

THE AJAX: WITH SHORT ENGLISH NOTES

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The Ajax: With short English notes by Sophocles

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SOPHOCLES

**THE AJAX: WITH
SHORT
ENGLISH NOTES**

ΣΟΦΟΚΛΕΟΥΣ ΑΙΑΣ.

THE

A J A X

OF

S O P H O C L E S.

WITH SHORT ENGLISH NOTES
FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS.

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PREFACE.

THIS edition of the "Ajax" of Sophocles is intended as the first of a series of plays to be published with similar notes.

The object proposed is to enable a less advanced student, whether at school or college, to read accurately and grammatically a Greek play without being at first interrupted by the discussion of various readings, and by references to books which perhaps may be beyond his reach.

In the notes, therefore, he is constantly referred to Jelf's Greek *Grammar* (2nd Ed. Oxford, 1851) and he is strongly advised to read therein the sections quoted. Such systematic reference to one grammar will, it is believed, be found to be of the greatest use. Occasionally Matthiæ has been cited, where any farther illustration has seemed desirable.

The text followed is that of Dindorf, revised by him in the year 1851.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ΑΘΗΝΑ. (Minerva.)

ΟΔΥΣΣΕΥΣ. (Ulysses.)

ΑΙΑΣ. (Ajax.)

ΧΟΡΟΣ. (Chorus of Salaminian sailors.)

ΤΕΚΜΗΣΣΑ. (Tecmessa, wife of Ajax.)

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ. (Messenger sent by Teucer.)

ΤΕΥΚΡΟΣ. (Teucer, half-brother of Ajax.)

ΜΕΝΕΛΑΟΣ. } (Atrida, generals-in-chief)

ΑΓΑΜΕΜΝΩΝ. }

MUTÆ PERSONÆ.

ΕΥΡΥΣΑΚΗΣ. (Eurysaces, son of Ajax.)

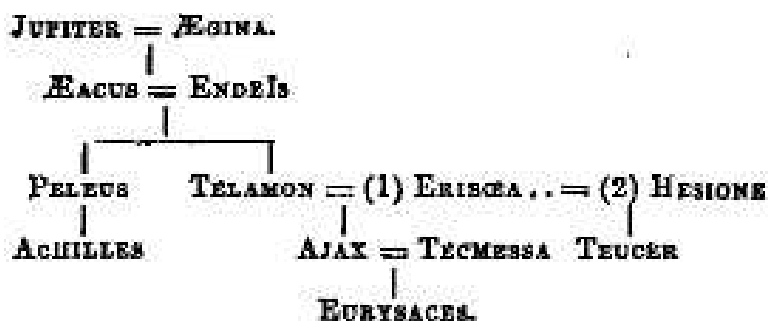
ΠΑΙΔΑΓΩΓΟΣ. (Servant, who has charge of Eurysaces.)

ΣΤΡΑΤΟΚΗΡΥΞ. (541, 544.)

INTRODUCTION AND ARGUMENT.

THE subject of this Play is the madness and the suicide of Ajax.

I. Ajax was of the family of the *Æacids* (l. 646), so called from *Æacus*, son of Jupiter; and was distinguished from the other Ajax, (the Locrian, son of *Oileus*,) by the surname of *Telamonius*, frequent in *Homer*, and used in this play, 134, *Τελαμόνιε παῖ*.



Hence *Zeus* was literally his *προγόνων προωδρῶν* (337); and was specially respected by him (824).

Æacus, born at *Ægina*, (formerly *Cenona*,) became king of the island.

Telamon, obliged to fly from home, became king of *Salamis*. Here he was visited by *Hercules*, whom he aided against *Laomedon*, king of *Troy*; and having won the chief honours in the war (*Aj.* 434—436), received *Hesione* daughter of *Laomedon*, as a chosen prize from *Hercules*, (*Aj.* 1299—1303.)

