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The Construction of Religious Education Ideology and the Representation of Power in Wisran Hadi's Play *Perguruan*: A Deconstructive Study

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ABSTRACT

Background. Narratives of the Padri War in Minangkabau have generally framed the conflict as a binary struggle between religious reformists and adherents of customary law (adat). Wisran Hadi's play *Perguruan* places a religious school at the heart of this conflict, yet it has not been examined in terms of ideological construction and power.

Purpose. This study aims (1) to explain how the ideology of religious education is constructed in *Perguruan*, (2) to identify the forms of power it represents, and (3) to show how the text destabilizes the binary oppositions between adat, religion, and power.

Method. This qualitative study combines Derridean deconstruction with hermeneutic interpretation. The data comprise nine dialogue units from the 1981 edition of the play, recorded on coded data cards and supplemented by a confirmatory interview with the playwright's heir. The analysis proceeded in four stages: identifying binary oppositions, reversing hierarchies, tracing aporias, and suspending meaning.

Results. The ideology is constructed through two modes: a "hard" mode that legitimizes repressive acts such as burning the adat hall, and a "soft" mode that operates through counsel, deferral, and appeals to reasonableness. The hard mode appears as direct violence, whereas the soft mode appears as persuasive power with the potential to become symbolic violence. The oppositions of religion/adat, teacher/student, and truth/deception prove unstable, since both camps claim a "truth" sustained by power, as the text itself concedes: "their positions will be the same; only the language differs."

Conclusion. *Perguruan* dismantles the logic by which institutions of religious education become arenas for producing truth and power. The study contributes to deconstructive scholarship on Indonesian drama and invites religious educators to reflect on the dangers of exclusive truth claims.

KEYWORDS

Deconstruction, Ideological Construction, Indonesian Drama, Religious Education, Representation of Power, Wisran Hadi

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INTRODUCTION

Drama is distinguished by its dialogic and performative dimensions, which allow it to project contests of power directly, both on the page and on the stage. Recent studies of Indonesian theater show that plays frequently serve as vehicles of resistance and social critique whose meanings become legible only through the relations among

signs within the text (Sahid et al., 2024; Wahyuningsih et al., 2024). Wisran Hadi (1945–2011) was a Minangkabau playwright who consistently turned history and custom into material for critique; his position in the Indonesian literary field was built precisely on a strategy of challenging established tradition (Monika, 2021). One of his plays, *Perguruan*, situates the opening events of the Padri War within a space of religious education.

The Padri War (1803–1838) has often been cast in dichotomous terms, with the Padri as reformers purifying Islamic law and the *adat* camp as the deviant party (Albarsani, 2024; Wardhana et al., 2024). Critical historiography has long contested this simplification. Abdullah (1966) showed that the conflict between *adat* and Islam in Minangkabau was a structural tension under continual negotiation rather than a clash between fixed camps; Dobbin (1983) linked the Padri movement to economic change in the interior; and Hadler (2008) demonstrated how Padri violence has been rewritten to serve the state. More recently, Rais et al. (2026) have reinterpreted the war as an early expression of anti-colonial nationalism, Andoni, Machmudi, and Abdurakhman (2026) have traced the shift of post-Padri religious authority from contestation to a consensus of moderation, and Priyatna et al. (2026) have highlighted the *Tambo Tuanku Imam Bonjol* as a record of the Padri's internal voice. The later reconciliation of *adat* and Islam in the principle *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah* (custom founded on Islamic law, Islamic law founded on the Qur'an) is likewise understood as the outcome of prolonged negotiation (Mariana et al., 2024; Quack, 2025).

Research on Wisran Hadi's work is extensive, but most of it remains structural or thematic. Studies of *Anggun Nan Tongga*, *Roh*, and *Penjual Bendera* focus on dramatic structure and the representation of symbols (Amara et al., 2023; Putra & Nasution, 2023; Suciawaty & Hikmawaty, 2022), whereas others examine Minangkabau cultural values and women's resistance (Afdhaliyah & Shafira, 2023; Prasasti & Anggraini, 2025; Rosa et al., 2020). The study closest to the present one is Arsa (2021), which applies a New Historicist approach to four of Wisran Hadi's Padri War plays and concludes that their representations of Padri figures are corrective and evaluative toward the movement's own radicalism. Whereas Arsa reads the four plays as representations of history and as vehicles for the playwright's moderate voice, the present study concentrates on a single play, *Perguruan*, and reads the construction of religious education ideology as a cause, rather than a consequence, of the Padri conflict.

