

Almost the greatest scientific invention of the age

On 24 September 1896, the Lumière representative to Bombay and Australia, Marius Sestier, received a telegram from the home office in Lyon. The films he had made in India and shipped back to France before leaving Bombay in mid-August had been opened by customs and ruined. [1] He was just eight days into his Australian tour and all of his work in Bombay seemed to have come to nought. Sestier was one of thirteen Lumière representatives charged with not only screening films but also making them. [2] With his Bombay films in dubious condition, what had Sestier achieved? In Sestier's hands was the Cinématographe Lumière "almost the greatest scientific invention of the age?" [3] [Fig. 1]

[Fig. 1] "Living Photography", *The Times of India*, 7 July 1896. Courtesy Mme Petitbois, Messrs Sestier et Jeune. [MARIUS SESTIER COLLECTION] NFSA 799531

There are long-held and oft-repeated claims originally made by Australian photographer Jack Cato, who, in describing the meeting between Sestier and Henry Walter Barnett, which apparently happened in Bombay, not only casts doubt on Sestier's film making skills, he also implies that Sestier's tour of the Cinématographe Lumière in that city was a failure.

It was a colourful assignment, but a most difficult one owing to the heat and humidity which twisted and curled and perished the film. Sestier knew little about processing his film and was unable to test and examine his work as he went along... There in the Taj Mahal Hotel, Barnett met Sestier who was very disappointed with the reports on his work from Paris. [4]

John Baxter in *The Australian Cinema* (1970) embellishes Cato's claims by adding that Sestier was "not a very talented operator" and, after receiving an "abusive letter" from his employers, was faced with having to return the machines if he didn't do better. What's more, according to Baxter: "the Lumières distrust of their employee was justified" when Sestier allegedly failed to properly develop the first films he had shot soon after his arrival in Sydney. [5] [6] Compounding the claims of Sestier's ineffectiveness in India is the long gap between the close of Sestier's tour in Bombay, on 15 August 1896, and the onset of significant national production, distribution and exhibition – whether by English, European or Indian nationals – until a number of years later. This was unlike elsewhere in the world where the moving image was enthusiastically embraced and film production progressed rapidly. [7] Adding 'fuel to the fire' are commentators who have also brought into question Sestier's choice of venues in Bombay, his ticket prices, and the audience to which he marketed the Cinématographe Lumière. [8] It is important to caution that Cato's claims, which were made in 1955 in his book *The Camera in Australia*, were his recall and interpretation of a conversation with Barnett that had taken place decades earlier. [9] Although his claims have been repeated often, they have not been examined further and substantiated. For example, research into shipping records and newspaper reports is yet to find any information that would indicate Barnett was even in Bombay in 1896. Indeed, all reports so far researched indicate otherwise. Barnett's last trip overseas prior to 1897 was not to India, but to England and Europe in 1894. [10] During the time Sestier was in Bombay (1 July 1896 to 15 August 1896), Barnett was not only getting ready to auction his home in Elizabeth Bay [11], he was also between his two studios in Sydney and Melbourne, busy with portraits of American actors from the Brown-Potter Dramatic Company [12], as well as working towards an exhibition by the artist Arthur Streeton. [13] And, if, as Cato claimed, Barnett met Sestier at the same time the latter received the dispiriting news from home office, then their meeting could not have been at the Taj Mahal Hotel for the simple reason that the Taj Mahal did not open until 1903. [14] Their meeting had to have happened in September 1896 in Sydney, as this is where Sestier received the telegram. *The Australasian Photographic Review* on 20 May 1897

Comment [A1]: Sestier left Bombay in late August.

Comment [A2]: Nearly all of his work in Bombay had been showing the cinématographe.

Comment [A3]: Three sentences previously the films were said to have been ruined.

Comment [A4]: What is this word? "MM" is the French abbreviation for "Messieurs", "Messrs" the English abbreviation. It's fortunate they're not German.

Comment [A5]: Why the French?

Comment [A6]: Not true: Cato only refers to Sestier shooting films in Bombay, not their exhibition.

Comment [A7]: Baxter's version of the story is based on and is even more fictitious than Cato's. What historiographical purpose is served by referring to an out-of-date and erroneous tertiary source?

Comment [A8]: This is an outright falsehood. Any half-competent Web search made after 2010 would have found (and will find) <http://www.apex.net.au/~tmj/sestier-and-barnett.htm> wherein Cato's version of history is scrutinised in detail and shown to be nonsense.

Comment [A9]: They arrived early on 30 June 1896.

Comment [A10]: The Sestiers left Bombay on 26 August 1896 (though spent a short time at Poona before then).

Comment [A11]: It wasn't his to sell. Only the contents – "household furniture and appointments" – were put up for auction.

contradicts the assertion made by Cato and others that Sestier was found lacking in his filmmaking skills. Instead, it indicates that Sestier had high standards and mentions that three films developed by Baker and Rouse, each 75 feet long, were to the complete satisfaction of Mons Sestier. [15]

A closer examination of Sestier's tour of Bombay is warranted to understand better the immediate impact that the Cinématographe Lumière had in Bombay, as well as its long-term impact on subsequent film production. By examining Sestier's work in the context of Bombay society, and by understanding the city's geographic location and the local business connections Sestier would have established upon his arrival, some unexpected findings strengthen, rather than belittle, his significance in the development of cinema in India.

* * *

Although Marius Ely Joseph Sestier (1861-1928) [Fig. 2] is identified as the sole Lumière representative to Bombay and Australia, he did not travel alone, but was accompanied by his wife Marie-Louise Puech (1873-1957), known as Marie-Rose [Fig. 3]. For a Cinématographe Lumière representative to be accompanied by their partner was unusual, but Marie-Rose's background in business and her knowledge of English made her essential for the tours of the Cinématographe Lumière in both Bombay and Australia. According to a family source, the husband and wife team were a formidable force, and they had specific roles: Marie Rose was the financial manager whereas Marius was the operations manager. [16] Significantly, Marie-Rose's participation in the dissemination of the Cinématographe Lumière in 1896 includes her as one of the first women to have an active role in the global phenomenon of cinema.

Comment [A12]: Any others almost certainly copied what Cato wrote.

Comment [A13]: This doesn't imply that he was capable of making films.

Comment [A14]: Any evidence for this?

Comment [A15]: Absolute nonsense. If she was so "essential" because of her knowledge of English why were 2 interpreters employed in Bombay?

Comment [A16]: Some evidence for this assertion would make it more believable.

[Fig. 2] Marius Sestier. Platinotype taken by Henry Walter Barnett, Australia 1896. Courtesy Mme Petitbois, Messers Sestier et Jeune. [Marius Sestier Collection] NFSA 1482833

[Fig. 3] Marie-Louise Puech. Platinotype taken by Henry Walter Barnett, Australia 1896. Courtesy Mme Petitbois, Messers Sestier et Jeune. [Marius Sestier Collection] NFSA 1482925

On 9 July 1896, *The Bombay Gazette* noted that the Sestiers were on their way to Australia to present the Cinématographe Lumière. Their Messageries Maritimes (MMS) tickets, which had been purchased on 3 June 1896, eleven days before departure from Marseilles, allowed for a stopover of up to four months before needing to embark for their contracted destination. The Sestiers had the option of taking an MMS route the Lignes D' Australie et De Nouvelle-Calédonie (The Australian and New Caledonia Route), which stopped at Port-Said, Suez, Aden, Colombo and Mahé before arriving in Australia. Instead, they took the Lignes de L'Indo-Chine (The Indo China Route), which passed through most of the same places but included a stop at Bombay after Colombo before heading to Indo China. [17] So, why did the Sestiers opt for a six-week stay in Bombay? Most likely because it was the Lumière's plan to maximise exposure to their Cinématographe Lumière. The other ports were likely thought not to be commercially viable even as a short interlude on the way to Australia. The city of Bombay, however, was long considered a centre for business, trade and work opportunities, and with a large multicultural population, it was described as "a meeting place of the world", a perfect place for the dissemination of the Cinématographe Lumière. [18]

Bombay was also a hub for photographers with between thirteen to seventeen listed studios. As noted by Jacques Rittaud-Hutinet, the Lumières made good use of their global photographic connections – that is, those who purchased Lumière photographic supplies – to facilitate their Cinématographe operators. [19] This suggests it was very likely that a local photographic business was involved with the Sestiers in presenting the Cinématographe Lumière to Bombay society. Among the contenders were the studios of Bourne and Shepherd, Shapur N Bhedwar and Clifton & Co. [20]

Comment [A17]: What is the "S" the initial of?

