APPROACH OF BIOGRAPHY OF OBJECTS: A PASSAGE FROM PROFANE TO SACRED

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ABSTRACT
This paper discusses the life journey of buildings through the Biography of Things approach taken through a case study of the Bouwploeg building which is currently the Cut Meutia Mosque. The change from an office building as a profane building to a mosque as a sacred building is the reason for the biography of things approach. This research uses the main data in the form of the Cut Meutia Mosque building, which is still standing in Menteng, Central Jakarta. The research method used in this research is based on the K. R. Dark framework which consists of data sources, data, evidence, and interpretation. The results of this research show that there are physical changes, functions, and meanings in the building’s life journey to become the Cut Meutia Mosque as a sacred building. This can be seen from the changes in materials and landscape. As well as the role of agency and structure behind it so that there can be a change in the building from profane to sacred.

KEYWORDS: profane, sacred, biography of things, bouwploeg, mosque
a person’s life. But Igor Kopytoff (1986) suggests that a biography may be utilized to depict the “life” story of an object. So, the life journey of a thing may point a status, an ownership, as well as the inter-relationality of the goods and its people. As stated by Gosden and Marshall (1999), human and an object was not directly capable to form a history, but when they both interacted, the story of their crossing could happen.

The approach of Biography of Things is observed within the category of building feature in accordance with the opinion of Gillings & Pollard in Joy (2009:541). They stated that an object like a monument, may reveal a history of its life span, analyzed with various interpretation considering its background. One of its examples is the building of Cut Meutia Mosque located in Menteng area in Jakarta. This mosque did not look like the general mosque because it looked more like a church in the Dutch Colonial time. In that time, the building was known as part of the icon in the area by the name Bouwploeg, a name taken from a real estate company of the government of Dutch Indies, Naamloze Vennootschap de Bouwploeg. This building was built by a Dutch architect Pieter Adriaan Jacobus Moojen in 1912, meant as an architect office bureau developing the area of the Nieuw Gondangdia in Batavia. As time went by, after it was no longer used as an architect office bureau, the building was changed for different functions. Eventually, on August nineteenth, 1987, the building was officially made a mosque named Cut Meutia Mosque.

The change of function from then an office building Bouwploeg now to a mosque, shows that there has been a change of usage, from then a profane, now sacral. A sacral or sacred building is identical with a place of worship as the main heart of religion. As a religious building, it is pivotal for the congregation to have a service. This function is crucial in the sociopolitical context as it represents an identity or power which related to a religion (Verkaaik, 2013). So, this means that a sacral edifice is a holy building and is attached to a religious function. Whereas a profane building means that there is no such relatedness to anything that is attached to holiness or sacredness in certain religions.

Considering this, the building Bouwploeg which at first was used as an office fulfilling a profane task. Although the building had to change several times for office purposes, its tasks were profane. This went on until the function of the building was changed into a mosque. Thus, the concept of the building was altered at the same time. When in the beginning, the building had been used for office needs, it then became profane, Thus the new function as a mosque had made the mosque sacral.

Based on the above explanation, the biographical approach was utilized to reveal a life walk of the building from one that was profane to another, that was sacral. By digging the relation between the building object of Cut Meutia Mosque and the community to form their history. For this purpose, the research problem raised here is to analyze the life walk of the building from profane to sacral using the approach of Biography of Things or biography of the object? The research, in a way, was directed towards understanding the change from profane to sacral in the study case of Cut Meutia Mosque.

The research uses a qualitative method applying the thought of K. R. Dark which stated the archaeological information may be found material goods, artifact, ecofact, as well as through the feature of eye viewing as data to prove the case study in the interpretative mind frame (Dark, 1995:36). This process had to undergo four steps; there is data, source of the data, proof, and interpretation. Source of data is obtained through the library and field research. The library research went through the readings of archives of photos, building maps found in books, research reports, and other literature about the history and the architecture of the building Bouwploeg and the Cut Meutia

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Mosque. After that, the field research was done by recording the verbal as well as pictorial. The interview sessions with the officials of the Mosque were held to get the information about the process of development before the building was turned into a mosque. Then the data was classified into the elements of the buildings, support attributes using function analysis and archaeological contacts to find clue about the changes that occurringly with the physical and function of the building. The result of the finding was applied in the context of change of the building from once that was used for profane purpose and later sacral. Then all these finding became the reverence to support the interpretation of analysis of object biography approach of Igor Kopytoff towards the edifice of Cut Meutia Mosque.

