



# STUDIA ETHNOGRAPHICA FRIBURGENSIA

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**Baltic States**

**Looking at Small Societies on Europe's Margin**

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In the early 1990s, the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) have regained their independence after nearly fifty years of Soviet rule. The shift from the communist system to an occidental one was marked by deep political and socioeconomic changes that have considerably modified the nature of these three countries. However, the transition has also caused strong tensions and at time actual conflicts among the various segments of these societies, which are characterized by their ethnic and cultural complexity as well. Still, over a period of twelve years, the baltic States have moved from the Old Continent's most remote periphery to the threshold of the European Union. Renowned social scientist from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have written the articles in this volume, critically bringing to light the various aspects of these countries' *return to Europe*. Even the Baltic Nations' case confirms that the postcommunist transformation cannot be oversimplified to a uni-directional change, as it is a process teeming with ambivalences and contradictions.