Deconstruction has also been applied to Indonesian drama and fiction, for instance to trace aporias in Arifin C. Noer's *Mega-Mega* (Bogodad et al., 2022), in the play *Year Ten Thousandth* (Bahonie et al., 2022), and in the novel *Aib dan Nasib* (Akhmad et al., 2025). These studies, however, generally stop at cataloguing aporias and do not connect them to questions of educational ideology and power. Research on Islamic education in Indonesia, by contrast, shows that institutions of religious education are arenas of ideological production, ranging from state policy (Kosim et al., 2023) and the emergence of ultra-conservative schools linked to religious movements (Malik, 2023) to the reproduction of exclusive Islam through popular children's literature (Kustiawan et al., 2023). Research on radicalization likewise shows that the paths from non-violent preaching to violence, and back again, are never linear (Nuraniyah & Solahudin, 2024). To the best of our knowledge, no study has yet read *Perguruan* deconstructively to reveal the construction of religious education ideology and the workings of power within it. This is the gap the present study addresses.

Perguruan is a play in four acts (Hadi, 1981), later included in *Empat Lakon Perang Paderi* (Four Plays of the Padri War) (Hadi, 2002). A narrator opens the play by announcing the return of Haji Miskin, Haji Piobang, and Haji Sumanik from the Holy Land as the dawn of a "new era." At its center is a religious school led by Guru (the Teacher). His student Lelaki (the Man), identified as Haji

Miskin, burns down the *adat* hall (*balai adat*) as a den of gambling and vice; Guru rejects this violence and debates truth, timing, and reasonableness with him. Guru also fears for another student, Tuanku Nan Renceh (Pemuda, the Young Man), who is falling under the same influence. Toward the end, Pemuda pays his respects to Guru while warning that "the blood that has been spilled" may reach the school, and goes on to form the group known in Padri historiography as the Harimau Nan Salapan (the Eight Tigers) (Dobbin, 1983; Masdison, 2018). The relationship between Guru and Pemuda parallels that between Tuanku Nan Tuo and his student Tuanku Nan Renceh (Dobbin, 1983).

Deconstruction proceeds from Derrida's critique of logocentrism, the tendency of Western thought to presuppose a center of meaning that is fully present (Derrida, 1997). Logocentrism operates through binary oppositions, pairs of concepts that appear equal but are in fact hierarchical (speech/writing, presence/absence, true/false), with one term privileged over the other. To read deconstructively is first to reverse such a hierarchy and then to show that the two terms depend on each other, so that neither can truly function as the center (Culler, 1982; Derrida, 1981).

Four concepts serve as analytical tools. The first is the *trace*: every sign signifies only because it bears the mark of other, absent signs; a text is a weave of traces rather than a container of completed meaning (Derrida, 1997). The second is *différance*: meaning both differs and is deferred, so that it is never fully present at any single moment (Bingham, 2024; Derrida, 1978). The third is *aporia*: an impasse at which the text asserts two mutually cancelling things, an impasse that becomes an opening for deconstruction (Bennington, 2024). The fourth is the reversal and displacement of hierarchies as a reading procedure. In literary studies, deconstruction is not meant to destroy meaning but to show how literary texts characteristically stage the instability of their own meanings (Miyazaki, 2025; Toft, 2023).