The History of Early Edifice of Cut Meutia Mosque

The recorded history of the edifice was that it was built in 1912 as an architect office bureau or an office positioned for a construction company around Niew Gondangdia (the early name of Menteng). The area was built as a city park (tuinstad). The company was under the management of the main director G. Elenbaas, Charles Wolff Schoemaker, the deputy director, and P. A. J. Moojen, the architect. This office was available in some newspapers in Holland in 1912-1914. Besides functioning the main objective of the business, the construction company offered other services, such as car service, and property sale for buildings. This side of business was also advertised in the Dutch newspapers (See Picture 1). In 1918, the building construction company, de Bouwploeg was handled by Ir. J. F. Kubatz. In six-year Menteng development project was taken care of by the architect, P. A. J. Moojen, there were some plannings that were less advantageous for the city park (tuinstad) which was originally proposed at the early planning. Finally, Ir. J. F. Kubatz struggled to accomplish the original plan assisted by Ir. F. J. L. Ghijselfs, J. F. van Hoytema, and H. van Essen. The construction project that was headed by Kubatz was run through another architect office that was established by Ghijselfs, Algemeen Ingenieurs- en Architecten Bureau (AIA). After 1918, the company N.V. De Bouwploeg diminished and was eventually dissolved in 1924.

Figure 1.
Advertisement in Newspaper Offering Property and Car Services Source: delpher.nl

The termination of the building construction company, de Bouwploeg was recorded in a Dutch newspaper Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië Number 295 dated on the 17th of December 1932, it stated that the building had been used as an additional post office, that is the building of the office then in de Bouwploeg, later, named Spoorweglaan in Van Heutszplein Street (now Cut Meutia).

At the time of the Japanese occupation during the Second World War, the Bouwploeg building was used as the Headquarter of the Military Police of the Imperial Japanese Army (Kampetai Angkatan Laut Jepang). After that in 1946-1949, it was the office of Staatsspoormweg (The Netherlands Railway or Jawatan Kereta Api Belanda). In 1959 it became the Office of the Central Jakarta Mayor (Kantor Walikota Jakarta Pusat).
From 1957 to 1984 it was used as The Office for Housing, as well as The Office for Housing in the Regions (Kantor Dinas Urusan Perumahan Daerah (UPD)), in addition to the Office for Military Housing (Kantor Urusan Perumahan Militer (UPM)). Following this, in 1964-1966 the building was chosen to be the Secretarial Office of the Mutual Cooperation House of Representative (Kantor Sekretariat Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat Gotong Royong (DPRGR)). Which later in 1966-1970, it changed to be the Temporary Secretarial Office of the People’s Consultative Assembly (Kantor Sekretariat Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat Sementara (MPRS)). Meanwhile, in 1968 the edifice was used as the Office of Religious Affairs (Kantor Urusan Agama (KUA)). Until it ended in 1987 when according to The Letter of Decision of the Office of the Governor of the Province of the Capital Special Region of Jakarta, Number 612/BK.D/WK I/72 the edifice officially functioned as Mosque, a place of religious service. Following to the command of Ali Sadikin, Governor of Jakarta, through The Letter of Decision of the Office of the Province of the Capital Special Region of Jakarta, Number Cb.11/12/71 stated that the building became a monumental structure of a cultural heritage and was returned as property of the Regional Government Special Capital Region of Jakarta or Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta or Pemda DKI Jakarta. Then another formal appointment by The Letter of Decision of the Governor of the Special Capital Region of Jakarta or the Governor of KDKI or Kantor Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta Number 1584-year 1987, on the nineteenth of August 1987, the government yielded the management of the mosque to the Foundation of Cut Meutia Mosque as sole proprietor. So, the building formally functioned as a mosque (Heuken & Pamungkas, 2001; Dinas Museum dan Pemugaran Provinsi DKI Jakarta, 2005).

Cut Meutia Mosque

Cut Meutia Mosque is administratively located at Jl. Taman Cut Mutiah No.1 RT. 010 RW. 005, Kebon Sirih, Menteng, Jakarta Pusat, DKI Jakarta, Kode pos 10350. The building was constructed by a Dutch architect, Pieter Adriaan Jacobus Moojen in the year 1912. It was built in art nouveau style in the early twentieth century, so it looks like a building of church in colonial era. Before it became a mosque in the early twentieth century, the building was known as an office building named ‘Bouwploeg’ or was easier called ‘Boplo’. This name is still used now and can be seen clearly written on the wall facade of the building on the northern side, “NV DE BOUWPLO”.