Comment [A18]: "Marseille", as elsewhere there is "Lyon".

Comment [A19]: The relevant steamers did not go to Colombo and Mahé; from the start of 1896 they no longer stopped at Mahé, but went to Colombo instead.

Comment [A20]: Bombay before Colombo. (Geography lesson needed.)

Comment [A21]: Any evidence that before they arrived they knew how long they would stay?

Comment [A22]: Warning: speculation.

Comment [A23]: Lumières'

Comment [A24]: Speculation.

Comment [A25]: It was a large city, so what's unusual about there being many photographers there?

Comment [A26]: If the studios were listed why can't they be counted exactly?

Comment [A27]: Who, if anyone, sold Lumière products in Bombay? Where's the evidence?

Comment [A28]: Yet more speculation. Showing films with a cinématographe did not require assistance from a local still photographer.

Comment [A29]: Any evidence that Sestier had anything to do with any of these "contenders"?

Disembarking at Apollo Bundar on 1 July 1896, the Sestiers would have immediately made their way to their hotel, presumably Watson's Esplanade Hotel at 10 Esplanade Road, which was only a very short distance from their disembarkation point. There, the Sestiers found themselves within Bombay's most affluent and influential district, populated by nationals and their well-educated families. It was also a district abuzz with European and English business activity. Confined to a few streets between Carnac Road to the north, Marine Street to the east, Esplanade Road to the south and Mayo Road to the west, the pretensions of the Cinématographe Lumière as the scientific invention of the century would, presumably, appeal to the district's inhabitants who were known for their progressive thinking and community leadership.

As Jean-Claude Seguin has pointed out, available evidence suggests that no arrangements were made prior to the arrival of the Sestiers in Bombay. Therefore, it was paramount that the Sestiers secure a venue for screenings and place publicity to advise potential audiences that the "marvel of the century" was about to be presented for the first time in their city. If they felt any trepidation over how they would achieve this, then it was not obvious:

On ne peut pourtant pas ne pas être étonné par l'intelligence commerciale de Marius Sestier qui, dès son arrivée, prend des contacts, apprend la langue du pays ou fait passer de nombreux articles dans la presse bien avant qu'il ne sache où les projections auront lieu.

[21]

[However, one can't help but be astonished by the business sense of Marius Sestier who, upon his arrival, makes contacts, starts to learn the language, and arranges articles in the press well before he knows where the screenings would take place.]

Astonishing as that may be, we must take into account that neither husband or wife were novices when it came to running a business – Marius with his own range of pharmaceutical products and pharmacy in Lyon, and Marie-Rose within the Puech-Raoux families' drapery business – and knew well how to establish contacts and exploit a market to their good advantage. [22] The Sestiers wasted little time and within 24 hours of their arrival, the first notification about the Cinématographe Lumière appeared on 2 July 1896 in *The Advocate of India* [Fig. 4].

[Fig. 4] «The Living Photography», 2 July 1896, *The Advocate of India*. Courtesy Mme Petitbois, Messers Sestier et Jeune. [MARIUS SESTIER COLLECTION] NFSA 799531

As an evening paper, *The Advocate of India* offered the first possible publication deadline that the Sestiers could meet. It was quite a feat to have arrived on 1 July, settled in, located a suitable newspaper, arranged a meeting and supplied the text in English in advance of editorial and printing deadlines for the next issue. Unlike today, many hours were needed to composite the text for printing. [23]

Within six days of arrival, the Sestiers had organised further advertising, printed leaflets, posters and programmes. But the main issue was securing a suitable venue given that at this time all of Bombay's theatres – The Gaiety, The Grant Road Theatre, The Tivoli Theatre, the Novelty Theatre and even the Town Hall – were engaged with shows. [24] The requirement for electricity to operate the Cinématographe Lumière most likely eliminated all but The Gaiety and The Novelty (as well as otherwise suitable vacant shop fronts or other commercial premises [25]).

Although the couple were seemingly at a loss, they still managed to secure two venues. In an unfamiliar location, by necessity the Sestiers relied on advice from those they trusted and, most importantly, with whom they could converse. It was fortunate that they found themselves within an enclave of French-speaking Europeans, which included the manager of Watson's Hotel, the Swiss-French Louis Mercanton, and an internationally renowned hotelier. Mercanton leased the Grand Hall within the Hotel to the Sestiers between Tuesday 7 July and Saturday 11 July. The first presentation of the Cinématographe Lumière opened at 6pm and ran four 30-minute sessions through to 10pm. [26]

Comment [A30]: They arrived early in the morning of 30 June.

Comment [A31]: Would they? Why the Esplanade Hotel? There were several hotels in the area.

Comment [A32]: Give us a break! Even if it's relevant, where is the evidence?

Comment [A33]: There's a lot more evidence easily available than when Seguin wrote 25 years ago.

Comment [A34]: Ridiculous statement. Where would one expect to find evidence of any "trepidation"?

Comment [A35]: Not in the original; and where's the evidence that he does?

Comment [A36]: "ou" = "or" in the original, and is there incorrect.

Comment [A37]: Hardly: Sestier had to get things organised to exhibit the cinématographe.

Comment [A38]: nor

Comment [A39]: Not so, because they arrived on 30 June.

Comment [A40]: Why the guillemets?

Comment [A41]: Not such a feat when they arrived early on 30 June.

Comment [A42]: Examples of all of which are still in existence to provide evidence for this statement?

Comment [A43]: The cinématographe did not require electricity to be operated: it was hand-cranked. An electric light source could be used, but so could a non-electric light.

Comment [A44]: Whom did they know in Bombay to trust?!

Comment [A45]: What evidence for this?

Comment [A46]: Mr Gouldston or John Cronan was the manager of the Esplanade Hotel when the Sestiers were in Bombay.

Comment [A47]: The last session was advertised to start at 10 pm.

Mercanton arrived in late 1895 and, although relatively new in Bombay, his job was to “know” his location in order to best serve his guests. The hotel’s original owner and builder, Englishman John Watson, described his hotel as “a place of favourite resort”, which could well be interpreted to include events such as the Cinématographe Lumière. [27] With all local venues occupied or unsuitable, Mercanton’s offer was a gesture of courtesy, but more likely made good business sense. Advertised as a scientific invention, the Cinématographe Lumière would appeal greatly to those attracted by the Victorian era’s predisposition to advance and popularise science, to become modern. This was not limited to Europeans or the English, as India’s well-educated nationals regarded science as the way to modernise India and move towards self-rule. For the Sestiers, these like-minded, educated professionals would readily grasp the scope of the Cinématographe Lumière.

The theory was correct with several articles in the local press comparing the Cinématographe Lumière with its antecedents – the Zoetrope, Praxinoscope and the Kinetoscope – pointing out their limitations in view of the Cinématographe’s superiority in recording moving images, developing them and projecting them almost instantaneously.