To address the dimension of power, deconstruction is combined with Foucault's (1980) view that truth is always produced within a "regime of truth" sustained by power, and with Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) concept of symbolic violence, the imposition of meanings that the dominated accept as legitimate. These concepts are suited to the analysis because both thinkers, like Habermas, understand power as operating through knowledge and education (Christensen, 2023; Poorghorban, 2023). The distinction drawn by Galtung (1969) and Žižek (2008) between direct violence and structural or objective violence informs the reading of the text's claim of "not in violence." Ideological construction itself is understood as a social process: reality and knowledge are not natural givens but are constructed through interaction and language (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Building on this gap, the study addresses three questions: (1) How is the ideology of religious education constructed in *Perguruan*? (2) How is power represented through that ideological construction? (3) How does the text destabilize the binary oppositions between *adat*, religion, and power? Theoretically, the study extends the application of deconstruction to Indonesian drama beyond the mere cataloguing of aporias toward a reading of educational ideology and power. Practically, its findings offer educators in religious institutions material for reflecting on how exclusive truth claims can shift into the legitimation of violence.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is an interpretive qualitative study with a textual design. Derridean deconstruction was chosen because the aim is to unsettle hierarchies of meaning within the text rather than to test hypotheses. Hermeneutics serves as the working mode of interpretation, since textual meaning can be grasped only through a back-and-forth movement between part and whole and between text and context (Ricoeur, 1981). In this study, hermeneutics serves to establish the surface meaning of the dialogue, while deconstruction serves to show where that surface meaning becomes unstable.

The primary data source is Wisran Hadi's *Perguruan: Drama dalam Empat Babak* [Perguruan: A Drama in Four Acts], published in Jakarta in 1981 by the Proyek Penerbitan Buku Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah, Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan. The dramatic text occupies printed pages 7–68, and all page references in this article refer to those printed pages. Nine data units (D01–D09), each consisting of a dialogue or a sequence of dialogues, were selected from the full script according to three criteria: (a) they contain markers of religious education ideology, such as teacher–student relations, truth claims, or reformist teaching; (b) they contain markers of power, such as violence, prohibition, or authority; and (c) they contain pairs of opposed meanings that allow a reading of binary oppositions. Dialogue that serves only to link scenes was excluded. Abridged quotations are marked with ellipses. All quotations from the play are the authors' translations; key Indonesian expressions are given in parentheses.

Supplementary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with Thaib, an heir of Wisran Hadi. The informant was selected purposively for his first-hand knowledge of the playwright's family background and religious life. The interviews were conducted over several sessions in Kamang (Agam Regency), Bukittinggi, and Padang; the session cited in this article took place on July 18, 2026, in Kamang, Agam. The interview guide covered the playwright's family background, his religious education, and the context in which the play was written. The interviews were not used to establish "authorial intention" but to confirm biographical context relevant to the reading of the text; the interpretation of the dialogue rests on the primary text.

Textual data were collected on data cards. Each card contained six fields: (1) the data code (D01 to D09, ordered by page); (2) act and page; (3) speaker; (4) the quoted dialogue; (5) textual markers in the form of key words, phrases, or metaphors; and (6) the binary opposition identified, with preliminary interpretive notes. Codes follow the order in which the dialogues appear in the script. A summary of the data cards is presented in Table 1.

The analysis followed four stages derived from deconstructive practice (Culler, 1982; Derrida, 1981): (1) identifying binary oppositions, that is, locating conceptual pairs in each data unit and determining which term the text privileges, such as religion/*adat* or teacher/student; (2) reversing hierarchies by rereading the dialogue with the subordinated term at the center to test the text's coherence; (3) tracing aporias, the points at which the text asserts two mutually cancelling things; and (4) suspending meaning by showing that apparently settled meanings are continually deferred and dependent on their opposites. The results were grouped by research question and read through the concepts of the regime of truth (Foucault, 1980) and symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). The analysis was confined to the lexical and semantic levels; punctuation was not analyzed, since it cannot be established whether particular marks originate with the author or with copying and printing.

The trustworthiness of the interpretation was secured through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria, whose application in recent qualitative research emphasizes the transparency of the reasoning process (Enworo, 2023; Nowell et al., 2017; Rashid & Rasheed, 2026). Credibility was ensured through repeated close reading of the entire script and through source triangulation across the text, the interviews, and Padri historiography. Confirmability was ensured through peer debriefing, that is, interpretive discussion among authors with different areas of expertise (performing arts studies, cultural studies, and theater), and through an audit trail recorded on the data cards. Dependability was ensured by documenting the analytical procedure step by step so that it can be replicated.