Figure 2.
Cut Meutia Mosque Source: Personal Documentation
The northern side of the mosque is in direct border with Taman Cut Mutiah Street and the Indonesian National Army—the Cut Meutia Navy Complex (Komplek TNI Angkatan Laut Cut Mutia). The northwest side of the building is Gondangdia Train Station and a well-known market now with a name” Boplo Market”. The western side of the building is in direct border with Dr. GSSJ Ratulangi Street where there is a Laboratorium Clinic. The eastern side is in direct border with Cut Meutia Street. The southern side is a railway and Cut Meutia Street which goes to Cut Nyak Dien Street.

The building is located strategically in the middle of the street as it served as portal or new entree of Nieuw Gondangdia, in parallel with Kunstkring Building which is in Cut Nyak Dien Street. The over-all building lies in the three-section ways, that is Cut Meutia Street, Dr. GSSJ Ratulangi Street and Cut Nyak Dien Street.

The Menteng area which in that time was planned for the residential place of the Dutch population had determined not to build a mosque as most Dutch foreigners were Christian. Eventually in 1970, the residents in the area wished to build a mosque for the Moslem. A senior general of the Indonesian Army, Dr. Abdul Haris Nasution proposed Bouwploeg Building, which had not been of use, be made into a mosque.

The mosque edifice stood on a ground in the form of a triangle. The complex was not only for a single building, the mosque, but for several other additional buildings on an area of 1402 square meter. In the 300 square meter ground was the main building, that is the mosque. It was made of two stories, of which the main building was designed in the form of a Greek Cross where the four sides of the wall were of the same length. The surrounding area of the main building were the several additional buildings which were utilized for other needs besides the function of the main building, that is for the congregational worship. There was a tower in the form of a four-square dome of four-square sides pointing to a cone-like top. Since it was built then to now, the building construction and the outlook of the edifice has not changed at all.

Figure 3.
The Mapping of Overall Layout of the Cut Meutia Mosque
Source: Personal research

Floor 1

Floor 1 of the main building is the central place where all worship and praise took place. The main room in the middle part of the building was meant for congregational prayer and other forms of worship for male and female. Besides that, there were several other additional rooms, such as the rest rooms and the wudhu or cleansing basins, i’tikaf room for individual silent prayer session, pulpit, mihrab or a chamber in the mosque, hospitality room, and the mosque’s secretarial room. There had been a significant change in Floor 1. Among others were 1) a division of prayer room
using wooden panel for male and female and several empty areas that were partitioned permanently that were meant for new space, 2) the staircase in the middle of the main room was now knocked down and installed in the front area (the Mosque’s terrace). This placement was to enlarge the worship area; 3) there has been added religious attributes, such as calligraphic writings on the walls; 4) other facilities that were newly made in the forms and materials that were different from before. For example, the doors were added with new beams, and the windows that were broken had been customed a new form in dark brown frames and the tiles were all replaced by new white marble.

Floor 2
The second floor is not far different from the first floor, as the mosque is not only for congregational worship, but there are also empty rooms that were there before being reused, such as a room for RICMA (the youth of Cut Meutia Mosque Association), classrooms facilitating learning moments for the children in need and Bakomubin (Coordinating Board of Mubaligh or missionary) rooms. In this second floor, the original forms and the wooden building materials were maintained. These items were 1) the original pale color doors and windows made of teak wood; 2) there were the original tiles of plain green and red; 3) stain glasses that were preserved in the fanlight, facade walls and door and window panels.

Other than The Main Room
There have been additional new buildings in the Mosque complex, 1) an auditorium used for prayer place, weddings, or meeting rooms; 2) room for the Cut Meutia Mosque Foundation Board; 3) several small houses for the mosque caretakers; 4) a subsidized cafe run by the youth; 5) a park area of a half-circle formation on the corner of the northern side of the premise; 6) parking area; 7) and once a cooperative, but it’s no longer open.

RESULT AND REVIEW
An object biography is an approach emphasizing that objects are not only means for production and are used by human. More than this understanding, an object has a deeper significance than just being perceived as trivial. There has been an interaction between human and an object, which produces invisible yield as they are interconnected and bonded strength between the two.