Fascination with the method of capturing the images was superseded by examinations of the nature of recording and replaying natural movement, the celluloid filmstrip and its speed of carriage through the Cinématographe for filming, and then replicating that speed for projecting present-day natural life:

The pace with which the bande unrolls greatly varies. Sometimes the maximum speed is found, whilst others the bande is immobile... Whilst the bande is immobile the reproductions are similar, whilst on the converse when the band revolves the reproductions represent the different movements accomplished. The number of proofs represented are fifteen to the second, and a scene on the projector therefore of one minute represents 900 photographs.. [28]

Information gleaned from Sestier’s papers indicates that Watson’s Grand Hall was indeed to be the venue for the first presentation of Cinématographe Lumière in Bombay. The Grand Hall, as an expeditiously available option, seemed to be a good venue because it was a generous space on the ground floor. But it was not ideal. Its many columns had prevented a clear and direct throw, which made it necessary to find a different space within the Hotel. According to two reports, the Cinématographe Lumière was moved to a smaller room, but that too caused problems. From 8 to 11 July, only 216 tickets were purchased (a number that would later be equalled or superseded per night). [29] The Hotel’s inability to allow the Cinématographe Lumière to be presented to its best advantage affected audience numbers:

the operator is unable to have the instrument sufficiently removed from the canvas to make the figures life-size, and this has the further disadvantage that it makes the actors in each scene move about rather too quickly. [30]

the cinematographe cannot be worked to advantage in a small room. The pictures have been well worth seeing but the science effect will be greatly enhanced when the exhibition is given in the Novelty Theatre, and the opportunity of seeing one of the latest scientific marvels of the age should not be lost.

[31]

Prior to opening at Watson’s Hotel the Sestiers had secured three nights at The Novelty Theatre, one of the largest and most luxurious theatres in this part of the city. Established in 1887 by Messrs Cursetjee F. Baliwala and Dosabhoj F. Mogul, theatrical impresarios of the Victoria Theatrical Company, the Novelty had earned a reputation for both local amateur productions and cross-cultural, high profile and innovative presentations. In 1896, the theatre was under the management of Cowasjee Framji Mehta owner and editor of the Gujerati-English newspaper *Kaiser-i-Hind*, and English émigré Arthur Francis Soundy, who was the theatre’s booking agent and also the owner of the music store Soundy & Co.

The Novelty Theatre’s dimensions of 50 metres long by 30 metres wide (and with no columns to hinder the view) provided an ample potential throw of 28 metres to the front of the stage from

Comment [A48]: In 1871, a quarter-century before Sestier was there, and in which period the hotel changed hands at least twice.

Comment [A49]: Where is the evidence that Mercanton made an ‘offer’?

Comment [A50]: Which are?

Comment [A51]: The cinématographe played no part whatsoever in developing a film strip. It was used to copy a film, to produce a positive print from a negative.

Comment [A52]: What is almost instantaneous? None of the listed operations is almost instantaneous, let alone performing the three in sequence.

Comment [A53]: It’s “band” in the original. And there are other mistakes in this transcription.

Comment [A54]: What “Grand Hall” in the hotel?

Comment [A55]: Which are?

Comment [A56]: There was no show on 8 July.

Comment [A57]: What is the evidence that Soundy was involved in the management of the Novelty Theatre?

the rear of the seating, or a 21 metre throw from the front of the stage to the rear. With tiered seating for 1400 people plus secluded boxes for women in purdah, a ticket office, an orchestra pit, refreshment rooms and electricity, The Novelty was set to serve the Sestiers well. Stepping away from Watson's Esplanade Hotel put the Sestiers into an environment where French was little spoken. But in the first few days of their arrival in Bombay they had invested wisely in an interpreter, Salvatore Colonnello, the son of Camillo Colonnello, an Italian specialty food importer on Medows Street. Salvatore Colonnello spoke local languages as well as French, English and Italian, a fact that was established during a court case in 1890. He likely assisted the Sestiers in negotiating for The Novelty Theatre. [32]

Two days after closing at Watson's Hotel, the Cinématographe Lumière re-opened on Tuesday 14 July at The Novelty. But as the audience settled into their seats, the lights dimmed and the presentation got underway, it became quite clear that something was wrong – the electricity supply was faulty. (There is some irony here in that science and technology had failed the scientific marvel of the century.) Tickets were refunded and future sessions cancelled, or at least until the electricity at The Novelty was repaired. [33]

Mercanton and the Sestiers renegotiated for further sessions at the hotel from Thursday 16 July to Saturday 18 July. While there was a comparatively reasonable house of 66 people over the three sessions on the Thursday night, there were heavy rains on the Friday and as a result there was only one session on Saturday. [34] As the days passed, the possibility of returning to the Novelty was in doubt and so the Sestiers brought in an electrical engineer, Archibald Allan Crawford, [35] a French-speaking Scot who had worked at Volkart Brothers during that company's installation of electricity at Watson's Hotel in 1892. Crawford left the company that same year to take on the Bombay Electric Company, the office of which was nearby. Crawford arranged the hire of a portable generator from the Bombay Port Trust and on 21 July the Novelty Theatre re-opened, lights blazing in a deep arch at the entrance.

Finally, the Cinématographe Lumière could be experienced in the best possible environment. But Sestier, most likely to honour the agreement with Mercanton or possibly because The Novelty was booked for another purpose, still alternated sessions between Watson's Hotel and The Novelty until the 28 July when the Cinématographe Lumière was moved permanently to The Novelty. Sessions by this time were reduced to one or two per evening instead of four-to-five, even though The Novelty was obviously accessible to a broader demographic. [36]

It is significant to note that the Cinématographe Lumière had no audience for any of its sessions on the nights of the 22nd and 25th of July at Watson's Hotel. Bad weather would likely have been the culprit for lack of attendance, as meteorological reports of the time tell of heavy rains and wind speeds up to 50kph. But if the weather were the only cause then there would not have been any audiences at either venue throughout that week. Nor would there have been audiences at the Novelty on 28 July when Bombay had battered down because of a cyclone, and yet 93 rupees were taken across two sessions. [37]

Another explanation for the lack of attendance at Watson's Hotel is that a live comedy act by Carl Gunnery had begun there, which may have distracted audiences. [38] Both the weather and Carl Gunnery's live act would have contributed to keeping the public away from Cinématographe Lumière. But what needs to be remembered is that the Cinématographe Lumière was at its best when films were projected onto a large screen with an uninterrupted view, and in a comfortable and amenable environment. These, The Novelty provided, and the public responded:

By desire of a large number of residents, who, in spite of bad weather, have gone to see the Lumière cinematographe, the patentee has obtained a fresh lease of the Novelty Theatre. [39] The Cinematographe is giving good results at the Novelty and Mons. Seister [sic] deserves the patronage of our Bombay public. [40]

Although this wonderful invention has been on view in Bombay for some weeks now it continues to draw fairly good audiences night after night at the Novelty Theatre. [41]

Comment [A58]: Is there even the slightest shred of evidence for this assertion? And of what relevance is it?

Comment [A59]: Especially considering that Mme Sestier was so good at English.

Comment [A60]: Or likely not. Did Soudy speak French?

Comment [A61]: Did any notice or advertisement say that they were "closing" at Watson's Hotel?

Comment [A62]: Who said? If the electricity supply was faulty, if they were electric lights they might not have worked either.

Comment [A63]: Where's the evidence for this?

Comment [A64]: There was only one session on 18 July because there was a show by Carl Gunnery at 9:30 pm.

Comment [A65]: Has the author read the newspaper articles of mid July 1896?

Comment [A66]: What is the evidence for this?

Comment [A67]: Where is the evidence?

Comment [A68]: Not quite what is in the newspaper report.

Comment [A69]:

Comment [A70]:

Comment [A71]: There were never more than four screenings on any one day.

Comment [A72]: Nothing is "obvious" in this twaddle.

