The delay proved to be one of the longest and most frustrating of Livingstone’s career as an explorer in Africa or, as he puts it in his 1870 Field Diary, “the sorest delay I ever had” (1870j:LXIX).

The nadir came when Livingstone developed flesh-eating ulcers on his feet and was forced to remain in his hut in Bambarre for 80 days, the last 20 of which he suffered from acute fever, nausea, and vomiting (1870e:X).

In other words, the delay wholly upended Livingstone’s ambitions as an Victorian explorer who had to keep moving, observing, and recording.

His world narrowed to the village of Bambarre and its inhabitants, a mixture of locally-based Africans, Arab traders, the Arabs’ followers, and Livingstone’s few attendants including Chumah, Susi, Gardener and a set of nine men from a government-run school for freed slaves in Nashik, India.

In his writings of the period, particularly the second half of 1870, Livingstone shifted from the impressionistic style that characterizes the majority of his final field diaries (1865-73) to something else.

In part, this new narrative style – especially in the 1870 Field Diary – positioned Livingstone much like Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner, condemned to retell his tale in order to account for how he, Livingstone, arrived at the present moment of stasis (1870a:[1]-[13], 1870i:XLI).

The narrative framework, in turn, took on a character akin to A Thousand and One Arabian Nights, with Livingstone layering a series of tales within the greater tale of his 1870 travels.

Finally, the delay also compelled Livingstone to take a close look at his immediate surroundings and record his observations in a way that he hadn’t since his famous first expedition to Africa (1841-56).