Before the interviews, the informant was informed of the purpose of the study and of how the data would be used, and he then gave oral consent to be interviewed and to be named in the article. Interview recordings and notes are kept by the first author and are used solely for the purposes of this study. The play is quoted only to the extent required for analysis, with its source acknowledged.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 summarizes the nine data units, their textual markers, the binary oppositions identified, and the ideological modes and forms of power they produce. Broadly, D01 is the point of departure for the ideological construction; D02 to D05, together with D08 and D09, form the "hard" mode; D06 and D07 form the "soft" mode; and the sequence D05–D06 also constitutes the principal aporia that destabilizes the oppositions between *adat*, religion, and power.

Table 1. Overview of data, binary oppositions, and ideological modes in *Perguruan*

Code	Page	Speaker	Textual markers	Binary opposition	Mode / form of power
D01	7	Narator	"new era," "holy land," the title "haji"	Holy Land/Minangkabau; new era/old era	Basis of ideological construction; legitimation of reform
D02	10	Pengikut	"hard as coral rock," "complete overhaul," "new and aggressive way of thinking"	steadfast/wavering; new/old	Hard; ideological mobilization
D03	12	Guru	"Do not resort to violence"	peaceful means/violence	Hard (rejected by Guru)
D04	14	Guru	"the hardest of the three"	teacher/student	Hard; limits of the teacher's authority
D05	15–16	Lelaki, Guru	"burn down a gambling den," "medicine, however bitter," "truth will never be crushed"	truth/deception; religion/*adat*	Hard; justified direct violence
D06	16–17	Guru, Lelaki	"*adat* hall," "their positions will be the same; only the language differs," "on what is reasonable"	*adat* truth/religious truth; reasonable/unreasonable	Soft; principal aporia, persuasive power (potential symbolic violence)
D07	17–18	Guru, Lelaki	"Do you not feel any regret?", "that innocent building"	building/people; changing/deceiving	Soft; persuasion through reflective questioning
D08	23–24	Guru	Nan Renceh; the thoughts and convictions that accompany violence	teacher (rational)/student (dangerous)	Hard; fear as control
D09	37	Pemuda	"the blood ... flows all the way here," "a tiger will turn wild without its tamer"	perpetrator/victim; tamer/tiger	Hard; threat and disavowal of responsibility

The construction of religious education ideology in *Perguruan* begins with the following statement by the narrator.

Data D01

Narator : The arrival of *Haji Miskin*, *Haji Piobang*, and *Haji Sumanik* from the holy land marks the beginning of a new era in the life of Minangkabau society.

(Hadi, 1981, p. 7)

The title "haji" functions as a marker of religious authority and as a source of legitimacy in the narrator's account. At the time, those who returned from the Holy Land were regarded as capable in economic, physical, and spiritual terms, so that their piety was seldom questioned. This religious milieu was close to the playwright's own experience: according to his heir, Wisran Hadi took great pride in his father, an Islamic scholar (*ulama*), who shaped his religious life (Thaib, interview, July 18, 2026). This information is not used to establish authorial intention, but it helps explain why a space of religious education stands at the center of the play.

A deconstructive reading shows that the "new era" acquires meaning only through the trace of its opposite, an "old era" implicitly marked by moral decline and the mixing of religion with tradition. This hierarchy falters against history, for Islam was present in Minangkabau long before 1803: although early contacts between Islam and the archipelago are often dated much earlier, the Islamization of the Minangkabau interior is generally placed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, partly through the *surau* (Azra, 2004; Mufid, 2026; Ricklefs, 2008). The "new era" of the three hajis is thus not the beginning of Islam but the beginning of an interpretation of Islam claiming greater purity. That claim sets up a second opposition, with the Holy Land as the center of truth and Minangkabau as a recipient that has "deviated" and must be rescued. This center–periphery framework underpins the ideological construction that follows, as those who accept the new interpretation divide into "hard" and "soft" ways of enacting it.