Comment [A73]:

All who have not seen this truly wonderful exhibition are recommended to visit the Theatre, both Europeans and Native alike. [42]

How the public responded is evidenced by the final box office takings of 4706.80 Francs. [43]

As to the composition of audiences, it is worth noting that from 19 July the Sestiers sought exposure in at least two dual language newspapers, [44] [Fig 5] and in early August had reached out to non-Europeans in English language papers, as typified by the following example from *The Times of India* on 5 August 1896:

It is to be hoped that our Parsee and native friends, who perhaps are unaware of this unique and excellent show, will make up their minds to give a treat to themselves and to the members of their families that can rarely be equaled.

[Fig.5] [Cinematographe] 19 July 1896, *Kaiser-i-Hind*. Courtesy Mme Petitbois, Messers Sestier et Jeune. [MARIUS SESTIER COLLECTION] NFSA 799531

Comment [A74]: The newspaper clipping shown in this image is upside down!

The day before, 4 August, the Sestiers had also organised four sandwich board porters to walk around Bombay and promote the Cinématographe Lumière in Gujerati or Marathi languages. [45]

Changes to the presentation were made approximately 20 days before the Sestiers would close their tour. There were no further presentations at Watson's Hotel after 25 July, and to increase conviviality and, of course, audience numbers at the Novelty Theatre for the remaining presentations, the Sestiers made purchases of various items such as plumes of feathers, fresh water and, for two sessions, snake charmers. Audiences had apparently been calling for greater value:

Comment [A75]: There is no evidence that the referred-to purchases were used at the Novelty Theatre.

It has often been suggested that the exhibition of the Cinematographe might be made even more attractive than they are if they were interspersed with some other form of entertainment. [46]

Comment [A76]: Only in the mind of the author.

On 8 August, three special sessions were advertised (which turned out to be four) in which Soundy & Co music store employee Frederick Seymour Dove (1863-1920) was to play music. From around 1890 onwards, Dove was recognised as Bombay's finest pianist and had much experience in performance and accompaniment. But he was not engaged to accompany the films, as this would interfere with the narration, but to play between screenings. [47]

Comment [A77]: I give up annotating this crap ...

The Bombay Gazette on 13 August described the four sessions as:

a distinct success. The selections of music played under the direction of Mr F. Seymour Dove very appropriate to the realistic character of the spectacle presented on the canvas.

In these last weeks of the tour, an increase in the number of films screened would have drawn bigger audiences, but it was the addition of music (especially on the final three nights which showed record box office takings) that proved to be a game changer. Incorporating musical performance into the film program shifted the 'marvel of the century' from the realm of science to the more profitable arena of popular entertainment.

But what about the price of tickets, was it necessary for Sestier to set a standard ticket price at 1 rupee? The admission price of 1 rupee has been considered discriminatory towards Indian nationals. However, a comparison with other contemporaneous ticket prices is revealing, particularly in view of the claim by Erik Barnouw and Subrahmanyam Krishnaswamy, in the book *Indian Film* (1963), that Sestier set the benchmark for all future film box office in India. They also assert that the Lumière brothers and their operators had an arrangement allowing the operators to set their own ticket prices. [48]

The following are theatrical events advertised in *The Bombay Gazette* that were concurrent with the Sestiers' time in Bombay. They show that staggered pricing was an established practice before the arrival of the Cinématographe Lumière:

* 29 June 1896 for 2-3 July. Miss Annie May Abbott aka The Little Georgia Magnet at the Tivoli Theatre: Rupees 3, 2 or 8 annas

* 6 July 1896 for 9 July. Grand Masonic Concert at the Town Hall: Rupees 3, 2, or 1

* 18 July 1896. Mr Carl S Gunnery at Watson's Esplanade Hotel: Rupees 3 and 2

* 14 August 1896 for 20 August. The Thespian Club at the Novelty Theatre: Rupees 3, 2 or 1

The comparison makes clear that the ticket price of 1 rupee at Watson's Hotel represented a substantial discount. Even when the Cinématographe Lumière moved to The Novelty Theatre, ticket prices of 2 rupees, 1 rupee and 8 annas represented a one-third reduction on prices for other events. The Sestiers had also introduced a budget ticket price of 4 annas.

There are several points to consider here. The first is that the setting of a single ticket price was standard at Cinématographe Lumière presentations around the world and was based on local market prices. The price of a ticket at the Lumière venue in Lyon was 50 centimes; in Australia the ticket price was 1 shilling for adults and 6 pence for children, which was fairly standard for amusements; and in New York patrons were charged 50 cents or 25 cents depending on the location of seating.

Second, Sestier's prices represented substantial discounts and made good business sense in having to adapt to the sub-continent summer conditions. In 1896, drought conditions prevailed and many of Bombay's inhabitants moved to cooler mountain climates. A reduction in price was a way to entice inhabitants out of their homes in stifling heat, especially at night. But the Sestiers were not losing money as, at the time, 1 rupee was worth 1 franc 40 centimes, almost three times the 50 centimes charged in Lyon. [49] This meant a good return could be delivered even if audience attendance in Bombay was lower in comparison to elsewhere in the world.

Third, admission prices may not have been the reason for the lack of attendance by Indian nationals. At that time, Indian nationals rarely engaged in activities beyond the home that were not religious and thus necessarily segregated, or traditional such as theatrical presentations of classic Indian tales. Socialising was often linked to religious ritual and the caste system (and included specific dietary requirements). Going out to a non-sectarian public event was fraught with the potential for religious and class contamination. [50]

The Bombay season of Cinématographe Lumière closed on 15 August due to the need to return the generator to the Port Trust. After a short trip to Poona (Pune) [51] Marius and Marie-Rose Sestier went on to Colombo the capital of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) to resume their journey to Australia. But in Bombay, nothing! That is, there was no other film activity for at least a year after their departure. There was no other projecting device, no one advocated an Edison, Paul, Demeny or other manufacturer to take advantage of the void when the Sestiers had left, as had happened elsewhere in the world. Bombay appeared to be done with the moving image.

It is easy to point a finger at the practices of the Sestiers for failing to inspire the locals to immediately take up the moving image. But Bombay's situation was unlike anywhere else in the world where the Cinématographe Lumière was presented. Climatic conditions cannot be overlooked as a reason for the relative poor box office takings (although it should be noted that other than the Sestiers' Australian takings there is little evidence from other Lumière representatives of their own box office earnings) [52]. When the Cinématographe Lumière sessions in Bombay were reduced to only one or two per day, this was due to an atypical period of drought, several months of hot dry conditions 24 hours a day with only a sporadic period of rain. Even when the rain did come on 9 July 1896, it was heavy and continuous for a fortnight. In Bombay's Fort precinct, which was less than three kilometres from both Watson's Esplanade Hotel and The Novelty Theatre, rainfall was reported to have been 24 inches (61cms) over the average. But overall the mean temperature was 29 degrees Celsius in the shade and 80 per cent humidity. The populace was exhausted from the heat and, as was customary during India's summer months, many moved to the cool of the mountains, thus reducing Bombay's population and the potential audience for the Cinématographe. [53]

If all of this added up to a difficult market within which to work, the situation worsened as the unusual drought conditions caused vermin populations to explode, and without the regular heavy monsoon rains to wash away the city's filth, the spread of bubonic plague had commenced. In the last weeks of the Sestiers' stay in August 1896, there was a 20 per cent increase in deaths

Comment [A78]: There is no mention of a generator, let alone one from the Bombay Port Trust, in any source.

Comment [A79]: "relatively".

Comment [A80]: So how can the Bombay box office takings be considered relatively poor?

Comment [A81]: It was monsoon time, and there were record rainfalls in the Bombay area.

Comment [A82]: The Esplanade Hotel was in the Fort area of Bombay.

across Bombay. Fear of contracting the disease was escalating even though the official number of deaths was not recorded until late September.