This approach informs that an object may also be regarded as a commodity, although it is not only considered for its materialistic value, but it should be evaluated in a different way, that is through a cultural perspective. For further understanding, the cultural perspective enables one to dig deeper from things visible despite it is in a realm of invisibility. To get to know the meaning from “other side,” cultural perspective can forge to find meaning, such as the values of the object in a respective society, for the present time to the time ahead. This supports finding the surface as well as the buried parts that are not well understood. For in this way, reinterpretation of history and its use, will be a way to interpreted and understand.

Knowing the biography of an object, or a certain commodity helps us to interpreted and understand through the relation with the other party, that is the owner or the possessor. Thus, the social status of the user, we utilize the cultural data, history, or the generational line of users of certain commodity in a broader and complete ways. Kopytoff (1986: 66) said that understanding a culture may be through the biography journey of an object within the social environment. Biography approach may also find the changed meaning of a thing. That way of seeing at things can lead one to have a
A different perspective towards the function of an object. When an object is regarded as less valuable in our daily life, may then change its meaning in a different scope of meaning, become valuable and significant. When a thing has better value in a context different from before, such as the example of raising the value of a thing as a heritage, or has a sacral meaning, it adds to the formation of commodification or singularization. Thus, singularity shows that there is a change or transformation resulted from a relation between a thing and human, and the environment, as well as technology that is developing. It is useful, eventually, to analyze the configuration of the relation of human and a certain object in the future.

Kopytoff (1986: 66-67) proposes several questions to raise understanding on aspects of the biography of an object, such as questions like “where does the thing come from?”, “who made the thing?”, “How old is the thing?”, or “what period did the thing exist?” and what are the signifier of the thing. How did the usage of the thing developing considering the years coming along and what happened when the thing ended his duration of “living”?

Those questions are used to see the relation formed in human and the thing to depict the journey of life that has been passed by the object. In this case, the research questions might also be applied to see the picture of the life story of the building Bouwploeg as a profane edifice, which in the end the building was meant for sacral purposes, that is Cut Meutia Mosque.

From Profane to Sacral

The concept of sacral according to Emile Durkheim (1915:49) is anything which deals with religion or about religious conception is supernatural. Supernatural is an order about anything beyond our understanding about the world of mystery, unknown or confirmed by our reasoning and senses. Therefore, religion is outside of science or common reasoning in general. Other opinion of Mariasusai (1995:87) stated that sacredness is not trespassing, chaos, and contamination. Sacral is perceived as respected, glorified, and unblemished. It may be summarized that sacral is holy, sanctified, or sacred. It is a pure entity that is exalted and unpolluted by all forms of disorder and perversion. Although, it embodies something that is invisible and felt, it relies on the mind which consciously gives power and feeling to admit sacredness. The feeling comes from the faith or belief of everyone. Therefore Durkheim (1915:66) divides sacredness in two categories, beliefs, and rites. The beliefs here mean opinion or view of a representation of sacredness, whereas rites or rituals are particular behavior that to present sacral atmosphere. This state of mind and behavior form sacral realms in life.

The mind and behavior in the realm of sacral atmosphere are influenced by an object, a sign, or an attribute. When these three things are believed to be the sacred part of life, they are eventually bound and tied. The next step is when people form a certain behavior to make things sacred, such as that it may be a place, a person, some things, and others. Sacredness is not attached to an object, but it is rather given by men or the society who regard it as appropriate or be sanctified (Durkheim, 1915). The opposite of this, that is regarded as sacral, which is profane, it is common and not included in the category of something that is holy. Anything that is in the category of profane is commonly seen and have nothing to be referred to as special.

Therefore, when explicitly a place is said to be sacral, it becomes the place where people perform some sacred activities or religious rituals, such as prayer in unison. This happens to a profane space when people conduct their daily activities, not related to religious rituals or holy behavior. In this case, the Bouwploeg building was considered
profane because it was used as office space. The primary focus of activities is meant for a working environment to plan construction of buildings around Menteng area. All the goods that were available there were for working. There was no attribute or holy ornament on the wall which marked the edifice a holy place. The same situation discussed here was when the attitudes and behavior of the people who used the building were casual, that made the building eventually profane. Then something changed when the office building became Cut Meutia Mosque. The new status as sacral eventually was followed by the implementation of the commonly perceived religiosity in using of the building. In the interior, there was a holy place and the supporting attributes that marked the sanctuary. In the inside of the Mosque, the congregation behaved in a certain way to be in parallel with the purpose of their visit to honor God in the Mosque and to communicate with Him. They had to do the ritual before entering the Mosque and while they were inside the holy building, there were some things they would do, that showed their presence in accordance with the sacred place.

