Yet Livingstone’s decision to visit Central Africa – the first European to do so – and his extended sojourn in Bambarre also engender a unique transformation in his composition practices as a diarist.

He beings to capture his observations about the local cultures at a level of depth and detail that distinguishes the 1870 Field Diary from the majority of the 20-odd other field diaries and notebooks that Livingstone kept on this final expedition to Africa.

In the nineteenth century, the presence of such information would have had a complex resonance with Livingstone’s contemporaries.

Its content would have satisfied professional expecations for ethnographic observations in the field, but Livingstone’s heavy reliance on informants would have undermined the credibility of his geographical pronouncements (Kennedy 2013:132, 199, cf. 158).

Roughly speaking, the diary’s presentation of such information bifurcates.

Most predictably, the diary includes a variety of ad hoc observations.

Livingstone, for instance, makes generalizations about the appearance of the population (1870a:[44]-[45]); he describes funeral rites (1870a:[1]-[6]); he discusses various religious beliefs in Manyema (1870i:XXVI); and he outlines agricultural practices (1870e:XII).

Thanks to his medical background, Livingstone also includes notes on the prescence of ailments, the use of local medicines, and the role of the traders in spreading STDs (e.g., 1870d:{19}-{21}, 1870e:X, 1870i:LXIII-LV).

At the same time, Livingstone makes a sustained effort to address bigger questions of society and history in Bambarre and Manyema more generally.

The diary opens with a series of anecdotes about regional chiefs and elsewhere includes stories about the death of the oldest son of Moenekuss (the headman of Bambarre), and describes the habits of another regional headman, Merere, and his father (1870a:[7]-[12], 1870g:{29}-{30}, 1870i:XXVIII-XXIX).

Livingstone also devotes a fair amount of attention to the structure of Manyema villages and habitations, regional trading dynamics (a topic to which he will return at length in the 1871 Field Diary), and local systems of justice (1870a:{43}-{45}, {63}-{70}; 1870j:LXVII-LXVIII).

Most interestingly, at one point Livingstone develops an annotated geneology of the house of Charura, a deceased African headman, to which geneology he, Livingstone, later returns to provide additional detail (1870k:LXXII, 1871b:LXXXII).

Such diverse narrative gestures, collectively, serve to portray Bambarre and the surrounding area as a vibrant regional location, one filled with diverse and clearly differentiated individuals, linked by a complex set of social dynamics and relationships, driven by motivations that Livingstone may not understand fully but that – the 1870 Field Diary shows – he gradually begins to recognize and delineate.

In other words, the 1870 Field Diary captures a complicated local universe in Central Africa that – whether Livingstone intends it or not – stands alondside (and whose nuances exceed) the more ideologically-driven pronouncements of victimization that the diary elsewhere projects upon it.