

Remembrances of David Maybury-Lewis¹

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It is a great honor to be here to share this moment with the Maybury-Lewis's and their friends. David was a very good friend of my family, an important colleague of Brazilian anthropologists, and a good friend of Brazil. He was also my advisor at the beginning of my graduate studies at Harvard, and I'm here as a friend, as a former student, as a colleague and as President of ABA (the Brazilian Association of Anthropology). In this position, I take the opportunity to announce that the board of ABA has indicated David to receive, posthumously, the Roquete Pinto Medal for Contributions to Brazilian Anthropology. This will happen at our next meeting, in the forthcoming month of June. This is the highest honor given by our Association, and he will be the first Anthropologist whose career developed outside of Brazil who is being awarded the medal.

Last December I came up here to see David and, unfortunately, he passed away just four hours before my arrival. I had spoken to Pia on the eve and knew of his condition, but was hoping to be able to give him an *ABRAÇO*: a Brazilian hug, which carries meanings that David knew only too well. An *abraço* carries with it an expression of acknowledgement, of recognition, of trustworthiness, and a strong sentiment of friendship. I was very disappointed then for not having been able to give him an *abraço*.

I have known David for nearly all my life and have many happy memories of him. He and my father first met in late 1953, the year in which I was born, and I was told that he paid a visit to see me in January of 1954, when I was just a few months old. But my memory doesn't go back that far. Now, I would like to briefly recount three episodes to point out, among David's remarkable characteristics, a few which are particularly meaningful from my point of view.

First Episode:

My first real memories are from the early 60's when our two families met for an outing on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro and we really had fun. We were going to the beach at *Recreio dos Bandeirantes* which, at that time, was considered to be very far away from the city. However, my father's car had a problem on the way and I cannot forget how impressed we all were when David, a professor, got underneath the car to try to fix it. I cannot remember whether or not it worked, but his attitude was really outstanding by Brazilian standards. It is funny though that when I came to Harvard as a graduate student, 20 years later, I realized, much to my surprise, that David's skills in getting things fixed were considered very limited and poor by American standards. At

¹ Speech delivered at David Maybury-Lewis' Memorial Service, held on March 24th, 2008 at Memorial Church, in Harvard Yard, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

any rate, I would like to emphasize here David's willingness to engage in interactions and to make friendships sharing experiences with people. He was very good at it.

Second Episode:

Nevertheless, my best memories of David start in 1971, the year my father spent as a Visiting Professor at Harvard. Our families had a lot of interaction and I remember well the great Easter we spent together at the Maybury-Lewis's home. As I recall, Pia hid dozens of chocolate eggs throughout the house, including the garden, and we had the best egg hunt of our lives. There was an intense competition for the eggs and it was funny to see David and my father competing and disputing for the eggs like the rest of us. Here, I would like to stress David's skills as a host. He, and the Maybury-Lewis's, really knew how to receive people over and to make them feel at home, in their home. One did have a sense of belonging, and I am sure that my fellow graduate students from the 80's remember well the open houses that David and Pia held monthly at Bowdoin Street.

Third Episode:

The third episode I would like to remember is from the time I came to Harvard as a graduate student in the early 80's, and spent two months living with the Maybury-Lewis's. My wife and I are grateful for their hospitality, and so is my eldest daughter who was there with us. At the time Pia was the president of the Danish Association, and every once in a while she held parties for the Danes at her place. In these occasions I was always impressed with David's performance. He did have a remarkable talent for languages and spoke at least eight or nine. His Portuguese, for instance, was perfect. But, as I was saying, I have often observed David in such parties and, although it is true that I don't speak any Danish, I always had the impression that he spoke Danish better than the Danes themselves. I knew it did not make much sense, and I kept asking myself how could that be so? How could I have the strong impression that he spoke Danish better than the Danes themselves? I think the secret was David's ability to interact with people, in the best sense of the term. And that says a great deal for the kind of anthropologist and the kind of human being he was. Besides his well-known charm and discursive skills, David was great at fitting in or tuning in wherever he was. And it is not just a matter of acting out or of being able to act like, but also, above all, a matter of being able to learn from, to have fun with, and to contribute to establishing real partnerships. Danish has a peculiar rhythm and its own way of gesticulating, as compared to English, and David seemed to excel in all of these. What I would like to point out here is David's ability and willingness to interact not only as an interlocutor, but also as a peer or as a partner.

This brings me to my final comment on David's relationship to Brazilian Anthropology. To start with, he was not a usual Brazilianist. His work on Brazil and his relationship or collaboration with Brazilian intellectuals was always marked by an attitude of partnership. David began his connection with Brazil in the early 50's, as a student, and he was proud of having a Master's Degree from the Free School of Sociology and Politics in São Paulo, where he studied Brazilian Indians with Herbert Baldus. Later on, he gave an important contribution to the establishment of the first

Graduate Program in Anthropology within Brazil, which was founded at the National Museum, in Rio de Janeiro, under the leadership of my father. In this endeavor he coordinated a team of researchers comprising American and Brazilian Students, who engaged in a rich exchange of data and perspectives. Some of them, like my friend and colleague Roberto DaMatta, who is also here, got degrees from Harvard. Finally, I also believe that part of his motivation to create Cultural Survival, a well-known institution with worldwide activities, was inspired by his Brazilian experience and the kind of anthropology being done there.

For all of these things, David's memory will remain alive in our minds and in our hearts. If he were still among us, I would like him to take my words here as the *ABRAÇO* I was not able to give him last December, as a sign of friendship, respect and acknowledgement for his generosity in a life-long relationship. Thank you David, we'll miss you!