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An Introduction to the History of the Principal Kingdoms and States of Europe (Natural Law Cloth)

Samuel Pufendorf

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Samuel Pufendorf was a pivotal figure in the early German Enlightenment and, along with Grotius, the great renewer of natural law theory. His version of voluntarist natural law theory had a major influence both on the European continent and in the English-speaking world, particularly Scotland and America. ***An Introduction to the History of the Principal Kingdoms and States of Europe*** *was first translated in 1695 but has been rare in English since the late eighteenth century.*

Pufendorf s histories exhibit the core notions of his natural law theory by recounting the development and current, reciprocal relations of individual states as collective social agents engaged in securing their own and, thus, their members interests, including self-preservation. Hence, his histories essentially functioned as vehicles for philosophical demonstration or justification. Moreover, by emphasizing empirical details and legitimating (in principle) the de facto politics of interest, these histories appealed strongly to the emerging nation-states of early modern Europe, which sought ratification of their external and internal actions, policies, and pedagogies. He based his account on the respective country s own historians and took care to describe its position from its own current and historical perspectives. It was a novel and appealing approach to political history, judging from the long and diverse publishing record of the work.

Samuel Pufendorf (1632–1694) was one of the most important figures in early-modern political thought. An exact contemporary of Locke and Spinoza, he transformed the natural law theories of Grotius and Hobbes, developed striking ideas of toleration and of the relationship between church and state, and wrote extensive political histories and analyses of the constitution of the German empire.

Jodocus Crull (d. 1713/14) was a German émigré to England, a medical man, and a translator and writer.

Michael J. Seidler is Professor of Philosophy at Western Kentucky University.

Knud Haakonssen is Professor of Intellectual History at the University of Sussex, England.

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