In returning to the original, unabrdiged text of the 1870 Field Diary, the current edition thus extends the critical approach.

Yet in so doing, the edition underscores that Livingstone’s *personal* story of travel – what he and subsequent scholars have most valued – is in fact the least interesting of the many, many stories found in the diary.

From another perspective, the text unearthed by our edition highlights that a key dimension of the diary – especially from the vantage of 2017 – are the myriad direct observations Livingstone records about Central Africa and particularly Bambarre in 1870-71 (cf. Bridges 1977:4).

Although even the best of Livingstone’s biographers has called his writings from the period “intellectual rambling” (Ross 2002:218), reference to the 1870 Field Diary shows that Livingstone’s extended sojurn in fact produced a unique historical document – one without parallel in some ways – even among Livingstone’s own writings.

To create this record, Livingstone invented a medial narrative style that doesn’t quite map onto Bridges three stages of production (Bridges 1987:180-90) and that, as we note elsewhere, oscillates between a field diary and a journal – at least as Livingstone normally created such documents.

The record does not focus on progression since not much “happens” to Livingstone and he does not leave Bambarre till the very end of the 1870 Field Diary.

Rather, the diary rather captures the circulation of local and regional information in Bambarre, the Congo, East Africa, and beyond by layering the ideas of historical and contemporary actors onto narratives of events and recorded stories.

This immediate, kaleidescopic, and unvarnished record reflects Livingstone’s growing interest in African societies at the end of his life (Bridges 1977:6), and indeed a principal value of the 1870 Field Diary lies in the many, many details that it provides about nineteenth-century Africa (cf. Bridges 1973:165).

In short, the diary documents the encroachment of Arab traders into the Congo.

It outlines step-by-step the impact of such encroachment on local populations and their social relations.

It details complex regional dynamics and the circulation of geographical, medical, agricultural, and other such information among an array of African and Arab individuals.

Finally, it presents the African populations of Bambarre, of other neighboring villages, and from farther north in Legaland and elsewhere in the reiong not just as *passive* victims of violence, but as evolving individuals that shift from guilability, to suspcion, and finally to resistance in their interactions with the Arab traders and followers.

In other words, the diary represents a breakthrough – overlooked till now in part because it has been edited out of the historical record – in the representation of such local African populations by travelers and explorers like Livingstone.

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