medicines, Lontar Taru Pramana, identified 182 species that can be used as ingredients for traditional Balinese medicine. Out of the 182 local names, 20 species have not been identified, and their scientific names have not been determined with certainty.¹⁰

Meanwhile, A study by Sutomo and

Iryadi (2019) revealed that 33% of 491 herb plants listed on various Lontar Usadha in Bali were no longer growing on Bali Island, with the possibility of extinction. In Bali botanical garden, 332 types of herbaceous plants have been well-conserved.¹¹ Some common Boreh ingredients such as ginger, turmeric, onions, garlic, rice grain, and moringa leaves can be easily encountered throughout the island. The marketplace will be the closest option available if a specific ingredient is required.¹²

In making the medicine paste, the dried or freshly acquired herbs would be measured and then pounded, known as Meintuk or Meuyeg, in mortar. The process would extract the plant's natural oil and juice, changing the material's consistency. The apothecary then adds

catalysts in the form of liquid such as spirit, fresh water, coconut oil, tree sap, or sometimes rendered deep sea creature's fat to the remedy. Finally, the paste-like mixture is ready to be used.

As a traditional treatment, Boreh has long been carried out from generation to generation by the Balinese. Elders and children commonly apply Boreh anget in the morning or evening. The warm sensation of Boreh anget helps to rejuvenate and comfort its user. For women, especially adolescents, it would be suggested to do a daily skincare routine using Boreh miyik. In contrast, Boreh tis and Boreh miyik would often be suggested for a postpartum woman.¹⁴ Today, Meboreh might be one of many options Balinese would choose since many over-the-counter medicines provide a faster result and less hassle. People sometimes dislike the strong scent of the herbs as they find a better product with a pleasant fragrance. It is no longer a habit for everyone in Bali; however, some households still practice this method as a daily routine to maintain their health.

Promote Boreh through Regional Competition

On June 2022, the Bali Provincial Culture Office held a Boreh-making competition. This cultural competition is an effort to appreciate and preserve ancient wisdom. The program also familiarizes Boreh's ingredients that most Balinese rarely seen. According to The Bali provincial cultural office, the competition was based on the Bali Provincial Regulation Number 4 of 2020 concerning the Strengthening and Advancement of Balinese Culture. The regulation encourages appreciation for Balinese culture, including traditional sports, games, and medicine. According to the Head of Tradition and Cultural Heritage of the Bali Province office, Ida Bagus Alit Suryana, the competition was a video competition. Through making a Boreh video competition, the organizer expected to promote traditional Balinese medicine revival in society. Suryana expected the community and health observers would be stimulated to consult on the Lontar Usada or any traditional references related to traditional medication. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic condition is a momentum to

return to promoting traditional medicine to maintain body health and fitness.

In the Boreh-making competition, the organizer requires some criteria that the participants must meet. The committee requires the contestants to make an authentic Boreh, a traditional herb, without adding preservatives and following traditional manufacturing techniques. In addition, participants must make an authentic Boreh as stated in the Balinese manuscript or based on oral traditions. This competition activity targets group participants or communities domiciled in Bali to do video documentation of the process of making Boreh, with its manufacturer's narration.

A jury of herb-based traditional medicine practitioners and university academics in Bali assessed this competition. The assessment aspects emphasize the authenticity of using raw materials for manufacturing Boreh, the making process, distinguished taste and aroma, product's color, benefits, and lastly, the participants can display the Boreh's reference, whether it comes from oral traditions, Bali manuscripts and both. In addition to sending videos, contestants who passed the top three selections must come directly to present their products in front of the judges.¹⁶

Rising Demand in Wellness Tourism

As one of the favorite tourist destinations in Indonesia and even the world, Bali not only offers natural beauty and an interesting variety of cultures. Bali is also believed and even planned to become one of the health tourism destinations in Indonesia.¹⁷ The concept of health tourism again in Bali was echoed by the Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy, which Sandiaga Uno now leads, recently with the term wellness and health tourism. Previously, the concept of health tourism or medical tourism was also mentioned by the General Manager of the Indonesia Medical Tourism Board (IMTB) Bali Nusra, Putu Deddy Suhartawan, in early November 2020. According to Deddy, Bali has huge potential to be the next medical tourism destination because qualified resources support it. More than 15 hospitals in Bali have been accredited nationally by KARS plenary, while four hospitals have

been accredited internationally. Deddy added that the types of health services Balinese tourists access are varied, but the main thing is cosmetic services. The role of hotels is indeed important, especially those that implement health protocols properly and consistently and provide various facilities and conveniences for guests to maintain health and fitness.¹⁸

