Draft 3

If 1066 is said to be the most important date in English history, what is the equivalent in another country ?

This essay argues that 1857 is of equivalent importance to Indian history as 1066 is to English history. It will use criteria of importance, including short term social and cultural outcomes as well as long-term consequences still apparent today. Both the Battle of Hastings (1066) in England and the Indian mutiny (1857) helped characterise each nation, influencing how they are perceived internationally and the identity of each nation today. In turn making them arguably the most important dates.

The short-term outcome of both dates can be simplified to a change in power. In both, new leadership was extremely important to social change at the time which led to longer term consequences. In England, 1066 can be described as the most important date because the Battle of Hastings resulted in the first Norman king, whose descendants still rule England. At the time this would have been viewed as an important event: During the battle, William the Conqueror defeated the Anglo-Saxon king Harold Godwinson. In order to control the population, the Norman's built castles across England and took a census, the Doomsday Book, so they could raise taxes. The Norman conquest resulted in a cultural and linguistic shift: The King's inability to learn English caused the language to mix with French, bringing about the origins of the English we speak today. Thus 1066 is important due to the change in the monarchy which shaped English identity. Similarly, the Indian mutiny of 1857 resulted in a change of leadership: From the East India Company to the British monarchy, making Queen Victoria the Empress of India. The year was important at the time because of the first mass uprising against British rule, soldiers from across India fought for independence. However, rather than the rebellion immediately achieving its goals, it resulted in increased subservience to the English; leadership from the Queen cemented India's status as a British colony. Like the Battle of Hastings, the mutiny resulted in many social and cultural changes. Now Britain could more effectively exploit India's resources and raise taxes on its people and trade. The mutiny resulted in a change in mindset for many Indian people, that they must unite to dispose of British rule.

The significance of both dates can be heightened by exploring the long-term political and ideological consequences. As mentioned earlier, the ancestors of William the Conqueror still make up the modern British monarchy. 1066 was the beginning of a great dynasty who for many are a symbol of power and a source of national pride. However, for others the Royal family represent colonialism and oppression. An interesting link is that the descendants of William are those who took power after the 1857 Indian mutiny. This English dynasty are also responsible for past imperialism and colonialism which plagued many countries including India, where it intensified after 1857. Whilst the English royal family do not rule India today and the British empire collapsed long ago, their actions in response to the mutiny bear the blame of many subsequent problems. The 1857 mutiny showed Hindu and Muslim soldiers as united against the British. It can be argued that after these events the British used "divide and rule" to cause religious infighting and weaken the subcontinent, eventually resulting in the 1947 partition. However, the effects of this strategy did not disappear with the British, the idea that different religions could not form one country was so deeply ingrained in Indian society that it is still prevalent today. The BJP who currently dominate Indian politics are Hindu nationalists accused of persecuting Muslims. Furthermore, the Indian economy never fully recovered from British exploitation. Overall, if 1066 can be seen as the most important year in English history due to the establishment of an enduring monarchy, then 1857 can be seen as the most important to Indian history because events that year shaped the national identity and lasting political factions.

In conclusion, events in both years had major short and long term impacts that shaped the respective social and political landscapes of each nation. Both led to a sense of national identity that is recognisable today; although in England there is continuity, in India it led to eventual calls for independence. Both dates remain relevant but in different ways. 1066 continues to be celebrated as the beginning of English identity, whereas 1857 in India is symbolic of English colonialism and imperialistic attitudes. The naming of the 1857 revolt represents these attitudes . Indian historians often refer to the event as the first war of independence, reflective of the movement it started. Whereas it was trivialised by the British who referred to it as the Sepoy Mutiny effectively downplaying its significance. However, 1857 remains significant to Indian historical narratives and therefore it can be argued to be equally as important as 1066 is for England.