After the Sestiers had left, both the local and foreign press reported that widespread panic had set in and thousands were leaving the city. As a measure of the fear and danger of contracting the disease, it was specifically noted that the staff and management of Watson's Hotel had departed. Shops, markets, offices and clubs lost their staff and customers. All dwellings, offices, public spaces had to be kept meticulously clean. Movement of people in and out of the city was restricted and everyone had to be given an all clear before they could proceed. By January 1897, Bombay was barely populated. When the emergency was finally declared to be under control on 27 August 1897, of the 12,795 cases recorded, 10,813 had died. The visitation of bubonic plague had to have played a significant role in stymying the dissemination of the Cinématographe Lumière in India at that time. [54]

As daily life resumed once the spread of bubonic plague was contained, so too did public entertainments. There are a number of significant connections that point to how the influence of the Sestiers' tour of the Cinématographe Lumière extended beyond their stay.

In July 1896 when Salvatore Colonnello began as the Sestiers' interpreter, so did his immersion in all things cinema. But the Colonnellos were not the only Italians in Bombay. The Sestiers frequented a high-class bakery on Medows Street run by Felice Cornaglia. In October 1907, just over a decade after the Sestiers had left Bombay, Salvatore Colonnello and a member of the Cornaglia family combined their interests to establish the Excelsior Cinématographe, a tent show on the Maidan. Using their insider contacts in Bombay's municipal government, they successfully allayed concerns raised over public safety in Bombay's cinema tent shows, particularly around the issue of fire. So popular were their tent shows that the Excelsior Cinématographe became the target of a take-over bid by the Excelsior Cinematograph Syndicate led by A. R. Bilimoria. On 28 May 1910, the Excelsior Cinema opened at The Novelty Theatre with Salvatore Colonnello, recognised for his vast experience in distribution and exhibition, as its manager. [55] [Fig. 6]

[Fig. 6] For many years the Novelty alternated between film shows and live performance. The Novelty Cinematographe. Postcard c. 1907-1910. Private Collection.

Comment [A83]: This image shows the Novelty Theatre after it was rebuilt in 1909, long after Sestier was in town.

Arthur Francis Soundy, booking agent for the Novelty Theatre and owner of the Soundy & Co music store, had a personal interest in photography, having run a controversial natural colour photography competition in 1865. [56] But it was his son, Harry Clifton (1863-1922), who was the more prominent photographer in the family. In 1895, he had left his position as manager of Bourne and Shepherd's studio in Esplanade Street and opened Clifton & Co on Medows Street. [57] Just over a year after the Sestiers' departure, Clifton presented animated pictures for almost a month from 18 September through to 12 October 1897 using a William Charles Hughes' Moto-Scope. [58] It seems that only two films were made for the Moto-Scope, but only one of them, *Cocoanut Fair*, which relates to the Hindu Festival Narali Poornima, may have been made in Bombay when the festival was celebrated on 12 August. [59]

The second film, *Our Indian Empire*, was actually made up of two films, *Delhi, The Rome of Asia* and *Lucknow, Great Imambara Palace*, and was clearly not made in Bombay. It's doubtful that Indian nationals had made these films, but there is also no evidence that they were made by Clifton. [60] Even if they were, Clifton was not among the first to present films in Bombay since the departure of the Sestiers. That was P. A. Stewart in January 1897. [61] The same can be said of Bengal-based photographer Albert Adolf Meztker who, on 25 August 1897, presented a program of tinted Queen Victoria Jubilee Procession films at the Framjee Cowasjee Hall, an educational institution. [62]

However, at the bottom of an advertisement in *The Bombay Gazette* on 22 September, it reads that Clifton was an "Agent for Films and Projecting Machines. Films Developed and Printed",

which indicates he may also have made films. *Cocoanut Fair* therefore being made twelve days prior to opening in Bombay. In late October, Clifton's father, Arthur Francis Soudy, presented a Grand Exhibition of Animated Photographs at The Novelty projected by an unknown machine, perhaps taking over from his son for a few nights. [63] There are no details available on how well any of these presentations were patronised to determine the uptake amongst the population. But combined they mark the beginning of continuous regular programming of the moving image in Bombay.

When the plague was said to be under control, as noted above, Harry Clifton and his father Arthur Francis Soudy [Fig.7] began screening films as soon as it was permitted and safe to do so. Although Clifton does not appear to have continued after October 1897, as manager of The Novelty Theatre, Soudy frequently screened films until the theatre's refurbishment began in 1907. [64] One of Soudy's more interesting bookings was the magician Carl Hertz, who incorporated film presentations into his magic act. Included were films of the Melbourne Cup, possibly from 1896 but more likely 1897, and of Indian-born cricketer Prince Ranjitsinjhi, who had been filmed in Sydney at the end of 1897. The films made in 1897 were shot using the Cinématographe Lumière, once owned by Sestier. [65]

[Fig. 7] Arthur Francis Soudy (1836-1911). Courtesy Sylvia Murphy.

But Arthur Soudy, his son Harry Clifton and Salvatore Colonnello were not the only ones in Bombay in 1896 to be attracted to the moving image. There was also photographer Harishchandra Sakharam Bhatvadekar (1868-1958), better known as Save Dada. The Sestiers' most significant impact on a national film industry can be traced to Save Dada. He went to the Novelty Theatre sometime after 27 July 1896, and he was so fascinated by the moving image that he purchased a Lumière Cinématographe in or soon after May 1897 when they became available for sale to the public. Although dates are blurry, Dada is credited as the first Indian national to successfully make and screen actuality films. According to various texts, he set up and filmed a wrestling demonstration at Bombay's Hanging Gardens between two famous wrestlers, Krishna Nahvi and Pundalik Dada. The film is simply titled *Wrestlers*. Another of Dada's films, *Man and Monkey*, shows the training of circus animals. Both films were screened at Bombay's Gaiety Theatre. [66]

In December 1901, Dada used his Cinématographe Lumière to make what are thought to be the first Indian-produced news films. The films, as described by Madan Gaur in *Other Side of the Coin, An Intimate Study of the Indian Film Industry*, are "The landing of Sir Muncherjee M. Bhownagree", "The return to India of Senior Wrangler R[ughnath].P[urshotum]. Paranjpe" and "The Renovation of a Parsi fire temple". [67] Dada also went on to film the 1902 Imperial Durbar, an official mass assembly organised to celebrate the Coronation of Edward VII as Emperor of India. There is no indication that he made anything other than topical, actuality or news films. But by the time he sold his Cinématographe Lumière in 1903, Save Dada had made a total of 20 local films. [68]

If Marius Sestier is to be criticised for his choice of venues (particularly Watson's Hotel), ticket prices and publicity campaigns in Bombay, it cannot be because of his lack of business acumen or misunderstanding of both the commercial and creative potential of the Cinématographe Lumière. To the contrary, Sestier exhibited a razor-sharp ability to adapt to changing circumstances – whether because of the unavailability of venues, inappropriate venues, electricity failures, harsh weather, or an epidemic – in a populous and ethnically diverse city such as Bombay. The impact of the Cinématographe Lumière on film production, distribution and exhibition in Bombay may not have been immediately perceived after the Sestiers had left, but the development of a national cinema in the years to come can still be traced back to the connections the Sestiers made in July 1896. This was their legacy.

* * *

Afterword

At the start of this article I described the unfortunate news that the films Marius Sestier shot in Bombay were ruined when they were shipped back to France. I believe it is important to reflect on what the subjects of those films might have been. From our knowledge of typical Lumière films from 1896, we can imagine street scenes, the Apollo Bunder and the surrounds of the harbour, the religious ceremonies practised on the Maidan, the trains at Victoria Station or Poona, and perhaps the Poona races.