Wellness tourism is a segment that is growing rapidly in many areas. Tourism is distinguished into six forms: leisure tourism (holiday), visitation tourism, transit tourism, reduced distance tourism, professional tourism, and relaxing and healthcare tourism. Healthcare tourism is then categorized into medical tourism and wellness tourism.^{19,20} Medical tourism only focuses on the quality and accessibility of care. It is carried out because of considerations related to cheaper prices. In contrast, wellness tourism is a trip carried out by tourists to relax and calm the mind, including SPA (Solus Per Aqua) visits and hot spring baths. The 2019 Global Web Index report shows that health travel now represents 6.5% of all travel made worldwide and is growing at 15.3% annually from 2015 to 2017, reaching 830 million trips annually.²¹ Asia is one of the preferred destinations for wellness tourism today, including India, which is known for Ayurvedic, China with acupuncture, and Thailand, which is famous for Thai massage.²²

In general, five-star hotels in Bali have prepared protocols that will be applied in every aspect. Starting from the lobby, rooms, and restaurants to the meeting place (MICE). Various facilities to maintain fitness and health, such as a fitness studio and spa area. Indonesia is one of the most popular spa tourism markets in Asia, and Bali is one of the most popular destinations in wellness tourism in the SPA sector, accommodating more than 20 of the best SPAs in the world. The uniqueness and techniques used in Balinese SPA are prominent tourist attractions.²³ In addition, the motivation of tourists to try Balinese SPA is because they are curious about the benefits of a typical Balinese SPA, which is also supported by the balance of beautiful natural tourism, as well as culture and local wisdom that is very well preserved. Bali also has many

well-known wellness activities, such as yoga, meditation, and body cleansing. Today, the use of Boreh by salons or Spas with Balinese nuances offers a complete treatment. Before applying the Boreh to all body parts, the therapist will usually do a massage and then apply the Boreh. The smeared paste should be cleaned after a while; it is necessary to wait a while for the medicine to be absorbed by the skin. If visitors do not mind, the therapist will perform facial treatments while waiting for the boreh to sink in completely.

The plan to make Bali a health tourism destination is also supported by tourism observer Robert Alexander Moningga. According to the man who also teaches at the Sahid Polytechnic, Bali has a main asset besides having many health facilities such as international-class hospitals, namely the readiness to accept domestic and foreign tourists. Of course, many things must be prepared, such as having trusted and experienced medical personnel or doctors like those in Malaysia and Singapore. Later this wellness tourism will be held by travel agents with various programs that prioritize a healthy lifestyle, including food and activities carried out during the trip.²⁴

CONCLUSION

There are three types of Boreh known by Balinese folks. It is classified according to their effect on the body: Boreh anget, Boreh miyik, and Boreh tis. Despite its popularity as a health treatment that has endured throughout time, it should be admitted that society's understanding regarding the ingredient's composition, processing steps, and the applying method is strongly influenced by the available information sources around them, as well as the ingredients. Most of the family did not have the manual at home, relying on the information they heard from others. In some circumstances, the presence of *Balian* (witch doctor) becomes important to make a high-accuracy medicine. In addition, the geographical settlement condition provides a suitable place for particular herbs to grow. Therefore, each community uses what they may find

around the area to make herbal medicine. 33% of 491 herb plants listed on various Lontar Usadha in Bali were no longer growing on Bali Island, with the possibility of extinction.

To appreciate and conserve the knowledge of Boreh making, the Bali Provincial Culture Office held a Boreh-making competition. On the spot, the public saw various Boreh ingredients that most Balinese rarely find today. On the other hand, the Government has a strategic plan to develop wellness tourism as a new activity option when tourists visit Bali. In line with the effort to introduce Boreh as a traditional medicine from Bali, tourists can experience traditional treatment from their hotel or spa.

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