THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

1. Shahada: testimony of faith
   "There is no God but God, and Muhammed is His messenger"

2. Prayer: five times a day facing Mecca. Mecca is the most sacred place in the Islamic world and it is closed to non-Muslims,

3. Zakat or Almsgiving: an annual contribution of 2.5% of a person's entire wealth given to charity

4. The Fast of Ramadan: abstain from food, drink and sex from dawn to dusk during the month of Ramadan. At the end of the month Muslims celebrate the end of the fast with the Eid al-Fitr celebration. In 2001, the U.S. Post Office issued a stamp to commemorate this festival.

5. The Hajj or Pilgrimage to Mecca: to be performed at least once in the lifetime of each Muslim. When completed, the pilgrim can add "hajji" to his name. While in Mecca, there are several ritual obligations:
   * walk counterclockwise around the Kaaba 7 times
   * walk a quarter-mile corridor 7 times
   * drink from the well of Zamzam
   * gather and pray around the Mount of Mercy at Arafat
   * throw stones at pillars which represent Satan
The Sacred Texts of Islam

The Holy Quran (Koran)
*means "recitation"

*revealed by the Archangel Gabriel to Muhammed over a 20 year period.....it was first memorized by his followers and then written within 20 years of his death

*divided into 30 sections...further divided into 114 chapters arranged from the longest to the shortest. Chapters vary from 3 to 282 verses...over 6,000 verses total

*a true Quran is written and recited in Arabic

*many people memorize the Quran....hearing it expressed in human voice is considered a miracle. Passages are included in the daily prayers and are used to introduce community events. Listening to recitation of the Quran gives the devout aesthetic pleasure. Crowds fill stadiums for public recitation contests, and passages are produced on cassettes and broadcasted on radio and television.

Hadith "traditions"

*several collections of the deeds and sayings of Muhammed, which must be authenticated.

*the authentication process is said to be an exercise in Islamic science....verification of the chain of transmitters back to Muhammed. Another method checks consistency with the Quran and other hadith