The "hard" mode refers to the reformist group's practice of its ideology through firmness, discipline, and a readiness to use violence. The character of this group is introduced through the dialogue of the followers.

Data D02

Pengikut : Three renowned men whose convictions are as hard as coral rock.

Pengikut : A little arrogant, but brilliant.

Pengikut : After so many years abroad, they are troubled by the state of affairs at home.

Pengikut : They want a complete overhaul. Their sermons are all aimed at forging a new and aggressive way of thinking.

(Hadi, 1981, p. 10)

The metaphor "as hard as coral rock" (*keras seperti batu karang*) links firmness of conviction to an image of immovability, whereas the demand for a "complete overhaul" (*perombakan total*) signals a will to transform conditions radically. The two expressions pull against each other: coral rock does not move, yet the group demands sweeping change. The steadfastness praised as a virtue simultaneously forecloses the possibility of dialogue. The phrase "a little arrogant, but brilliant" (*sedikit sombong tapi berotak cemerlang*) reveals a similar tension: intelligence that ought to open understanding instead produces distance and a sense of superiority over others. The group's sermons are directed toward "a new and aggressive way of thinking," and the word "aggressive" marks the point at which persuasion begins to slide into repression. Guru's response in the two following dialogues confirms this shift.

Data D03–D04

Guru : I told them too. Do not resort to violence. Violence is not the only way to change things. Ah... they are truly reckless.

Guru : Haji Miskin. The hardest of the three young figures. I forbade him to commit acts of violence.

(Hadi, 1981, pp. 12, 14)

Guru's repeated prohibitions ("I told them," "I forbade him") mark the very limits of his authority. Guru is the center of knowledge in the school, yet his students act beyond his control. The student himself sets out the reasons for this violence in the following debate.

Data D05

Lelaki : If I burn down a gambling den where the people are staked as wagers, is that wrong?

Guru : We must wait for the right time.

Lelaki : And meanwhile we keep silent about the deceptions being committed?

Guru : Nothing has ever come into being, present in a single instant together with its perfection.

Lelaki : A short life compels us to work faster. They have blanketed their deceptions with the word truth, and they use their power to that end.

Guru : We cannot pull back that blanket in a short time. The means are determined by time and place.

Lelaki : People afflicted with a sickness of belief. We must give them medicine, however bitter it tastes.

Guru : That is true. Suppose they use their power for retaliation: would that not turn into bloodshed?

Lelaki : They may use their power. But truth will never be crushed by deception.

(Hadi, 1981, pp. 15–16)

By renaming the *adat* hall a "gambling den," Lelaki turns a symbol of customary institutions into a legitimate target of correction, so that violence draws its justification from a claim to truth. This reading concerns action within the dramatic world, not any historical religious movement as a whole.

Reversing the hierarchy shows that Lelaki employs the very strategy he condemns. He accuses his opponents of "blanketing their deceptions with the word truth," yet he blankets arson with the word "medicine." The metaphor of "medicine, however bitter it tastes" (*obat walau terasa pahit*) turns violence into treatment and casts society as a patient with no right to refuse. Here lies the first aporia: a campaign against linguistic deception is waged by manipulating language. The closing line, "truth will never be crushed by deception," presupposes a truth fully present and dependent on no one, yet that truth survives only once it has been defended with fire. A truth claimed to be self-sufficient thus depends on the power that enforces it (Foucault, 1980).

Guru's concern then turns to another of his students, Tuanku Nan Renceh.

Data D08

Guru : No. It must be me. If Nan Renceh comes under his influence, he will act even more violently.

Guru : I cannot imagine what will happen if I fail to keep that man's hands from reaching Nan Renceh's school.

Guru : That man is not important. It is the thoughts and convictions he carries, together with the violence of his deeds, that must be prevented.

