

FACTSHEET

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PARLIAMENT OF KENYA
THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

The Mace



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THE MACE

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Purpose and Acknowledgement

This Factsheet is part of the Kenya National Assembly Factsheets Series that has been developed to enhance public understanding and awareness, and to build knowledge on the work of the Assembly, and its operations. It is intended to serve as a guide for ready reference by Members of Parliament, staff and the public. The information contained here is not exhaustive and readers are advised to refer to the original sources for further information.

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The Mace



A Serjeant-at-Arms officer (carrying the Mace) leads the Speaker's procession during the last sitting of the National Assembly in the 12th Parliament.

Introduction

The ceremonial Mace is a highly ornamented staff of metal, wood or other materials, carried by a Mace-bearer or placed before a sovereign or other high officials; in civic ceremonies or before a revered gathering to symbolize authority. The Mace is also referred to as a Scepter. Processions that feature Maces include parliamentary or formal academic occasions.

History

The earliest ceremonial Maces were practical weapons intended to protect the king's person, borne by the Serjeant-at-Arms, a royal bodyguard established in France by Philip II, and in England probably by Richard I. By the 14th Century, these Serjeants' Maces had started to

become increasingly decorative, encased in precious metals. The Mace as a real weapon went out of use with the disappearance of heavy armour. The history of the civic Mace (carried by the Serjeant-at-Arms) began around the middle of the 13th Century. Early in the 15th Century, the flanged end of the Mace (the head of the war Mace) was carried uppermost, with the small button bearing the royal arms in the base. Craftsmen often pierced and decorated the flanged ends of the Maces of this era beautifully. These flanges gradually became smaller, and by the 16th or early 17th Century had developed into pretty projecting scroll-brackets and other ornaments, which remained in vogue until about 1640.

The next development in the embellishment of the shaft was the reappearance of these small scroll-brackets on the top, immediately under the head of the Mace. They disappeared altogether from the foot in the last half of the 17th Century, and remain only under the heads, or, in rarer instances, on a knob on the shaft. The silver Mace-heads were mostly plain, with a cresting of leaves or flowers in the 15th and 16th Centuries. In the reign of James I of England they began to be engraved and decorated with heraldic devices and similar ornamentation. As the custom of having Serjeants' Maces began to die out about 1650, the large Maces borne before the mayor or bailiffs came into general use.

Uses and Significance of the Mace

The Mace enhances the richness of parliamentary tradition, and symbolizes the authority of the Legislature in which it is displayed and utilized. In most Parliaments, no formal business can be transacted in the absence of the Mace. It is regarded, both within and without Parliament, as the overarching symbol of the authority and dignity of the House as well as the Speaker presiding over the House. In monarchies, it represents Royal authority. The Mace is an essential part of Parliamentary regalia. It gives credence and legality to the assembly of Members of Parliament.

The Mace as used in the National Assembly of Kenya

In 1958, the Speaker of the Legislative Council, Mr. Cavendish Bentick, received the Mace from the crown Prince. The Parliament of Kenya has used the Mace as part of its legislative undertakings since then. In independent Kenya, two Maces were utilized by the bicameral House from 1963 to 1966, after which only one was used until 2013 when the new Constitution reinstated the Senate.

Upon the attainment of Independence, His Excellency the President Mzee Jomo Kenyatta officially brought the Maces to Parliament on Monday, December 14, 1964 during the Second Session of the First Parliament, and handed them to the two Speakers, namely Hon. Sir Humphrey Slade, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Hon. Timothy C.M. Chokwe, Speaker of the Senate, to symbolize the Constitutional authority of the two Houses derived from the People of the Republic of Kenya. Since then the Mace has been part and parcel of Parliamentary business in the country. The Mace is viewed and accepted as the symbol representing this legislative authority.

The Mace of the Assembly has come to be associated with the authority of the Speaker and the House as a whole. While the Speaker is officiating over the House, the Mace must be in its proper place on a Table before him or her.

The Serjeant-at-Arms is the custodian of the Mace. The Serjeant carries the Mace on his or her shoulder when leading the Speaker's Procession into the House each day and on ceremonial occasions involving the Speaker. Ceremonial occasions in which the Serjeant plays a prominent role include the opening of each term of Parliament by H. E. the President of the Republic of Kenya, the procession of the Speakers and Members to the Chamber during joint sittings of the National Assembly and the Senate including during the President's speech on the opening of a new Parliament.

Offences relating to the Mace include attempting to or removing the Mace from its place in the Chamber during a Sitting of the House, as well as disrupting the Speaker's Procession. These offences are considered to be grossly disorderly conduct and attract specified sanctions stipulated in the National Assembly Standing Orders.

Profile of cases involving the Mace (seizures and thefts)

Institution	Summary of Case involving the Mace
Parliament of UK (House of Commons)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1930, John Beckett, a Member of the Labour Party, was suspended from the House of Commons for showing disrespect to the Mace by trying to leave the Chamber with it while protesting against the suspension of another Member. It was wrestled away from him at the door. • In 1976, Michael Heseltine, a Member of the Conservative Party, seized the Mace and brandished it at the opposing Labour Party Members, during a heated debate on the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Bill. • In 1987, Ron Brown, then Labour MP for Leith, picked up the Mace during a debate on the poll tax, and threw it to the floor. The Mace was damaged and Brown was ordered to pay £1500 to repair it. When he later failed to read out a pre-agreed apology to the Speaker, he was suspended from the Commons and the Labour Party. • In 2009, John McDonnell, the Labour MP for Hayes and Harlington, in which London Heathrow Airport is situated, was suspended from the Commons after disrupting a debate on expansion of the Airport. Following Transport Secretary Geoff Hoon's announcement that the Government had decided to approve a new Heathrow runway without a vote in the Commons, McDonnell picked up the Commons' Mace. TV pictures of the Commons Chamber were cut during McDonnell's protest. McDonnell was named by Deputy Speaker Sir Alan Haselhurst and, as such, was suspended from the Commons for five days.

