This book is the publication of papers presented by philologists, personal name specialists, and historians at a colloquium at Mulheim in Sept. 2004. The colloquium was organized by the group of German scholars who have distinguished themselves in the past decade and a half with their long term project »Nomen et gens«, or »Name und Gesellschaft«. Their objective has been to gather under a single heading, then study, classify, and exploit for historical, linguistic, and onomastic purposes, the masses of personal names to be found in documentary records – charters, chronicles, vita etc. – for the period from the third to the eighth centuries in the German successor kingdoms to the Roman Empire in the West. This body of material has been little known or exploited by modern medievalists due to the lack of any comprehensive dictionary of these names as well as to uncertainties about their creation and transmission over time, and as to whether each Germanic people had a distinctive set of names different from those of the others. At an early stage this group established an electronic data base at Duisburg and began the task of entering not only individual name citations but also various kinds of auxiliary information about the person bearing the name in question. Thus this undertaking is focused both on personal names from a philological, onomastic perspective, and on the lives of the people named. It is in other words a prosopographical data base for all the people named in these early medieval German texts. The director of the project, and co-editor of this volume, Dieter Geuenich, estimates the total number of names available to be 80,000. As of Oct. 2004 over 56,000 had been entered from over 2000 different sources for over 16,000 different people (p. 336). Descriptions and early findings of the project have been published in three previous volumes and several articles (p. 8, n. 1).

To give an example of precisely how the members of this group proceed in compiling and then presenting their data, two of them, Heike Hawicks and Ingo Runde, have summarized what has been done for a single German aristocrat, Duke Godefrid of Alemania of the eighth century: »Der Probeartikel *guda-frithu-3 (Gotefrid) als Beispiel für die Vorgehensweise bei der interdisziplinaren Erstellung von Namen- und Personenkommentaren im DFG-Projekt »Nomen et Gens«, p. 353–378. First, comes a summary of the evidence – seventeen different occurrences of the name, then, secondly, an etymological commentary on the name itself: including its variant spellings, a resume of current knowledge on this name – its origins,
spread, ethnic connotations; then, thirdly, a commentary on the person in question: data available on him from all relevant sources, followed by a reconstruction of what is now known about him: the prosopographical starting point. And finally an evaluation of the original sources which furnished information on the person. Taken all together these different sections on Duke Godefrid occupy fifteen pages of text (p. 358–373), and stand as a model for scholarly work of this kind.

The purpose of this colloquium was to present more of these findings as well as to elaborate on some of the problems encountered en route. The first three papers give an idea of the different areas in which people involved are working. Walter Kettemann’s »Vom Überlieferungsbefund zur Ergebnispräsentation. Konzeption und Organisation der datenbankbasierten Projektarbeit«, p. 41–53, describes the computerized approach to the creation of the data base. In her article »Schilthof, Uuanfanheri und andere. Seltene Namenelemente aus dem Wortfeld ›Waffen und Rüstung‹ in zweigliedrigen germanischen Personennamen«, p. 54–72, Christa Jochum-Godgluck examines the use of name elements taken from the vocabulary of weapons and defense — e.g. spear, sword, shield — for the formation of two element personal names. Some were taken over commonly, others rarely. As might have been expected many of the early Germanic personal names flourished for only limited periods of time and then passed out of favor; one of the goals of the »Nomen et gens« group is to determine and date these fluctuations as closely as possible. In their paper »Personennamen in drei hagiographischen Quellen des Frühmittelalters. Die Viten des Austregisel von Bourges, des Ansbert von Rouen und des Einsiedler Goar«, p. 73–99, by Steffen Patzold and Andreas Schorr show how this kind of knowledge enables historians to date three seventh-eighth century saints lives which survive only in later manuscripts and were thus thought to have been written only at that later time.

