

Mohammad Rohail

Cambridge Trip Report

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to Rev. Chong, Olive To, Lawrence Li and all the people who were involved in the making of this trip, I am extremely grateful and honored to be a part of the trip this year, and can say with full confidence that I have learnt a lot to take back with me. This excursion meant the world to me, especially considering the fact that it was my first time to travel to Europe, or anywhere outside of Asia for the matter. I remember feeling so overwhelmed and found it hard to believe till we were on the plane to London! It hit me at that time, realizing how lucky I am to be able to do this, something that I would have probably never been able to do at such a young age. Therefore, I once again must thank everyone involved and especially Rev. Chong, for being kind enough to grant me this visit.

Upon arriving, I remember being overwhelmed with joy and awe, glancing at the beauty of UK, and just stared outside the window the whole ride when travelling to Cambridge. The gloomy and cold weather somehow soothed me, and I really enjoyed the visuals that came with it, honestly, I would say I prefer gloomy rainy winters over hot burning summer days. Though, a bit of both would be ideal for the average person, I can definitely say it is better than the wet and humid weather of Hong Kong!



At Cambridge, the tours were amazing, I really appreciate all the guides, students and traditions that they so highly value, similar to us here at St. Johns College. Undoubtedly, the

structural elements and aesthetic visuality caught my eye, and swept me off my feet. I really love the look of Cambridge, being a small city with people riding bicycles to University and work. It reminded me of my village back in Pakistan, where cycles are the common way for transit as well.



However, like many others I too have that one particular moment in Cambridge that completely changed me as an individual and a student. It was our visit to Gonville and Caius College, we were honored and fortunate enough to have a learning session with Professor Yao Liang and Professor J.Scherpe. Both their talks were uplifting and motivational, I did not know that it would have such a huge impact on me. Being an arts student, I felt that I did not belong and would not be able to get much out of it, but I felt that I got the most out of it, because I am an arts student. To be able to study arts, means to be flexible and diverse in many fields, which can also allow us to have multi-perspective lenses to look at all kinds and types of worldly issues. I have now also become very interested in law, thanks to Dr. Scherpe. His talk about common law and the problem of cultural insensitivity was highly relatable for me. Being a first-generation Pakistani in Hong Kong, my status as an ethnic minority has definitely had its ups and downs, and of course the learning curves that come with it. I started thinking whether Cultural translation of law would be something that I could excel at, considering the background that I come from, I want to give back to not just my community, but the world as a whole and bring major important changes to it, similar to how these great professors here at Cambridge have done and are continuing to do so. Moreover, I realized how our judicial system in Hong Kong is so special, like mentioned in the talk and by Rev. Chong, sometimes the final decision is made by a judge who is foreign, hence why it is such an interesting place to be since it is still influenced by foreigners. This is why I love my home place Hong Kong, being a hub with so many different cultures and people residing in one place. From there on out, I was able to think of even more issues and problems existing in Hong Kong, such as laws about passports and license conversions which are

exceptionally intriguing. But one must always keep in mind that a change starts from your home, then to the country and then finally the rest of the world. Besides that, the tour around the beautiful bridges of Cambridge was a great way to end the day.



To add to that, another special moment for me was our visit to Trinity College and Queen's College, looking at the stone laid for Xu Zhimo in Queen's Green. The poem read by Tristan was exceptional, really moving, at night I even convinced David to read the poem once again near the river at Cambridge, it was even better read in Mandarin than in English, it feels much more authentic even though I couldn't fully comprehend the words. Moreover, Rev.Chong talking about the history and impact of Xu Zhimo on his life also got me thinking, of how important science can be for an arts student. Throughout the trip, we met a lot of renowned scientists instead of people from my field, but the degrees are still called **Bachelor of Arts** in for example physics or chemistry. This is found in both Cambridge and Oxford University. I started to ask myself what Cambridge means to me, and though I have not completely figured it out yet, I can say it means a lot, it is a place where I can take ideas and ways of life, to enjoy and learn, and take these ideas and ideology back to my home place, Hong Kong. I believe Xu Zhimo is highly relatable to all of us, because he too was a foreigner studying in Cambridge, and yet went back home and applied all that he learned. Thus, Cambridge is a place where great ideas are born and perhaps inspired. We must become a philosopher, a scientist and an artist all in one, in order to truly be able to perceive things from a multi-dimensional view, getting an education does not only mean to earn money and make life easier for you and your family, while I agree that it is important, but I also believe that being able to give back to society and impact it for the better is much more important. For example, taking Hong Kong's current situation into account, I asked myself how my education can help make things better? How can I contribute using the limited knowledge I have, why do I have to choose a side? I do not have to be neither this nor that, in fact I can be both.

I thought about my home, Hong Kong, why is it dying? How can my god given education help my home, how can I apply the ideas that I learnt in Cambridge from all the professors and individuals, ideals of Plato and Aristotle in Hong Kong? I do not have the answer yet, but I believe I am moving in the right direction. I can only find myself in my home, Cambridge was a guidance to it. I don't see myself living in Cambridge too, just like Dr. Chong. Because I can only grow in my home, it is where I belong, Cambridge is a great place but it can get too comfortable away from the chaos and problems ongoing in my home Hong Kong and Pakistan. That day, Rev.Chong inspired this thought in me, just as Xu Zhimo

inspired him in his time at Cambridge. This I would say is the cycle of life, learning never stops and inspiring others is the epitome of a true educator!



Besides the learning, I had a lot of great food and met amazing people too. I made a lot of new friends, and even got closer to the St. Johnians I went with on this voyage. Therefore, I am truly thankful to each and every one of them in making my trip so special. I even met my floor brother who I last saw during my orientation!



For my ending remarks, I would highly encourage everyone to visit Cambridge and

Oxford at least once and partake in this trip if possible. This was hands down the best experience I have ever had, and perhaps the most unforgettable one in my life. Once again, I cannot express enough gratitude and thank Rev. Chong plus the rest of the people involved in this trip, all the friends I made and the knowledge I gained from each and every person, I am truly honored to be a part of all this. Finally, thank you Dr. Chong sincerely, for everything that you have done and given me, I shall forever remember this and am endlessly grateful.