(Hadi, 1981, pp. 23–24)

On page 23, Guru weighs the risk posed by his student's actions in terms of their possible influence on Nan Renceh, while on page 24 he distinguishes the perpetrator from the ideas that accompany the deed. The sequence confirms that educational authority in the play operates through

a struggle for influence rather than through direct command alone. The teacher/student opposition becomes unstable because Guru's authority requires the student's recognition, while the student remains free to carry his own interpretation into action.

Data D09

Pemuda : Very well. Do not blame me if the blood that has been spilled flows all the way here.

Pemuda : My respects to you, Teacher. A tiger will turn wild without its tamer, Teacher!

(Hadi, 1981, p. 37)

"Do not blame me" sounds like self-defense, yet it concedes the speaker's involvement in the bloodshed. The verb "flows" (*mengalir*) presents blood as water moving of its own accord, erasing the human agency behind it. The sentence is at once defensive and threatening, two stances that cancel each other. The contrast between "spilled" (*tersebar*) and "here" (*ke sini*) dismantles the illusion that the school can remain neutral: violence tolerated outside will seep into a space regarded as sacred.

The metaphor "a tiger will turn wild without its tamer" (*harimau akan jadi liar tanpa pawang*) casts Guru as the civilized tamer and the student as the wild tiger. Reversing the hierarchy reveals that a tiger is wild by nature: "will turn wild" concedes that the student's obedience was only ever temporary, and the tamer exists as such only so long as there is a tiger to control. Guru's authority thus depends on his student's potential wildness, while "my respects to you" shows deference and defiance coexisting. In Padri historiography, the group Tuanku Nan Renceh went on to form is known as the Harimau Nan Salapan, eight reformist leaders who took the path of violence (Dobbin, 1983; Masdison, 2018); the "tiger" is therefore a historical trace that ties the play to actual events.

The "soft" mode, by contrast, instills values through persuasion, counsel, and patience, chiefly on the part of Guru. In D05 he answers his student's urgency with "we must wait for the right time" and "the means are determined by time and place." The word "we" (*kita*) implies a shared interest yet conceals who decides when the moment has come, and "the right time" never arrives on its own terms because it is always deferred. The remark that nothing comes into being "in a single instant together with its perfection" can be read as the text's own formulation of *différance*: meaning and perfection are perpetually deferred by process (Derrida, 1978). Such deferral is a way of managing authority. Persuasion and waiting, however, amount to symbolic violence only where there is evidence of an imposition of meaning accepted as legitimate by the dominated (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). This study therefore reads the soft mode as persuasive power with the potential to become symbolic violence, not as symbolic violence already established.

Data D06 (continuation of D05)

Guru : Their symbol of power is the adat hall. There, too, they speak of truth.

Lelaki : Yes. But the truth they speak of rests on personal interests.

Guru : And the truth that is being fought for?

Lelaki : Truth itself.

Guru : Is it not also upheld by individuals?

Lelaki : Yes.

Guru : Then their positions will be the same; only the language differs.

Lelaki : Where do you stand, Teacher? Between the two?

Guru : No.

Lelaki : Then where?

Guru : On what is reasonable.

Lelaki : Tsk! Where does one take a stand in pursuit of an ideal?

Guru : Not in violence.
Lelaki : Teacher!

(Hadi, 1981, pp. 16–17)

Guru calls the *adat* hall a "symbol of power" where "they, too, speak of truth." The word "too" (*juga*) makes truth an activity secondary to power: in a regime of truth, truth is what those in power pronounce (Foucault, 1980). Lelaki accepts this critique and opposes the self-interested truth of *adat* to the "truth itself" for which he fights. Guru then reverses the hierarchy with a single question: "Is it not also upheld by individuals?" The supposedly pure religious truth is likewise sustained by interested human beings. Guru's conclusion, "their positions will be the same; only the language differs" (*kedudukan kan menjadi sama, hanya bahasa yang berbeda*), is the principal aporia of the play: the religion/*adat* opposition on which the entire conflict rests is annulled by the text itself. Yet "only" (*hanya*) invites suspicion, for language is no mere wrapping; it is precisely the difference in language that allows one claim to be called "truth" and the other "deception," which makes language the very terrain of power.

