***Nomadic Studies Collection***

**David J. Phillips**

**Author of** *Peoples On the Move[[1]](#footnote-1)*

**Basic outline or description of this collection?**

Researching *Peoples on the Move* took five years, after the somewhat limited resources of the International Research Office I was greatly helped by the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London. I also acquired various books, some now long out of print, of which about 30 are left. Also various Journals such as *Nomadic Peoples*, most of which I no longer have, but there various articles and leaflets in 3 boxes. As I had no longer time to pursue this study, I thought to offer all this material to a person supposed to be interested a few miles away, to evaluate and use or dispose of. I found the person did not exist. As WEC has no interest I would dispose of them. I did not envisage the expense of crossing the Atlantic. There 30 books and the papers in four cardboard boxes (14kg, 11 kg, 11kg, and 9 kg) totalling 45 kg.

**Background on David Phillips and these holdings**

I grew up in a home with a great mission interest, my parents having been in Brazil working among the Indians. I was called later to work among the growing churches in Brazil and have served fulfilling that call in two periods in Brazil totally twenty years, first with UFM then with WEC. This involved both pastoral and literature work and theological lecturing training Brazilian missionaries, many of whom are now on various fields. In between I worked for thirteen years in the International Research Office under Patrick Johnstone. Most of the time this entailed gathering information on countries, peoples and missiological issues, which was used both for *Operation World* and for answering enquires for information from individuals, churches and missions.

One such enquiry came from the then Deputy International Director of WEC, Evan Davies, saying 'Find out whatever you can about nomads, as I have to attend a EMA (now Global Connections) conference led by Malcolm Hunter'. I was told I would not find much! I gathered about eight pages on Pastoral and Commercial nomads and presented to him. He looked it over, and said 'Seeing all this I think you had better go to the conference instead of me'.

From then on I grasped the challenge of exploring and making known the extent, nature and needs of this largely overlooked and ignored worldwide group of unreached peoples. I discovered that little was known about nomads and even among missions the prejudice of the sedentary against the nomad was to be found. Even Christians see nomads as erratic misfits, instead of being societies carefully subsisting on marginal natural resources or markets and with their own identities and worldviews. From this I saw the need for contextualising the message, with a 'nomadic' theology, and the method and the messengers, especially with examples of those who had lived and travelled with nomads. There were no worldwide studies of nomads, secular or Christian; the information on many of the peoples was very limited, which is often reflected in the book.

Along with my other duties in the IRO, I continued to gather information to develop the text of *Peoples on the Move.* I visited nomads in the UK, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, India, Mali and Mongolia. At WEC I got called 'Mr Nomad'! In spite of discouragement from some,my literary agent assured me the text was a complete work suitable to publish. In the meantime we formed an EMA Nomadic Peoples Committee and held three conferences with Malcolm Hunter's participation and wrote some articles for journals. A Nomad brochure and profiles were produced and distributed at various venues. This work in the UK seemed to lapse when I returned to Brazil in 2001. I also realized for the research and advocacy of nomads to develop, it was necessary to have a number younger people specializing in regions.

Since then I have been involved with a similar task of preparing ethnographic profiles of the Amerindian peoples of Brazil in Portuguese for Brazilian missionaries on the website [www.instituto.antropos.com.br](http://www.instituto.antropos.com.br/). 100 out of 300 of these are complete, probably exceeding the size of *Peoples on the Move.* I have also continued as part of the *Operation World* team.

1. Published in 2001, William Carey Library [↑](#footnote-ref-1)