Underlying complexities of origin and identity aside, Livingstone’s act (however motivated) in the 1870 Field Diary of naming the local population and fixing it in at Bambarre or more regionally has an important discursive implication.

The act enables Livingstone to introduce a key set of protagonists into his narrative, to characterize them, and to show that they live out of the world or, at Livingstone and many others after him do, to point to “the isolation in which they live” – as the fragmentary, opening phrase of the 1870 Field Diary puts it (1870a:[1], cf., e.g., Northrup 1988:19-20).

Against these protagonists, Livingstone’s diary pits the Arab traders and their followers, whom Livingstone also repeatedly distinguishes as the “Ujijians” or “Ujijian traders” (1870a:[69]; 1870e:XIII; 1870i:XXXV, XLII; 1871e:CI), thereby associating them with what would soon become the East African gateway to and easternmost edge of Tippu Tip’s Central African trading empire (see above).

In other words, working as the equivalent of a modern-day war reporter, Livingstone composes the 1870 Field Diary from a place he positions as isolated, that lacks overarching local political mechanisms to regulate affairs, and that, as noted earlier, effectively lies at the edge of the Sultan on Zanzibar’s sphere of influence.

In such a distant and lawless place, the 1870 Field Diary suggests by turns, someone who refrains from violence can be a friend of the local population (1870a:[49]), a coward (1870e:XIII), or a dependant of the Arab traders and so no friend at all.

No one underscores this last point better than Livingstone himself.

The 1870 Field Diary contains numerous instances of Livingstone turning to the Arab trader Mohamad Bogharib for aid (e.g., 1870i:XLII) and especially memorable references to the kindness of Katomba, another Arab trader, (1871e:LXXXIX-XCIV) – references that Livingstone chooses to preserve, consolidate, and elaborate in the Unyanyembe Journal (1866-72:649).

Most striking of all, Livingstone himself gifts his “double barrelled gun” (1871e:XCI) to Katomba in return for the above-cited kindness – an odd decision indeed given the endless descriptions of Arab and Arab-led violence in the 1870 Field Diary.