Besides that, Mircea Eliade (1959) in his book *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* stated that a sacred sphere may be structured by several points that were connected to one another.

**a) Homogeneity and Hierophany**

Eliade (1959) stated that on one hand, homogeneity is profane in a sense that it is a place of common and rejects the sacrality of the world and accepts only a profane existence, whereas on the other, hierophany is the relation that was created by human and God. A sacred sphere is homogeneously a place where a man interacted with God. In this case, a mosque like Cut Meutia Mosque is used for the Moslem to pray in unison with the congregation in the context that the place is for communication and for one close to God.

**b) Theophany and Sign**

Eliade (1959) mentioned that theophany is the appearance of God that is observable by man. This situation was made through rituals raising in the atmosphere that God is truly present in the place of worship. One kind of ritual was to create an Islamic nuance in the interior of Cut Meutia Mosque by hanging calligraphic ornaments.

![Calligraphic Ornaments in Cut Meutia Mosque Source: Personal Documentation](image)

*Figure 4.* Calligraphic Ornaments in Cut Meutia Mosque Source: Personal Documentation

There is a rule imposed strictly that should be followed. It is the regulation that one should observe prior to entering the inner part of the holy building. Eliade mentioned that a sacred part of the interior, ‘ambang batas’ or ‘threshold’ is made to remind the worshippers that there a division of two worlds, the sky, and the earth. Or, in other words, there are the natural and the sacred and the holy worlds. The Muslims are to follow the Sunnah of Rasulullah SAW or “the Way of the Prophet” to *wudhu*, that is to purify the body from *najis* or ‘impurity’ or excrement when they are practicing religious duty to pray to Allah SWT in the mosque. For
this purpose, therefore, the ‘batas suci’ or the division of a holy part in the interior of the mosque is to be made to separate one from the unholy part. One should step over the “sign” of batas suci or the “threshold” as one of the rituals before entering the holy part of the mosque. In the interior of the mosque in general, particularly Cut Meutia Mosque, the purification section or the wudhu place shows the step to follow the holy rule and tradition of the mosque.

c) The Center of The World

The essence of the center of the world according to Eliade (1959) is a place or an object that lies in the center of the world. It is where the sky and earth meet. Eliade refers the center of the world as Axis Mundi. The sacred place lies between the worldly and the godly worlds. For this reason, therefore, godly activities are in the center as the summit of all holiness. In Islam, according to Surah Al Maidah verse 97 Allah SWT, or God the most glorified, the highest, said that Ka’bah which is situated in Mekkah was formed as the center of the earth, thus it was made the kiblat or qibla because it became the direction in which Muslims all over the world pray daily and at the time of haj or umrah pilgrimage.

“Allah has created Ka’bah, a holy house as center (of worship and for worldly matter) for men, and (it is also) in the month of “Haram, had-ya, qalaid”. (Allah has created that) you may know that indeed Allah knows what is in the sky and on earth and indeed Allah Omniscient knows everything” (QS. Al Maidah Verse 97)

The edifice of Cut Meutia Mosque does not face to the direction of kiblah like all mosques in general. It is because in the beginning of the building history was for office purposes, not a mosque. Therefore, to decide the direction of salat or praying, the congregation position should be inclined at 45˚ to the west accordingly. As this position was made westward, the mihrab or the niches in the wall and the carpet for praying were no longer facing southwest as it was supposed to following to the frame of the building. Eventually, the direction of kiblah was established.

