The overall narrative of the diary, including the scale and scope of the information that Livingstone records, grows out of his unique situation and circumstances in 1870.

On one hand, Livingstone bashes contemporary armchair explorers, i.e., “theoretical discoverers,” like W.D. Cooley and James Macqueen, who developed elaborate geographical theories by integrating the observations of others rather than engaging in their own explorations (1870c:II).

On the other, Livingstone fails to acknowledge that he himself is operating like an armchair explorer, albeit one based in Central Africa.

He dreams of traveling and exploring like the Arab traders that surround him, but a variety of circumstances have immobilized him and, as noted earlier, he devotes portions of the 1870 Field Diary to accounting for his impediments (e.g., 1870i:LIV-LV).

Yet despite such immobility, the 1870 Field Diary shows Livingstone to be very well informed about regional events and events farther afield in East Africa and elsewhere.

Additionally, the diary makes clear that each group of traders that arrives in Bambarre, from whatever direction, further enlarges Livingstone’s story of knowledge.

As a result, when Livingstone composes the Letter from Bambarre – the drafting of which coincides with the end of the 1870 Field Diary and marks the point from which Livingstone resumes his travels – he shows that the principal information gained from Waller relates to events in Britain or across the Atlantic, not Africa (Livingstone 1871c:[1]).

The scale of Livingstone’s knowledge best emerges through an enumeration of the locations from which Livingstone shares news in the 1870 Field Diary.

These locations include:

Nearby villages such as Mamohela and Kasongo (1870a:[24]-[33], 1870i:XXIX);

North along the Lualaba River to Nyangwe and beyond (1870a:[24]-[33], [41]-[45]; 1870e:X; 1870h:XIX; 1870i:XXI, LIV-LV; also see the map on 1871a: [LXXVI v.2]);

Legaland and beyond to Lake Albert (1870a:[33]-[40]; 1870h:XVII; 1870i:XXIX-XXXI, LV [v.1]; also see the map on 1870f:[XIV v.2]);

Lubaland and Lunda to the south and soutwest to Katanga (1870c:[I], 1870f: XIV [v.1], 1870i:XXI);

Ujiji and the central East African trading routes to Zanzibar (1870d:{21}-{22}; 1870e:XI; 1871b:LXXIX, LXXXI;

The areas north and northeast of Unyanyembe all the way to Buganda and Masaailand (1870f:[XIV v.2]; 1871b:LXXIX, LXXXI); and

Mecca and the Arabian Peninsula (1870i:XL, 1871b:LXXXIII).

In other words, despite being apparently stranded and isolated in Bambarre, Livingstone works with his informants to record information about vast swaths of Central and Eastern Africa and beyond.