However, amongst Sestiers' papers are records of expenses for the upkeep of the Cinématographe Lumière and for filming. [69] There are three items which could relate to filming in Bombay and India:

1. Charmeurs 2 Séances: 6 rupees. Refers to the snake charmers hired to appear at the Novelty Theatre. It would make sense for Sestier to have filmed them.
2. Colombo frais: 10 rupees. The Sestiers arrived in Colombo 27 August to wait for their connection to Australia on 2 September. Costs for the Cinématographe Lumière in Colombo indicate either they screened films or had made films.
3. Fête Cocos dépense: 8 rupees. This refers to the Coconut Festival or Fair, which took place in Bombay on 22 August 1896. Perhaps the film *Coconut Fair*, which was screened in 1897, was inspired by a version filmed by Sestier. Or, given that *Coconut Fair* was made by persons unknown, perhaps this film was Sestier's, which for some reason was not included in his shipment to France and had survived.

Also included in Sestier's records of expenses are 9 rupees for the postal services which may have been for the films from Bombay on Friday 31 July 1896. [70] Research shows that between 1895 and 1899, "Foreign Parcels" were sent at a rate of 4 annas (or a quarter rupee) for 40 grams. Assuming the 9 rupees were all for parcel freight, then Sestier had shipped almost six kilos of film. Of interest here is a method of postage called "Parcel Packet" which was defined as "an article posted in a wrapping or covering, the ends of which are not closed against inspection of its contents". [71] This might explain why the package came apart at customs, or, and more likely, custom officials simply opened something they found unusual. It's likely that the history of the Sestiers' time in Bombay would have been written differently had customs not opened the package and the films survived.

Notes:

- [1] Lumière to Sestier, 24 September 1896 [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275, [10].
- [2] Jean-Claude Seguin and Michelle Aubert eds. *La Production Cinématographique des Frères Lumière* (Lyon: Aubert et Seguin, BIFI, 1995), p. 415.
- [3] "Living Photography", *The Times of India*, 7 July 1896. The title of this essay is taken from the first sentence of this article, which is without the word 'almost'.
- [4] Jack Cato, *The Camera in Australia* (Victoria: Georgian House, 1955), pp. 114-117. If nothing else, Cato's claims have at least provided an impetus to unearth hard evidence that would back up his claims.
- [5] John Baxter, *The Australian Cinema* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1970), pp. 2-4.
- [6] October 2, 2015, Vieux Comptoir, rue des Lavandières-Saint-Opportune, Paris, in conversation with the author, Sestier family member, Bernard Jeune, reported that the Lumières considered the Sestiers to be the most honest operators, particularly in regard to financial returns.
- [7] John Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England*. (London: David & Charles 1976), pp. 201-221. The duration between the close of Sestier's stay and the beginning of local production is in comparison to other countries. For example, in England Trewey's presentation of the Cinématographe Lumière in February 1896 had been preceded by R.W Paul and Birt Acres making films for the Kinetoscope, Paul's Theatrograph and Acres Kinetic Camera amongst others.
- [8] Examples include: FitzSimons, Trish and Pat Laughren and Dugald Williamson, *Australian*

Comment [A84]: Item number 2 is for Colombo, which isn't in India.

Comment [A85]: This is fantasy. In no source is it stated or implied that snake charmers were hired (by Sestier or anyone else) to appear at the Novelty Theatre.

Comment [A86]: They arrived at Colombo on 29 August.

Comment [A87]: They departed from Colombo on 31 August.

Comment [A88]: What is the evidence for this assertion?

Comment [A89]: Speculation. Logic goes out the window in the rest of this paragraph.

Comment [A90]:

Comment [A91]:

Comment [A92]: What films? The Coconut Fair took place on 22 August, three weeks later.

Comment [A93]: Distortion. No source says this; all that is known is that "Négatif ouvert Douane" – opened, not came apart.

Comment [A94]: The first sentence of the newspaper article does have the word "almost". And the newspaper has "discovery", not "invention".

Comment [A95]: Such research was done years ago, and can easily be found with a Web search.

Comment [A96]: LOL. "Look, everybody, I've been to Paris." The venue name is incorrect, and there are two errors in the spelling of the street name.

Documentary: History, Practices and Genres, Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 33-34. Ganti, Tejaswini, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema*, New York: Routledge, 2004, p. 6. Shirley, Graham and Brian Adams, *Australian Cinema, the First Eighty Years*, Angus & Robertson, 1983, p. 7. A common thread throughout many descriptions of these first screenings in India is that Watson's Hotel barred Indians. However, research shows this was not the case. The Hotel was certainly elite but all nationalities were welcome from its opening in 1871 through to its sale in 1885 when it was purchased by the Nizar Sirdar Abdul Haqq Diler Jang Bahadur of Hyderabad, a Muslim. The Nizam refurbished the hotel and it remained in his family until its sale in the 1910s. "The Esplanade (Watson's) Hotel", *The Times of India*, February 1, 1871; "Building", *The Architect*, April 22, 1871; "Wills and Bequests", *The Standard*, January 22, 1898; "Sales by Auction", *The Times of India*, January 8, 1910. Nergish Sunavala, "Lecture on old Bombay hotels debunks myths, unearths scandals" *The Times of India*, April 21 2016. Accessed October 15, 2016
<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/Lecture-on-old-Bombay-hotels-debunks-myths-unearths-scandals/articleshow/51929064.cms>

[9] In his memoir "I Can Take It" Cato admitted to hero worshipping Barnett and appears to have taken all Barnett's claims at face value. However, it is worth noting that one of Barnett's oldest friends, Aaron Blashki, reveals in his memoir that in 1896 Barnett was in debt and almost broke. Blashki also speaks about Barnett's tendency to sweeping statements and self-aggrandisement. *Blashkiana: The Memoirs of Aaron Blashki JP (1860-1938)*. (Victoria: Australian Jewish Historical Society, 2005), p. 67.

[10] "Personalities", *Photographic Review of Reviews (Sydney)*, 1 July 1894, p. 9.

[11] "Auctions", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 September 1896, p. 2.

[12] *Melbourne Punch*, 4 June 1896, p. 81; and *The Bulletin*, 6 June 1896, p. 8.

[13] Streeton to Barnett 1896. Papers of W.H. Gill, 1896-1939, MLMSS 285.

[14] "Citizen Jamsetji", accessed 15 October 2016,

<http://www.tata.com/aboutus/articlesinside/CitizenJamsetji>; and "10 Things to Know About the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel", accessed 15 October 2016, article by Rachel Lopez, posted 5 January 2012, <https://www.vogue.in/content/10-things-know-about-taj-mahal-hotel/#s-cust0>

[15] *Australasian Photographic Review*, 20 May 1897, p. 27.

[16] Bernard Jeune, e-mail message to author, January 13, 2012. Puech family documents were sent concerning Marie-Rose's prizes at school including in English: Couvent de L'Assomption: 1ère Division, Anglais, Prix, Mérité, par Marie Rose Puech, Nîmes, 24 Juillet 1889; Jean-Claude Seguin, "Marius Sestier, Operateur Lumière Inde-Australie: Juillet 1896-Mai 1897", 1895 Juin (16) 1994, pp. 34-58.

[17] *Album de la Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes 1895*. (Paris: Administration Centrale, 1895); "Accident to the Yarra: The New Australian Service" *The Times of India*, August 23, 1895, p. 6.

[18] Tindall, Gillian, *City of Gold: The Biography of Bombay*. London: Temple Smith, 1982, p. 17. Tindall likens ancient and modern Bombay to New York, London and Tokyo as one of the world's powerhouses for trade and as a cultural melting pot.

[19] Rittaud-Hutinet, Jacques, *Le Cinéma des Origines: Les Frères Lumière et Leurs Opérateurs*. France: Champ Vallon, 1985, Part 1. The first part discusses methods of seeking operators and training them.

[20] *Thacker's Indian Directory 1895*. Calcutta: Thacker, Spink and Co, 1895, 1182; Kathryn Hansen, "Parsi Theatre and The City: Locations, patrons, audiences", *Sarai Reader 2002: The Cities of Everyday Life*, (2002): 47, accessed July 2, 2016. "Photography by Electric Light". *The Times of India*. April 24, 1895, p. 5.