A review of the other papers presented by members of the »Nomen et gens« group will give an idea of the variety and scope of the research projects which have come out of this undertaking. In an examination of personal gravestone inscriptions from the Rhein/Mosel region, »Ostgermanische Personennamen in rheinischen Inschriften des frühen Mittelalters«, p. 293–309, Wolfgang Haubrichs shows how these yield important information about the ethnic identities and intermarriages of Germanic peoples in the fifth and sixth centuries. In his article »Probleme der Germanischen Wortbildung im Lichte der Personennamen-Analyse«, p. 310–318, Albrecht Greule makes a philological inquiry into the way Germanic personal names were created in the early medieval period. To what degree did personal names indicate ethnic identity among the early Germanic peoples of the former Roman Empire? This is the question around which Hans-Werner Goetz organizes his essay »Problem, Wege und Irrwege bei der Erforschung gentiler Namengebung«, p. 319–335, arguing that further analysis of the name data being collected by the »Nomen et gens« project is indispensable to the resolution of this question on which scholars at present have divided views. In their essay »Möglichkeiten der statistischen Auswertung der im Projekt erfassten Personennamen«, p. 336–352, Matthias Bock and Dieter Geuenich are concerned to show two different
ways of exploiting the data now collected in »Name und Gesellschaft«. First how this database enables the scholar to see family relationships between witnesses to two eighth century Bavarian charters on the basis of shared name elements. Secondly how the lemmatization, or normalizing, of name elements in the database (listing, with cross-referencing, of all the variant spellings of the different parts of a given name in one place instead of a purely alphabetical list) makes it possible to trace the evolution of these elements over time and geographical region. This article is essential for an understanding of the entire project. A final article by one of the collaborators, Diana Trapp, »Probleme der Doppelnamen«, 379-390, highlights the complications involved in understanding double names such as Allowinus cognomento Bavo.

In order to make their work better known and to encourage collaboration the organizers of »Nomen et gens« invited a number of other medievalists interested in personal names to talk about their own research: their papers make up half of those published in this volume, and they vary widely in subject matter and time period. The naming customs of the earliest Germanic peoples of the Roman period is the subject of Hermann Reichert’s article »Sprache, Person und Name in England im Jahrhundert nach der normannischen Eroberung. Nomen et gens im Urgermanischen?, p. 103–119. Finding evidence that people sometimes named children after heros known through the poetic tradition he questions the widely accepted belief that parents chose names only from family ancestors. In »Zur Frage der Beinamen«, p. 120–136, Heinrich Beck discusses the widespread use of second, or characterizing (as opposed to identifying), names in early Scandinavian society (such as found in runic inscriptions and bracteates) but is uncertain whether this was a practice inherited from the past, or a recent innovation. Maria Giovanna Arcamone’s »Die Italienische Anthroponymie germanischen Ursprungs und ihr Fortleben im heutigen Italien«, p. 137–152. This is a brief but illuminating survey of the Germanic origins of Italian names as a result of the successive invasions and settlements from early medieval times of Ostrogoths, Lombards, Franks, Normans and Angevins. Lists of names attributed to each of these peoples are attached at the end of the article. In contrast to her conclusions Dieter Kiemer, »Germanische: Namen auf der Iberischen Halbinsel«, p. 153–172, finds that the Germanic invaders of Spain had very limited influence on Spanish personal names. Quite different is Heike Grahn-Hoek’s »Franck und Francia im 6. Jahrhundert«, p. 173–218. This is an explanation of how Francia, a name coined in the sixth century to designate the territory of the eastern Franks, came to be the political name for the kingdom of the western Franks between the Loire and the Seine. »Anthroponymie et déplacements (IXe – XVe – XXe siècles): migrations, réseaux, métissages«, p. 219–239, by Patrice Beck, Monique Bourin et Pascal Chareille is a description of a new project of an international group of historians, mainly French (many of whom collaborated with the French »Genèse médiévale de l’anthroponymie moderne«) to study family names, many taken from place-names, as evidence for population movements: I, those found in Carolingian polyptiques; II, contacts between Spain, southern Italy, the Holy Land, England and Normandy eleventh/twelfth centuries; III, France in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. »The Aims and Objects of the Prosopography of
Anglo-Saxon England: 1066 and All That?, by Janet L. Nelson and Francesca Tinti is a description of this project in which personal names have a central place. John Insley’s contribution «Sprache, Person und Name in England im Jahrhundert nach der normannischen Eroberung», p. 259–272, is a summary of current knowledge about the importance of French and English as the languages spoken in England during this time, and his subject includes personal names. In »Name und Symbole in Unterfertigungen von Urkunden«, S. 273–289, Reinhard Hartel studies the degree to which the signs, *signa*, letters, marks etc., at the end of medieval charters are the equivalent to the personal name of the author, witness, or other, in question.

The collaborators of the »Nomen et gens« project have invested an enormous amount of time, energy, and intelligence over the past fifteen years in what seems to me one of the most important scholarly undertakings now underway for the study of the early Middle Ages. We will doubtless hear more from them in the future.