Guru's answers, "on what is reasonable" and "not in violence," establish reasonableness as the basis of his position. At the same time, they raise a question: who has the right to determine what counts as reasonable? Guru's power is visible in his prerogative to judge his student's actions, although the dialogue does not demonstrate any unconscious acceptance of that dominance. Foucault's account of the relation between power and truth is therefore used here as a limited explanation, while the instability of the oppositions remains the principal focus of the deconstruction.

Data D07

Guru : Do you not feel any regret?
Lelaki : From a historical point of view, yes.
Guru : And from the point of view of its beauty?
Lelaki : We can build something better than that.
Guru : Of course, but its spirit will be different, and the beauty it radiates will be different too.
Lelaki : And so will its purpose.
Guru : Would you not, in doing so, be committing a deception as well?
Lelaki : A deception?
Guru : Through its purpose you will deceive others.
Lelaki : Not deceiving, but changing.
Guru : But why was that innocent building made the target, rather than the people?

(Hadi, 1981, pp. 17–18)

Guru's questions about regret, history, beauty, and the purpose of a new building lead his student to consider the consequences of his act. At the dramatic level, Guru uses questions to shape the way his student judges his own conduct, while Lelaki's answers reveal a conflict between the rationale of moral correction and the loss of the building's history. The text does not show that this influence in itself amounts to symbolic violence; what it shows more clearly is a struggle to determine the meaning of change, preservation, and truth.

Power in *Perguruan* thus appears in two guises. In the hard mode, it is direct violence justified in religious language: the burning of the *adat* hall, the threat of "blood," and the formation of a reformist group prepared to use force. In the soft mode, it is persuasive and pedagogical power: deferral, appeals to reasonableness, and questions that lead the student to judge his own conduct. This second form may become symbolic violence, although the text does not show the student accepting

Guru's dominance unconsciously; Lelaki keeps arguing back. The two modes differ in method, not in the desire to master meaning: both seek to instill a single interpretation of truth.

The third question is answered through three reversals. First, the religion/*adat* opposition collapses when Guru concludes that "their positions will be the same; only the language differs" (D06): religion appears not as pure truth set against a deceitful *adat* but as one regime of truth competing with another. Second, the teacher/student opposition collapses when Guru's authority proves dependent on the student he seeks to control (D08–D09): the tamer needs the tiger in order to remain a tamer. Third, the truth/deception opposition collapses when the student who accuses *adat* of "blanketing deception with truth" calls violence "medicine" and reconstruction "changing" (D05, D07). The *perguruan* thus loses any stable center of meaning: it is less a space of enlightenment than an arena in which truth is produced, contested, and defended by means of power.

These findings extend and qualify Arsa's (2021) conclusion that Wisran Hadi's Padri plays voice a moderation that corrects radicalism. In *Perguruan*, even the moderate voice embodied by Guru is not neutral: it remains a form of power that may become symbolic violence, even as it concedes that religious and *adat* truths are equally sustained by power. The play therefore questions the foundations of truth claims rather than merely correcting radicalism. This is consistent with Wisran Hadi's strategy of challenging established tradition (Monika, 2021) and moves beyond structural and thematic studies of his work (Amara et al., 2023; Prasasti & Anggraini, 2025; Putra & Nasution, 2023).

Unlike earlier deconstructive studies of drama (Bahonie et al., 2022; Bogodad et al., 2022) and fiction (Akhmad et al., 2025), this study does not stop at cataloguing aporias; it reads them as the points at which educational ideology and power are laid bare, so that deconstruction becomes a critique of ideology. This accords with the view that literary texts characteristically stage the instability of their own meanings (Toft, 2023) and that deconstructive reading uncovers the "blindness" behind a text's insight (Miyazaki, 2025). Like *Leng*, read as communal resistance enacted through signs on stage (Sahid et al., 2024), *Perguruan* shows that drama can critique institutions regarded as sacred.