Biography of Things Cut Meutia Mosque

The Transformation of Cut Meutia Mosque as Sacral Building

Biography of Things by Kopytoff (1986) implied that an object has a ‘social life’. This approach describes how an object started its life and how occurrence by occurrence could cause change that in the end, influence the values and meanings of the previous purposes of the building. Like the case of Cut Meutia Mosque, its function had been adjusted which started in the physical appearance of the edifice, then developed into the transformation of the meaning of the building. The restoration construction built the addition of buildings in the mosque complex, eliminated several partitions to build a new space, changed the outlook using new material. The picture of the change may be observed through the sketch of the plan of the early floor plan to the present.
The next most significant plan is the placement of stairways to the Second Floor, from the middle of the main hall to the outside part of the hall, the Mosque Terrace. According to the Mosque guardian, the moving of the stairways was conducted to enlarge the space for worship. The position of the stairways before had made the space for praying less spacious. After approval from the Restoration Committee (Tim Sidang Pemugaran), the stairways were to be built in the terrace area of the mosque. This change has affected the facade of the construction, that is by putting additional canopy on the terrace of the second floor. In this matter, the canopy protected the floor from the rain flow.

Figure 6.
The stairways were moved to the first floor
(Source: (tropenmuseum.nl; Personal Documentation, 2023)

Figure 7.
The Change of the Facade Appearance
(Source: (KIT Digital Collection Leiden University; Personal Documentation (2023))
The parts of the object that have been damaged and fragile, were repaired with new material. However, this effort has changed the original form and the new material that replaced the old one. The doors and windowpanes which had been made from teak wood, now were made from regular wood. The window glass before the restoration was made of louvre window, now they were square flat glass. The new tiles were white shiny square marble in big size, whereas the old ones were medium size red and green.

Although it has not been found any documentation about the ingredient of those colored tiles, it was suggested that they were of terrazzo. It was dominated by red, green, or black, poured in abstract chippings in tiny stone offcuts. This type of tile is in use nowadays in houses in Menteng area (Heuken & Pamungkas, 2001:107).

The added new material may also be found in the moveable wooden partitions dividing the male prayer sections from the female. Besides that, calligraphic stickers were installed on the wall to add the atmosphere of a holy place.

The detail identification of the architectural change in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Changes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tower</td>
<td>• The rooster ventilation shut with velour window frame half-circle form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stained glass of the windows was replaced with plain glass panels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Writing on railing and signage (column) stripped.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The tipped ornament of the balusters or short pillar on the roof was covered by mini <em>cungkup</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exterior Facade</td>
<td>• Stairways in the entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Window shape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Add <em>canopy</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Railing Ornament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Entrance and Porte Cochiere</td>
<td>• Main entrance of the edifice stayed in the same axis although the yield reached a different level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In the area <em>porte cochiere</em> the stairways to Floor 2 were demolished.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sideway Access</td>
<td>• Before, a stairway covered with <em>limasan</em> canopy (four-side roofing) only on the right side of the building. Now, the access is used only for male congregation going to the cleansing area for wudhu then to the prayer assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Now, an added access for female congregation on the left side of the mosque, by using the air space as alternative for a window</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back Access</td>
<td>Now, the back access was taken away. Before, the access led to the transitional room was from the back part of the building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floor Cover</td>
<td>• The variety of Floor Cover in the Mosque are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Marmer Marble 30x30 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ceramic Tiles 30x30 cm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• PC or Paved Cement 15x15 cm is a baked tile used at beginning edifice, which at this time, was used in certain area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elements</td>
<td>Changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doors and Windows</td>
<td>Floor 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Almost all windows were transformed from rectangle to curved shape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The entrance of the female prayer section has utilized the window opening for a door.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Floor 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The form of the upper parts of the little windows remained in the same shape of the original frame of rectangle to now, a curved roof.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Half of all doors and windows were made originally of wood, but some were replaced by aluminium.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceiling</td>
<td>An exposure of the nuance that have been established creating a sacral atmosphere on the second floor.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1.*

Identification of the Change in Cut Meutia Mosque

*Source:* Pusat Konservasi Cagar Budaya (2022)

**The Life Journey of A Building from Profane to Sacral**

Human and things alike have their life journey. The cycle of material life may transform the culture of the material depending on the context. This situation tells us that material culture went through an evolutionary ongoing from time to time. Below is the template of applying the theory of Biography of Things to the life journey of Cut Meutia Mosque:

**Figure 8.**

The Life Biography of the Building Cut Meutia Mosque

*Source:* Personal Imaging

The building changed its function after it was modified purposefully. Thus, the change of function was caused by the physical construction. Thus, when the function had been adjusted to the building’s new purpose, the significance of the building in its history became unmeaningful. The physical change was meant for adjustment as in this case,
indirectly an action to leave the colonial memory behind. However, the obliterating effort of the colonial time was not stripping every mark of colonial occupation. Connerton (2008:62-64) stated that there are seven endeavors of forgetting. In this context, forgetting to establish an understanding, or forgetting that is constitutive in the formation of a new identity, which, in other words, preserving some of the past elements that were useful to build a new collective identity in a different frame of locality. By disremembering or wiping away the memory of the past, a replacement of such emptiness is to create a fresh and different memory to step forward.