Parliament of Canada	Being a symbol of the power and authority of a legislative assembly, a precedent was set in 2002 as to the severity of acts of disrespect toward the Mace in Canada and, by proxy, the monarch. After Keith Martin, federal Member of Parliament for Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca, seized the ceremonial Mace of the House of Commons from the Clerk's table; the Speaker ruled that a <i>prima facie</i> breach of the privileges of the House had occurred, and contempt of the House had been committed. Martin was not permitted to resume his seat until he had issued a formal apology from the bar of the House, pursuant to a Motion passed in response to the incident.
Parliament of Victoria (A State Legislature of Australia)	The Mace disappeared from its locked case in Parliament House in Melbourne on the night of October 8, 1891 and despite an extensive search, its whereabouts remain a mystery to-date. The only clue was that a man was seen sprinting from Parliament, carrying a large, long object wrapped in brown paper and tied with string. He jumped onboard a moving cable tram. And such was the weight of the object that he was carrying, that it swung him around and it bashed into a metal stanchion. And it clanged. Clearly, the parcel was metal. He got off somewhere around about Abbotsford, and disappeared without a trace. To this day, there's a \$50,000 reward awaiting the person who finds it.
National Assembly of Guyana	In October 2014, the Speaker of the Guyana National Assembly issued a Press Statement that the Mace had been stolen, and filed a report on the same with the Commissioner of Police. However, a few days later, the Clerk of the National Assembly told reporters that he had actually taken it for cleaning. The Clerk said he took the Mace for safe keeping and for cleaning and that the Speaker never enquired from him of its whereabouts. The Clerk and the Speaker were at odds over the Clerk's refusal of the Speaker's request to set November 6, 2014 as the date for the National Assembly to reconvene after its recess.
Parliament of Lesotho	In November 2014, Quailing legislator Hon. Chalane Phori seized the ceremonial Mace in the National Assembly and walked out, forcing adjournment of business. The commotion was sparked by a debate on constitutional amendments on the powers by the Prime Minister to prorogue Parliament. As a fierce debate on whether the motion should be discussed or not raged, Hon. Phori left his seat, took the Mace and walked out, forcing the session into an unexpected break. The Mace was later returned to its rightful place by the House Assembly's Sergeant-at-Arms, who is its custodian. The Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Advocate Lekhetho Rakuoane Rakuoane ordered Phori to immediately withdraw from the House, citing that his action had demeaned the Speaker's seat. Because of the disruption, the House was adjourned to the following day. The Mace is an essential part of the regalia of Parliament symbolizing the authority of the King as exercised by the elected Assembly.
Parliament of Sri Lanka	In June 2014, two Buddhist monks who are Members of Sri Lanka's Parliament were hospitalized after being beaten up inside the country's National Assembly. The unprecedented violence followed arguments over President Chandrika Kumaratunga's government's struggle to muster a simple majority in Parliament. Ruling party MPs ran away with the Mace, which is the symbol of the Speaker's authority, thereby holding up further sessions of Parliament which were postponed until July 20, 2014.

Parliaments in Nigeria	<p>The penchant for Mace stealing and its conversion into weapons for head bashing or even head destruction has become common in Nigeria and can be traced to the First Republic. These fracas almost always start when a faction promoted by external forces, intends to settle scores with the entrenched leadership. The modern and very bad precedent of Mace stealing and head battery in Nigeria started in Western Nigeria, with Mr. Ebubedike representing Badagry East having the 'honour' of being the first Nigerian to seize a Mace, and using same as a head battering weapon when fighting between Members broke out. Chairs were thrown and he grabbed the parliamentary Mace and wielded it like a weapon to attack the Speaker and other Members. At the time, the Mace was made of glass. The victim was left seriously injured. In another instance, Dr. Chuba Okadigbo the Senate President raced to his hometown of Ogbunike to hide the Mace of the Senate in a bid to stall his impeachment. Additionally, in early 2013, the Mace of the House of Assembly of Ogun State was smashed and damaged during a commotion on the floor of the House, and by December 2014 (over 19 months later), it had yet to be replaced, and the Legislature had only mended the Mace, making it look somewhat grotesque and skewed.</p>
Parliament of Quebec	<p>In 1883, the Mace of the Parliament of Quebec was saved from a fire by Sergeant-at-Arms Gédéon Larocque. In addition, it was as recovered after being stolen in 1967.</p>
Parliament of Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In June 1997, Opposition MPs repeatedly attempted to grab the Mace in order to disrupt the Budget presentation by then Finance Minister Musalia Mudavadi. • During debate on the proposed Security Laws (Amendment) Bill 2014, a Member of Parliament, Hon. Fred Outa, had to be wrestled to the ground in the National Assembly Chamber when he tried to stop the resultant vote by seizing the Mace.



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