Historiographically, the findings support Abdullah (1966) and Hadler (2008), who reject reading the Padri conflict as a clash between two fixed camps. The aporia "their positions will be the same" may even be read as a literary trace of the later reconciliation, when post-Padri religious authority moved from contestation toward consensus (Andoni, Machmudi, & Abdurakhman, 2026; Andoni, Yulia, & Vidhiputri, 2026) and was codified in *adat basandi syarak, syarak basandi kitabullah* (Mariana et al., 2024; Quack, 2025). Continuing debates over Islamic law and *adat* among later scholars (Riva'i, 2023) suggest that Guru's question has never been fully settled, and the capacity of the *surau* both to unite and to divide a community (Alfurqan et al., 2025) is mirrored in the ambivalence of the play's *perguruan*.

The two modes also speak to contemporary research on Islamic education. Lelaki's shift from preaching to arson parallels evidence that radicalization moves between non-violent and violent paths depending on relationships among teachers, groups, and opportunities (Nuraniyah & Solahudin, 2024). Guru's anxiety mirrors the problem of religious schools tied to ideological movements (Malik, 2023) and the reproduction of exclusive interpretations through educational media (Kustiawan et al., 2023). The soft mode, in turn, shows that even moderate approaches can slide into symbolic violence, as studies of religious moderation policy and madrasa classrooms have found (Habib et al., 2026; Ilmiah & Kadi, 2025). The distinction between direct and structural violence continues to inform peace education research (McInerney & Archer, 2023), and the production of knowledge by power remains a pressing issue in Indonesia (Aswar et al., 2026).

Theoretically, this study shows that deconstruction can be operationalized as a four-stage procedure for reading ideology in drama and can be combined with the concepts of the regime of truth and symbolic violence without abandoning its suspension of truth claims. It also proposes that power in religious education manifests not only in a hard form but also in a soft form that appears reasonable and may become symbolic violence. Practically, the findings invite educators in madrasas, *pesantren*, and Islamic higher education institutions to reflect on how readily a claim to "truth itself" can become a license for coercion, whether physical or symbolic. *Perguruan* also merits use as teaching material in literature and character education to cultivate critical reading of exclusive truth claims.

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis covers only nine selected data units and therefore does not encompass every scene of the play. Second, it is confined to the written text of the 1981 edition and does not address performance, although dramatic meaning is also shaped on stage. Third, punctuation was not analyzed because its authenticity in the printed edition cannot be verified. Fourth, the interviews involved a single informant, so the playwright's biographical context could not be corroborated by other sources. The claims of this study are accordingly limited to what the text itself can demonstrate.

CONCLUSION

This study reaches three conclusions. First, the ideology of religious education in *Perguruan* is constructed from the claim of a "new era" that makes the Holy Land the center of truth and Minangkabau a society in need of purification, a claim enacted through a hard and a soft mode. Second, both modes represent power: the hard mode as direct violence justified in religious language, and the soft mode as persuasive power exercised through deferral, appeals to reasonableness, and reflective questioning, with the potential to become symbolic violence. Third, the text destabilizes the oppositions between *adat*, religion, and power through its own aporias, above all in Guru's remark that "their positions will be the same; only the language differs." The oppositions of religion/*adat*, teacher/student, and truth/deception cannot be sustained, and the *perguruan* emerges as an arena for producing truth and power rather than simply a space of enlightenment.

Future research could (1) compare *Perguruan* with Wisran Hadi's three other Padri War plays to determine whether the hard and soft modes operate there as well; (2) examine stage productions of *Perguruan* to see how the text's aporias are realized in performance; (3) undertake a fully Foucauldian analysis of discipline and surveillance in institutions of religious education; and (4) extend the interviews to directors, actors, and scholars of Minangkabau theater to enrich the context of the play's reception.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation and revision of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT (OpenAI) and Claude (Anthropic) to assist with structural organization, language editing, translation, and reference searching. All output was reviewed, edited, and verified by the authors, including every quotation and reference. The authors take full responsibility for the content of the article.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Writing - original draft.
Author 2: Methodology; Data curation; Proofreading; Writing - review and editing.
Author 3: Formal analysis. In-vestigation; Retrieving data.
Author 4: Formal analysis. In-vestigation.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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