The formation of the new identity was reflected in the changes that happened in Cut Meutia Mosque. These changes were constructed in such a way to reveal that the building of a Mosque had created new concepts of its function, and memory that it was no longer used as office. The effort to obliteriate the past memory also showed in the choice of building material to accommodate the new concepts. The material apparently seemed to bridge the mutual bond between human and objects. Carl Knappett (2014:4702) mentioned that materials played an important role of relational. They owned a particular specificity to reveal a process and an independent nature in terms of relational cause, codependence in social relation, independence in vitality, interdependences between things and objects. Materials held a pivotal place to expose meaning based on the created action that happened in object and human. Therefore, the choice of material used in the new identity, it created an adjustment process done from then, an office to now, a mosque.

Moreover, the endeavor to build a new identity had to go through a physical change that supported the establishment of a new meaning at the building history from the past to the present. The additional change in the landscape resulted from the expansion of new buildings surrounding the main edifice, contributed the transformation of meaning. This condition is related to concept of landscape biography which focuses on a change of function, arrangement, and the meaning of the monument in the context of landscape from time to time. Renes (2015) in Ihsan (2019) explained that there are layers of time to identify a landscape biography, such as (1) vertical layer, (2) horizontal layer, (3) palimpsest, (4) intellectual layer, and (5) meaning layer. Cut Meutia Mosque is in the fifth layer category, because of the landscape feature or object had changed in meaning or function although the physical change was a little. So, object biography sees change, not only from the physical character, but also from its value and meaning aspect which came from an object that was continuously passed down from generation to generation.

The reutilization of an office building to a mosque shows that there has been a change of meaning from a profane to sacred building. And then the physical change and landscape in the surrounding altogether added to the visualization of the building. As quoted from Amalia Nurul Rizky (2017), the visual appearance of the building Bouwploeg as the gate of Menteng, now shows that the change had to be adjusted to accommodate to the new function as a mosque. This apparently transformed the visual emphasis of the building for no longer reflected and represented its role as “The Gate of Menteng”, as it had been before. Therefore, the former visual with the surrounding of Bouwploeg could not be maintained.

**(Agency and Change)**

A change cannot happen without a reliable agency working to perform the task in public sphere as well as in the office, behind the screen. The awareness to create a change needs an individual who is actively interacting in the environment and form a social action. This characteristic was named by sociologists and archeologists, “agency,” where the society and the social context in the surrounding are the structure, which
becomes the partner to make the social activity happen (Gardner, 2008). In *Handbook of Archaeological Theories*, a book by R. Alexander Bentley, Herbert Maschner, and Christopher Chippindale, an agency is explained in two perspectives, individual and relational. In an individual perspective, the agency is only based on the individual mind without any social action to back up, whereas in a relational agency, the agency stands up working on interactively with the surrounding and creates a social structure as a result. The agency which is based on an individual action and approach, focusing on the action taken and the individual connection shows lacking on working interactively with the environment. Nevertheless, a relational approach involving a process of interaction makes a pivotal result producing new patterns and reaching a larger effect.

In relational perspective, the agency works closely with a theory of structuration suggested by Anthony Giddens. Its ted that an agency does not bind itself with an individual, but it also shows that an agency is formed by the working effort of the agency in a certain context. It means that the strategy of the agency is to form or change a building structure to be resolute from time to time. For this, Giddens in Gardner (2008:97) referred the agency had to be prompt in action,

The agency and structure meant in this paper were found in the work of Moojen, the architect of the building of *Bouwploeg*. The context of which was the structure, to develop the area, Nieuw Gondangdia as a city park that made him the principal architecture who established the architect office bureau in 1912 as a contractor to develop Nieuw Gondangdia as well as a real estate company. He came the first Dutch agency man who was moving behind the scenes. He initiated the first launching of the project development. After the company broke, it was then shut down. The building remained useful during several functional changes that were made and run under several owners.