Ajax, son of Telamon and Eriboea, (Aj. 184, 462, 569,) [granted by Zeus in answer to Hercules' prayer for his host, (Pind. Isth. vi. 51—80)] had been one of the suitors of Helen, and was therefore obliged to assist Menelaus in her recovery from Troy, according to the oath by which her father Tyndarus bound all the suitors to take up arms if ever she should be carried off from the chosen one (Aj. 1115. Phil. 72). He started for Troy from Salamis with twelve ships (Hom. Il. 2. 557); accompanied by his half-brother (Aj. 922) Teucer, under a promise to their father that neither would return without the other. [Hence arose Teucer's alarm after Ajax's death, lest on his return Telamon should accuse him of having caused it in order that he might succeed to the throne of Salamis (1014—1016); and should drive him from home (1019). The story of Teucer's subsequent flight from Telamon's wrath is well known. He went first to Sidon (Virg. *Æn.* 1. 619), and by aid of king Belus, father of Dido, settled in Cyprus, and founded the town of Salamis. (Her. *Od.* 1. 7. 21, &c.)]

On reaching Troy the Greek ships were drawn up in order on shore; the forces encamped and entrenched by them, between the promontories of Rhætium and Sigæum. Ajax was stationed at one end of the camp (Aj. 4), Achilles, his cousin, at the other (Hom. Il. 8. 224; 11. 6; Eur. *Iph. in Aul.* 288—295). One of his many acts of personal bravery specially instanced by Teucer (Aj. 1270, &c.) was his defence of the ships when Hector had driven the Greeks in flight into the camp, crossed the trench, and was just setting fire to the ships (Hom. Il. 653 to the end.) During the war the Greeks were often engaged with neigh-

bouring enemies (see l. 343, 564, 720, and Thuc. i. 11); and on one occasion Ajax sacked a city of Phrygia, and carried off Tecmessa, daughter of its king Teleutas, as his wife (219—331).

When Achilles was slain by Paris, Ajax and Ulysses by their exertions carried off his corpse and arms. A trial was held to decide which of them should have the arms of Achilles as his prize; they were allotted to Ulysses. [Ulysses was son of Anticlea by Sisyphus king of Corinth: before he was born she became the wife of Laertes; hence he is called sometimes son of Sisyphus, or one of the Sisyphidæ (190. Phil. 417); sometimes son of Laertes or Lartias (380, 1393).] Here the story of the play begins.

II. Ajax, enraged at the decision, went out at night to murder his rival Ulysses, and his judges (445 &c. but comp. 1136) the Atridæ. Minerva, however, whom he had irritated more than once (Aj. 770—775), struck him with madness; under the influence of which he made an onslaught upon the cattle, the public property of the army, mistaking them for his enemies; killed some (and amongst them the Atridæ as he supposed), and drove off others (one of whom he fancied to be Ulysses) to torture at his tent. Early on the following morning (scene 1st) Minerva brings Ulysses to see the madman there; and hear his boasting triumph (1—133.)

In the next scene the Chorus of Salaminian sailors [called also Erechthidæ, i. e. Athenians, by an excusable anachronism of the poet's, to flatter his countrymen, to whom Salamis afterwards belonged (—202, comp. 861, 1221; where compliments are paid to Athens)], of Ajax's

ship, his close comrades, [343, 356]) come on the stage, and describe the evil reports which are just spreading about Ajax (133—200). Tecmessa his wife comes out of the tent, and tells how he had in his fury treated the cattle; and how he had afterwards come to himself, and in deep distress discovered his mistake (201—332). Next, Ajax himself comes forth from his tent, calling for his brother Teucer, and declaring that his only relief will be in suicide. On the entreaty of Tecmessa and the Chorus he (650) pretends to change his mind, and goes out as if (654) to propitiate the anger of the Gods (333—717). Just then a message comes in haste from Teucer, who had been absent, bidding them keep Ajax safe at home; because Chalcas the prophet had told him that if he went out evil awaited him (718—784). Tecmessa in alarm sends some to hasten Teucer's return, and others in opposite directions to look for Ajax (785—814).

The scene changes to a desert spot, where Ajax is seen; and after a beautiful soliloquy kills himself by falling on his sword (815—865). Soon after, the searching parties of the Chorus come in; and Tecmessa discovers the body. In the midst of their laments Teucer arrives (974); and soon after Menelaus (1047); and then Agamemnon (1226), who wishes to prevent Ajax from receiving the rites of burial, but is nobly opposed by Ulysses (1318). The play ends with the preparations for the funeral.

Ajax is said to have been buried on the shore of Rheumteum: where Alexander the Great visited his tomb, and paid him funeral honours.