This set of articles reminds us of the fundamental social and cultural changes that were brought about in Europe 500 years ago by the advocates of Church reform, primarily Martin Luther. His views and actions received great support several years after 31 October 1517, when the University of Wittenberg professor posted his 95 theses, and not only within the Holy Roman Empire. By the beginning of the 1520s, we can observe active responses to his ideas in the region on the southeast Baltic coast: in Prussia, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and Livonia. We held an international conference in Klaipėda and Biržai on 7–9 September 2017 in order to reflect on the impact of the Reformation in the area between Tallinn and Gdańsk. Klaipėda City Municipality and the Sėla Biržai Regional Museum contributed to this initiative of the Institute of Baltic History and Archaeology at Klaipėda University. The conference was supported by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Lithuania and the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Vilnius, as well as by organisations and private companies that kindly contributed: the German community of Klaipėda, the Simon Dach House, and the joint stock companies Michaelson Boutique Hotel, Eurovėjas, Nesė and Friedricho pasažas.

Twenty speakers, from a variety of institutions in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Germany, gave presentations at the conference. Some papers presented at the conference were made into articles for publication in this book. Only one author in this publication did not attend the conference.

The topic addressed by the conference and these articles, the long and short-term effects of the Reformation and the changes it brought about, should be understood in the wider context of the research interests of the Institute of Baltic Region History and Archaeology at Klaipėda University. One of our priorities is the study of the impact that changes in Western Europe in the Medieval and Early Modern Period had on the eastern part of the Baltic region, and its political, economic, cultural and confessional systems. It was a conscious decision not to let this collection be dominated by research carried out by staff at the Institute, in order to show the international relevance of our research topics, rather than to highlight our own contribution.

Vasilijus Safronovas