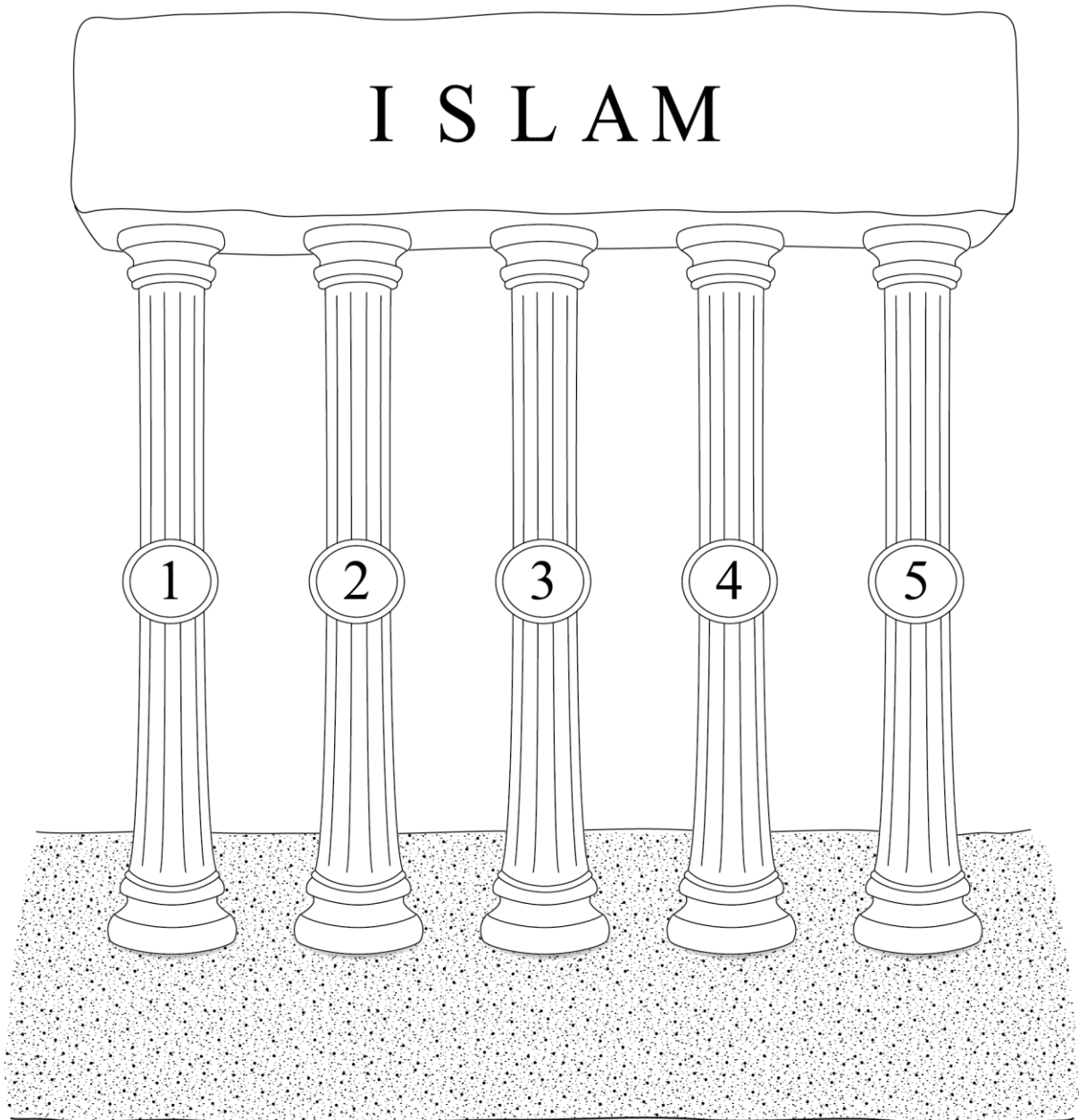


Background article: Practices, The practice of Islam

The five pillars of Sunni Islam



In Sunni understanding, the image that is given is that Islam is a way of life, or a building, that stands on five pillars, each of which is required to support the total edifice. Each of the pillars, or practices, is dealt with in detail in other parts of this section.

The five practices are:

- *Shahadah*, the principal declaration of faith: “I bear witness that there is no god (that is, nothing worthy of worship) but God and Muhammad is the Messenger (the Prophet who bears the revelation of the Qur'an) of God. This is repeated at the end of every *salat*, it should be the last words that a Muslim hears as death approaches, it is repeated over the dead body as it is laid in the grave, and acts as the formula for conversion to Islam.
- *Salat*, the regular rhythm of five times per day formal prayer.
- *Sawm*, fasting during the month of Ramadan.
- *Zakat*, the circulation of a proportion of one's surplus wealth to those in need.
- *Hajj*, the annual pilgrimage to Makka, which is obligatory on every adult Muslim once in their lifetime if they have sufficient wealth and health to perform it.