[21] Jean-Claude Seguin, "Marius Sestier, Operateur Lumière Inde-Australie: Juillet 1896-Mai 1897", 1895 Juin (16) 1994, pp. 34-58.

[22] Frédéric Guy, ed. *Indicateur lyonnais Henry: annuaire commercial, administratif et*

Comment [A97]: 1887

Comment [A98]: Errors here; an understanding of the meanings of these names would help.

Comment [A99]: Blashki makes no such revelation, nor implies it. He doesn't even give dates in his discussion about Barnett.

Comment [A100]: Incomplete reference.

Comment [A101]: Wrong year to refer to because the relevant ships' courses were changed at the start of 1896.

Comment [A102]: Accessed a Web page? What is the URL?

judiciaire de la ville de Lyon et du département du Rhône. Lyon: 1886-1928; *Le Progrès Illustré, supplément littéraire du Progrès de Lyon*. December 11, 1892, 7; Marius Sestier Brevet 2835, 5 November 1892 and Brevet 3107, 14 April 1894.

[23] “Bombay Today: The Living Photography”, *The Advocate of India*, July 2, 1896; Seguin, “Marius Sestier”, p. 57; Pat Lovett. *Journalism in India*. (Calcutta: The Banna Publishing Co, 1900), 27-30, 77-87; [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275 [3];

[24] “The Gaiety Theatre”, *The Times of India*, 6 November, 1881, p. 5.

[25] “Living Pictures in the Kinetoscope”, *The Times of India*, December 7, 1895, p. 5. A shop front had been the venue for Edison’s Kinetoscope when it was exhibited at 65 Esplanade Road. Batteries were used to power the machines as wired-in electricity was hard to locate.

[26] The Swiss born married couple Louis Mercanton (1855-1905) and Marie-Emilie Lozeron (1853-1895) were often the focus of high praise such as “The Waterloo Cup: The Draw”. *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, March 13, 1895: “The dinner was served in the splendid style one has been accustomed to on similar occasions at the Adelphi. It would, therefore, be superfluous to mention here that Mr. Mercanton, the popular manager, rivalled all his previous efforts in that direction”; After Marie-Emilie’s death in May 1895, Mercanton took a job as manager at Watson’s Hotel arriving in Bombay in December 1895. It’s interesting to note that Mercanton was the father of the great film producer and director Louis Mercanton. At the time of the Sestier’s visit Mercanton junior had completed school in England and may have been visiting his father in Bombay. The suggestion that the young man was inspired by the Cinématographe Lumière presented by the Sestiers is raised; 1891, United Kingdom Census RG12/2195, a record of the Mercanton’s son at Abbotsholme a progressive school in Derbyshire; [Marius Sestier Collection] 799531 [30].

[27] “The Esplanade (Watson’s Hotel)”, *The Times of India*, February 1, 1871. Describes the intention of the Hotel to be “a place of favourite resort”.

[28] “Living Photography”, *The Times of India*, July 7 1896.

[29] [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275 [3] There are no box office receipts given for 7 July 1896 the first night of screening. Rupees 784 is marked against the first night in the column for Receipts. However, this Rs784 is referred to as Capital from there onwards. It would seem very odd that 784 people paying 1 rupee each attend the 5 sessions of the opening night and only 37 people the following night. It’s possible this first screening was used as a preview session, perhaps by invitation as was done in Australia as reported in “Lumière’s Cinématographe”, *The Daily Telegraph*, September 26, 1896.

[30] “Exhibition of the Cinématographe” *The Bombay Gazette*, July 9, 1896, p. 5.

[31] “The Cinématographe”, *The Bombay Gazette*, July 11, 1896, p. 5.

[32] [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275 [3, 8] There are several lines for fees paid to “Colonello” for translation services. Salvatore Colonello (18?-19?), was the son of Camillo Colonnello. The Colonnello family arrived in Bombay in the 1880s where they opened an imported food business at 105 Medows Street. In 1890 Salvatore was in court involved in an obscene postcard and photographic sales scandal and in the newspaper report of Times of India 23 August 1890 Salvatore is revealed to be a French speaker. After the scandal Camillo Colonello disowned his son in a public statement. Salvatore was one of several siblings and until the Cinématographe Lumière arrived his career path was unsettled.

[33] [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275, [3, 4]. It is notable that there is no account line for the July 14, 1896 which would have indicated an estimated audience.

[34] [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275, [3, 4]. Against the dates July 17 and 18 are indicated “pluie” (rain) and “1 Séance” (one session or performance).

[35] [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275, [3, 7, 9]; *Who’s who India*, (Calcutta: Tyson & Company, 1927), 58. Archibald Allan Crawford (1863-1952) Born in Edinburgh into an artistic and musical family, his father, William Crawford A.R.S.A, a portrait painter of some distinction, and his mother, Theodosia Yonge Müller, a pianist from a musical family. Crawford worked and

Comment [A103]: Where are the sources for the other venues referred to?

Comment [A104]: This is an incomplete reference.

Comment [A105]: The analysis in this paragraph is naïve.

Comment [A106]: There were 4 sessions on the opening night.

Comment [A107]: Informative.

Comment [A108]: Superfluous.

Comment [A109]: Not when most attendees had their ticket price refunded.

trained in Scotland as a mechanical engineer and he graduated as an electrical engineer from the Zurich Polytechnikum after which he worked in Italy and Russia; “Electrical Appliances”, *The Times of India*, May 5, 1890 and “Bombay Art Society”, *The Times of India*, February 3, 1891, “Electric Lighting in Bombay”, *The Times of India* September 8, 1894, “Cotton Fires”, *The Times of India* May 19, 1914.

[36] “The Marvel of the Century”, *Bombay Gazette*, July 22, 1896.

[37] “The Weather”, *Bombay Gazette*, July 23, 1896, records 2 to 3 inches falling on 22 July in the Esplanade and Fort districts respectively. “The Weather”, *Bombay Gazette*, July 27, 1896, records 3 to 2 inches falling on 26 July in the Esplanade and Fort districts respectively. “The Weather”, *Bombay Gazette*, July 29, 1896, records winds speeds for Bombay of between 79 and 83 MPH for July 28.

[38] “Carl Gunnery”, *Bombay Gazette*, July 20, 1896.

[39] “The Cinématographe”, *The Bombay Gazette*, July 27, 1896

[40] “The Cinématographe”, *The Times of India*, July 29, 1896

[41] “The Cinématographe”, *The Bombay Gazette*, August 8, 1896, p. 5

[42] [Marius Sestier Collection] 799531 [33].

[43] Using the contemporary exchange rate this amount approximates £187.00, or in today’s money around \$AUD3200.00. [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275 [3]. Seguin, 48; [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275 [6, 23]; [Marius Sestier Collection] 799531 [34, 38].

[44] *Kaiser-i-Hind* 19 July 1896, *Bombay Samachar* 27 July 1896 [Marius Sestier Collection] [India Press Clippings: Scrapbook], 1896. NFSA No 799531 [35, 36]

[45] Seguin, 48; [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275 [6, 23]; [Marius Sestier Collection] 799531 [34, 38].

[46] [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275 [7, 24]; [No heading], *The Bombay Gazette*, August 11, 1896, 4; April 14, 2011, Grenoble, France, in conversation with the author, Madame Marie Rose Gavend, nee Sestier, said her great grandmother, Marie Rose Puech complained, “We lived above but down below were snakes”. Mme Gavend did not know to which country was referred but the reference may have been to India’s famous snake charmers.

