

Demystifying the Journal Article Publication Process

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The Importance of Timing:

Don't publish too early when your work is not yet ready or polished; don't be tempted to or be pressured by publishing too early.

Think about it as the one article you might have before going on the market, or at most 2.

Start planning after prospectus defense, once you make headway into the dissertation. Prior to that encyclopedia articles don't count for much professionally, but it does give you a boost to see your name in print, so for that purpose not a bad idea, to break that threshold.

The article could be a version of a polished chapter in the dissertation dealing with a specific aspect of the project, or an article that engages the broader argument of the dissertation.

How to Plan the Submission Process:

Most important thing: remember, it's usually an 8-10K paper that presents a clear argument and is suited for the particular journal to which its submitted. **Key thing: submit the paper when you think it's good very good but not yet ideal;** this advice is more suited for the early TT years than the pre-PhD article but the point is that the biggest hurdle in this process is that it takes very long. You want to initiate the process not too soon and but don't wait till you think the article is perfect. The reason being that you will get comments from peer reviewers in any case that you will have to address and incorporate in the revised version. *After submitting the article, make notes about what are some of the things you still want to do with the article. Then incorporate those along with the peer reviewer comments.*

The Process Typically:

1-You submit the article usually via the journal portal, and receive confirmation.

2-The editor decides whether to send out for peer review or its sent out automatically.

3-Reviewers can take 3-6 months. After the 3-month mark, perfectly fine to check in with the editor so they may nudge the reviewers.

4-Reader reports come, with the outcome of accept with some revisions, accept with substantial revisions, revise and resubmit, or reject. With a positive outcome, you have around 6 months to send final version of article; can't exceed word limit by much. And don't have to respond to each and every point raised by reviewers in the case of accept with some revisions.

5-Your final essay is copyedited and typeset. A month or so. Only stylistic changes can be made at this point.

6-Then its published online and finally in print.

Handling Reviewer Comments and Rejection:

Very rarely, especially in the early stages of one's career, is an article accepted in first try. It's very customary for it to be rejected first couple times, and that's no reason to be disheartened or to begin questioning the value of the article or project. One can mitigate that possibility by submitting to the most appropriate venue but in general rejections and on occasion, somewhat snarky or mean reviewers are common; no benefit in taking it personally. For any kind of reader report, 1) go through it carefully and with a certain distance, highlight those points that are useful for revision; consider that reviewer's disciplinary or specialist positionality must have affected the review, and try to capture the points most useful to you for revisions, 2) there might be some comments that are unhelpful or where the reviewer did not get the point, or showed some biases. Ignore them or consider how they are specific to the reviewer's possible positionality. **Try to use the reader reports for the task of further polishing and advancing the quality of the article, not as an evaluation of the worth of the article or of you as a scholar.** Keeping the emotional distance, though hard, is crucial!

Things to Consider While Choosing a Venue for Publication:

1. Frequency of publication; try choosing more frequently published journals; 3 to 4 times a year.
2. Are there any backlogs? That's usually not a good sign.
3. Are there any thematic or conceptual orientations the journal seems to favor? Does it align with your article? This is the most important consideration.

4. What is the quality of articles being published in the journal? Read a couple to get a sense. Don't go for easier options, but also don't be stuck on the premier options either. Strike a balance and choose what seems best fit for your work.
5. Don't dismiss a journal only because its published overseas; check if its peer reviewed, that's more crucial.

Some Possible Venues for Islamic Studies and Religion more broadly, in no particular order:

1. Muslim World
2. Journal of Comparative Islamic Studies
3. ReOrient
4. Journal of Religious Ethics
5. Journal of Qur'anic Studies
6. Journal of Royal Asiatic Society
7. Journal of American Oriental Society
8. Journal of Islamic Studies
9. Islamic Studies (IRI, Islamabad)
10. Journal of Islamic Law and Society
11. Journal of Sufi Studies
12. Journal of American Academy of Religion
13. Religion
14. Political Theology
15. Journal of Law and Religion
16. Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East (CSSAAME)
17. Journal of Maghrebi Studies
18. IJMES (International Journal of Middle East Studies)
19. Der Islam
20. Journal of Shi'i Studies
21. Journal of Ibn 'Arabi Society
22. Journal of Arabic Literature
23. South Asia (Routledge, Australia)
24. Modern Asian Studies
25. Journal of Asian Studies
26. Bulletin of SOAS
27. Die Welt des Islam
28. Journal of Critical Pakistan Studies