In retrospect, after 1870 when *Cultuurstelsel* (The Dutch Cultivation System) or The Netherlands Forced Labor was abolished and replaced with *Ethische Politic* or Politic of Return Reward (Politik Balas Budi), the economy in the Indies (Indonesia) was slowly recovering and benefitted the inlanders or the native Indonesian (kaum pribumi). However, as the economy in the inland (Indonesia) was on the rise, many Dutch citizens immigrated and resided throughout the colonized archipelago. The increasing numbers of Europeans, particularly the Dutch, had caused city areas in Jakarta, then Batavia, was developed for elite residential, including Menteng area. Indirectly, these developed city areas were built following the European houses. One of the Dutch architects that was interested in doing the project was H. P. Berlage. He stated that Menteng area was built like *Minervalaan* (an elite residential in Holland), but in Indonesia, the land was much wider compared to the one in the Netherlands (Shahab, 2006:6). This grandeur impression of Menteng area had stayed in the minds of the Dutch people that made them dream of moving to Indonesia. Most of the Dutch people who lived in Menteng were christians, so the religious buildings in this area were churches.

In 1970, the Indonesians who lived in Menteng area demanded mosques or mushollas considering that there wasn’t any Islamic place of worship were built. An Army General, the late Dr. Abdul Haris Nasution proposed *Bouwploeg*, which was vacant at that time, to be made a mosque.

As time went by, in 1987 the building was initiated for a mosque and was approved by the DKI Mayor, Ali Sadikin. The initiative to utilize an unused building, *Bouwploeg* was a populace voice. The action taking to have a mosque became the context or structure to be followed up by the late General. He became the agency to suggest the *Bouwploeg* building be made a house of worship, thus the agency and
structure relational engaged in yielding a meaningful physical transformation of a profane to sacral building.

Figure 9.
The Role of Agency to Change, Source: Personal Imaging

Because basically, agency and structure are relationally connected in the line of power, action, time, relationship, humanity (Gardner, 2008:96). Dowding (1996) in Gardner (2012) stated that between relation and agency with power would materialize. It is because there was ability to do certain action that would influence what other people were doing. In this case, Moojen, as the architect who built the Bouwploeg Building acted as an agency for having a capacity to change a social structure. Through his actions, purposefully planned and significant as a realization of a material culture, in this case, Bouwploeg building. However, the relation of Moojen as an individual with an object could not be taken from his position as an architect. He finally had a power over what he was doing and the capacity of what he was doing.

The continuation from the change of the function of a material culture hence was made to happen by the influence of the late Army General Dr. Abdul Haris Nasution. This is to show that he was a highly respected figure who indirectly had a power to transform Bouwploeg building to be a mosque. His involvement in this matter shows that he had a respect on humanity because he understood the need of people to have a place to worship and pray to God, so he decided to propose Bouwploeg building which at that time was vacant, so it was ideal to be utilized as a Mosque. The significant action to transform the function of the building marked the difference of the building function in the outcome of the social structure. Therefore, Bouwploeg building, had been a profane material before, was transformed to be a sacred building now.

CONCLUSION
An object could not be assessed out of its appearance as a dead thing. When that “dead thing” interacted with human and his environment, it reveals the biography of its life which forms a history and shows a deep meaning in their contact. The approach of Biography of Things is capable to expose the history of Bouwploeg Building which in the present, was changed into Cut Meutia Mosque.

Using the approach of Biography of Things, several physical changes were adopted to equip the completion of the building as a mosque. So, the transformation of once an office premise, de Bouwploeg may be changed into the making of a perfect setting of Cut Meutia Mosque. The functions and meaning of the building were installed according to the belief of Islam. The change may be observed from the materials used for repositioning the functions in the interior of the mosque. The change of the materials
used for the additional space and the creation of the new identity was relevant to the landscape of the Mosque for a new life as a sacred building. The role of some professionals that involved in the history of the Mosque had revealed the contribution of the creation of house of worship, a Mosque. The important persons that would be remembered as builder in the building history and its crucial aspects in the life history of the building. They were Moojen, the architect who built the office of de Bouwploeg and Dr. Abdul Haris Nasution, the initiator to utilize the building and transform it into a mosque. The late General Dr. Abdul Haris Nasution made use of the vacant building to become a Mosque. His perspective by devoting his time to initiate the Mosque as an agency of moving to change the meaning from then a profane building to now sacral.

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