[47] Frederick Seymour Dove (1862-1920), the eldest son of Frederick Dove and Sarah Anne Seymour, two London families steeped in music and piano making, arrived in Bengal where he married Amy Jane Westwood in 1887 and a year later their daughter Gladys Amy was born. Three years later the couple had settled in Bombay and Dove began work as a clerk at Soundy & Co. “The Scottish Orphanage Concert in the Town Hall”, *The Times of India*, February 14, 1890, p. 4, “Miss Maggie Ford’s Entertainment”, *The Times of India*, July 7, 1890, p. 4. His first public performances were noted respectively as showing “care and attention worth listening to.” and “.a complete master of the instrument”.

[48] Barnouw, Erik and S. Krishnaswamy. *Indian Film*. (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1963); Rittaud-Hutinet, Jacques. *Le Cinéma des Origines: Les Frères Lumière et Leurs Opérateurs*, (France: Champ Vallon, 1985).

[49] [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275 [3]. This is the Sestiers’ own estimated exchange rate.

[50] Frank F. Conlon, “Dining Out in Bombay”, in *Consuming Modernity: Public Culture in a South Asian World*, ed. Carol A Brekenridge. (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), pp. 91-127; Tindall, *City of Gold*, pp. 17-39; Jim Masselos. “Spare Time and Recreation: Changing Behaviour Patterns in Bombay at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century”, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, (6/2) 1983, pp. 34-57. With hundreds of different cultures in India the complexities of entertainment, relaxation and personal time is beyond the scope of this essay.

[51] [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275 [9]. What the Sestiers did in Poona or how long they stayed is unknown.

[52] “Meteorological Observations”, *The Bombay Gazette*, July 7 to August 15, 1896; Seguin, “Marius Sestier”, pp. 56-57.

Comment [A110]: “and” if the following part of the sentence is to make sense.

Comment [A111]: “and”

Comment [A112]: ROTFL. In the referred-to newspaper article there are no minimum and maximum wind speeds reported, though the average wind speed is noted as 27 mph. The minimum and maximum temperatures in degrees Fahrenheit are listed as 78.8 and 82.7 (respectively). Sustained winds with speeds in this range of values in mph would have blown half of Bombay into the sea.

Comment [A113]: So the statement is of no value.

Comment [A114]:

- [53] “Meteorological Observations”, *The Bombay Gazette*, July 7 to August 15, 1896.
- [54] R, Nathan, ed., “Reported plague seizures and deaths in Bombay Presidency and Goa from the beginning of outbreak up to the 27th August 1897. Appendix III: Statistical Statements”, *The Plague in India, 1896, 1897, Vol II Appendices I to VI*, (Simla: Indian Civil Services, Government of India, Home Department), 1898, pp. 109-113.
- [55] “Amusements: “Excelsior” Cinematograph: The Greatest of All Living Picture Shows”. *The Bombay Gazette*, October 11. 1907 “Local and Provincial: To-Day’s Engagements: The Week’s Calendar: Excelsior Cinématographe”, *The Times of India*, October 15, 1907, 5; “Excelsior Cinématographe”, *The Times of India*, May 24, 1910; Kaushik Bhaumik, “Cinématographe to Cinema: Bombay 1896-1928”, *Bioscope: South Asian Screen Studies*, 2 (1) (2011): 47, accessed March 4, 2011; Chinoy, Pioneering in Indian business. 52-55. The Excelsior Cinématograph Syndicate included members of the City of Bombay Building Co including Ardeshir R. Bilimora and Sultan Chinoy. Other members included business and municipal leaders Fazalbhoy Meherally Chinoy, Pallonji Edulji and A.M. Madan.
- [56] “A Challenge”, *The Times of India*, August 15, 1865; “Photographs in Natural Colours: To the Editor of *The Times of India*”, *The Times of India*, August 22, 1865, p. 2; Sylvia Murphy, e-mail messages to author, March 19, 2009. In correspondence between 16 March and 27 May 2009 Sylvia Murphy, descendant of Arthur Francis Soundy, has graciously shared her findings with me. Soundy’s activity with all things theatrical, musical and photographic since his arrival in Bombay in the 1850s puts him in the forefront of the Sestiers’ key associates
- [57] “Clifton & Co, Photographers” (Bombay), accessed 5 June, 2016. Father and son seem likely to have had a more significant role than indicated in this essay.
- [58] “Animated Photographs-Living Pictures: Clifton and Co”, *The Times of India*, September 18, 1897; Hopwood, Henry V, *Living Pictures: Their History, Photo-Production and Practical Working*, London: Optician & Photographic Trades Review, 1899, pp. 139-141; “Advertisement: W.C. Hughes, Specialist in Optical Projection”, *The Optical Magic Lantern Journal and Photographic Enlarger*, 8.100 1897: xix; Who’s Who of Victorian Cinema: William Charles Hughes and Who’s Who of Victorian Cinema: John Alfred Prestwich <http://www.victorian-cinema.net/prestwich> The Moto-Scope may have taken 65mm and 35mm film stock. For some information about W.C. Hughes and his projection systems.
- [59] “Cocoanut Day”, *The Times of India*, August 13, 1897, p. 4. Coconuts are thrown into the sea as an offering to Lord Varuna to calm the seas after monsoon.
- [60] Rangoonwalla, *Indian Filmography*, [1] and Gaur, Madan, *Other side of the coin* [321]
- [61] “Stewart’s Vitagraph [sic]”, *The Bombay Gazette*, January 5, 1897, p. 3. “Local and Provincial: Stewart’s Vitagraph” *The Times of India*, January 6, 1897, p. 3.
- [62] “Living Pictures: Extraordinary: The Jubilee Procession”, *The Times of India*, August 25, 1897, p. 2.
- [63] “Novelty Theatre: Grand Exhibitions of Animated Photographs”, *The Times of India*, October 20, 1897.
- [64] “The King of Cards”, *The Times of India*, January 13, 1898; “Public Notifications. Novelty Theatre: The Delroy Season”, *The Times of India*, February 2, 1900. This advert for Ada Delroy lists the Bioscope as a featured act. Of note is that manager James Bell purchased a Cinématographe Lumière in Australia in 1897 as per “General Gossip”, *The Referee*, May 12, 1897; “Public Notifications: Novelty Theatre: Grand Cinematograph Exhibition”, *The Times of India*, August 23, 1901.
- [65] Sally Jackson, “Do Frenchmen play cricket?” July 3, 2014, <https://www.nfsa.gov.au/latest/do-frenchmen-play-cricket> Sally Jackson, “Georges Boivin: Paris, 1859-1940”, http://www.grimh.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&layout=edit&id=2845&lang=fr
- [66] Firoze Rangoonwalla, *Indian Filmography: Silent & Hindi Films (1897-1969)*, (Bombay: J.

Comment [A115]: It’s “Cinematograph” in the title of the original article.

Udeshi, 1970) and Madan Gaur, *Other side of the coin, an intimate study of the Indian film industry*. (Bombay: Trimurti Prakashan, 1973). Detail on Save Dada is elusive, including a consistent spelling of his name, the films he made and the years of production; “Lumire [sic] Cinématographe: Viewing and Projection”, accessed October 25, 2016.
<http://www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/collection/cinematography/viewingprojection/collectio nitem?id=2007-5005/1/1>

The Cinématographe Lumière which Save Dada purchased through Riley’s of London can now be found as part of the Feroze Sarosh Collection in the National Media Museum in Bradford in the United Kingdom.

[67] “Public Notifications: Novelty Theatre: Grand Cinématographe Exhibition”, *The Times of India*, August 23, 1901. The advertisement notes that local scenes will be shown. Although no attribution is made it’s possible these are some of Save Dada’s films.

[68] “For Sale”. *The Times of India*, June 1, 1903. Save Dada’s for sale advertisement for his Cinématographe Lumière.

[69] [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275, [39]

[70] [Marius Sestier Collection] 1467275, [7]

[71] Virk, Diljit Singh. *Indian Postal History, 1873-1923: Gleanings from Post Office Records*. New Delhi: Army Postal Service Association, 1991; Thacker’s Indian Directory 1895.

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