

Reimagining indigenous African ontological entanglement and resilience adaptation in the Anthropocene

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Abstract

Thinking about indigenous African communities has become crucially important regarding modern ontologies in the dominant tropes on resilience and the Anthropocene. Indigenous African communities today are seen by many as perhaps the most paradigmatic, generating alternative ideas regarding climate resilience and environmental adaptation in debates regarding the Anthropocene. This paper argues that reductionist modern ontology fails to fully acknowledge how indigenous African communities are productively located in the contemporary Anthropocene.

Keywords: Anthropocene; climate change; African ontology; environmentalism

Introduction

This paper examines how the indigenous African community has become significant and productively rethought within the prevailing discourses of resilience in the Anthropocene. The argument is that engagement with the Indigenous African community is important for ontological environmental relational epoch and events of the Anthropocene (Pugh & Chandler, 2021; Wakefield, 2020). This paper seeks to explain why and how contemporary thinking in the dominant tropes of resilience discourses and the Anthropocene engage with Indigenous African communities. Cutting-edge insights from disciplines such as Climatology, Geology, Philosophy, Geography, International Relations, Anthropology, Ethnography, and Visual Arts have taken up the task of thinking through the Anthropocene age (Leppard, 2018; Pugh & Chandler, 2021; Chipato & Chandler, 2022). Interestingly, critical scrutiny of the epoch and events of Anthropocene resilience have tended to focus on top-down imaginaries of governance practice to challenge established categories and critiques today. However, critical scholarship has not offered interdisciplinary perspectives on how African more-than-human hybrid ontologies can be infused into contemporary thought and governmental practice to rescue the Anthropocene.

Indeed, many authors have increasingly focused on indigenous African communities in the Anthropocene in the face of climate catastrophe (Wright, 2019; Nuhu et al., 2019; Adu-Prah et al., 2019; Mash, 2019; Lube & Loius Kotze, 2019; Antwi-Agyei & Nyantakyi-Frimpong, 2021). However, they have not taken into consideration the African community as a key site of ontological environmental agency driving contemporary critical interdisciplinary thought and governmental practice. This paper attempts to fill this gap in critical scholarship by offering insights into the problem of how Indigenous more-than-human hybrid ontologies are governed in the Anthropocene. This paper aims to highlight indigenous African communities' ontological environmental relational

entanglement with prevailing treatments of discourses on resilience and the Anthropocene. Indigenous African community ontological relational entanglements are increasingly characterized by human and non-human dualisms that emphasize flatter ontologies. Human and non-human dualisms and binaries that emphasize flatter ontologies are indicative of how all life is relationally entangled (Chandler & Pugh, 2020; Pugh & Chandler, 2021).

Indigenous African community more-than-human hybrid ontologies eschew anthropocentrism and recognize the political significance of the diversity of the natural environment and other ecosystems (rivers, mountains, savannas, etc.). Their environmental relational entanglements, therefore, require us to think and recognize that humans are not alone on Earth, but share space with other non-humans. Consequently, because of their mutual entanglement in their existence with non-humans, humans face an obligation towards these non-human elements of the Earth. Crucially, this mutual entanglement with nature/human enables a wide range of creative possibilities that allow us to rethink approaches to climate resilience/environmental adaptation in the Anthropocene (Chandler & Pugh, 2021; Chipato & Chandler, 2022). One of the crucial aspects of more-than-human hybrid ontologies is that the world is an interconnected web related to all other life forms. In fact, every reality in the African-centred worldview has an inseparable link to other realities.

Resilience discourses in the Anthropocene

The Anthropocene thinking since the 2000s has become a significant driving force for recognizing how climate change and the existential threat of other environmental problems are, in many ways, a product of human activity (Chipato & Chandler, 2022; UN, 2020; Wakefield, 2020; Harrington, 2016; Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000). Approaches to resilience in the Anthropocene in contemporary social and political thought include how the existential threat of environmental destruction has been anthropogenically created (Wakefield, 2020). The Anthropocene epoch necessarily assumes that significant human actions impact the planet's ecosystems, physical landscapes, global climate change, and biodiversity loss (specifically global North production and consumption practices) (Castree, 2014; Chipato & Chandler, 2022). In doing so, the current strand of critical research on resilience as a modality of the Anthropocene challenges modernist tropes of the human/world divide. The modernist metaphysical divides (things, the nature of being, human and non-human entanglement, and assemblages) that immanence entails are perhaps the quintessential trope of Anthropocene theory. The Anthropocene, a provocation and an evocation of things, nature, and non-human systems and assemblages, implies how the actions of humanity now have an unprecedented impact on the extinction of species. (Harrington, 2016; Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000). Solutions that address climate change and the existential threat of other environmental problems in many ways need to recognize the interconnectedness of humans and nature. From this perspective, Anthropocene thinking brings the conceptualization of resilience to the forefront as a way of understanding the nature of being, in fact, as an ontology (Chandler, 2021; Wakefield, 2020).

The Anthropocene is an interesting concept because it calls life itself into question in a time of potentially devastating crisis, accepting our fate of coping with the edge of the crisis (Chipato & Chandler, 2022; Wakefield, 2020). Here, the Anthropocene summatively problematizes and profoundly questions the immanent powers of life, which are fundamental to its resilience. Environmental destruction provoked by human actions and

global climate change is always something external for which we must become resilient. Rather than being one of progress and emancipation, the Anthropocene moment urges humanity to face a future of existential risk, living in the midst of perpetual perishing, harm, and loss (Harrington, 2016). The Anthropocene framing takes into account the new geological era, where the great acceleration of human alteration of planet Earth is the basis for mutual entanglement in the existence of non-humans and humans (Harrington, 2016; Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000). Neoliberal governmental rationalization and mobilization of environmental forms of power in the Anthropocene epoch is increasingly characterized by apathy with its so-called impending danger on a global scale (Cohen et al. 2016; Chipato & Chandler, 2022; Karera, 2019). The influence of the Anthropocene lies in the way the concept productively provides a great opportunity to investigate and gain insights into the integration of human and natural systems and more-than-human hybrid ontologies (Chandler, 2021; Grove, 2019).

Resilience can be situated within the specific problematizations of the Anthropocene thinking engendered by social and environmental processes (Chandler, 2021). Resilience can be defined as ‘the capacity of a system, community, or society to resist or change in order that it may obtain an acceptable level of functioning and structure’ (United Nations, 2020), or “the ability of groups or communities to cope with external stresses and disturbances as a result of social, political, and environmental change.” (Adger, 2000, p. 347). Research that grapples with the challenges of global climate change adaptation in the Anthropocene increasingly transcends disciplinary boundaries, drawing insights from psychology, engineering, ecology, and public policy (Chandler, 2021; Wakefield, 2020). Conventional critical thought on resilience and the Anthropocene reflects heavily upon Indigenous African communities’ autonomous capacities for self-organized adaptation to external shocks and environmental stress (Chandler, 2021; Chandler & Reid, 2019; Chipato & Chandler, 2022). The practice of exposing oneself to dangers and threats for a secure life in the future is an all-encompassing discourse of resilience in the Anthropocene (Reid, 2017). The emergence of resilience alongside the contemporaneous emergence of the Anthropocene has important implications for the nature of the indigenous African community and its relation to the world. Discourses of resilience can be productively grasped as how life itself can only grow in so far as it is exposed to danger and crises. In this light, resilience thinking engenders and produces a world that is beyond modernist reasoning of command and control, oriented around the logic of environmental governance. Resilience as a body of thought effectively recalibrates our powers and capacities to reimagine a different world.

As I see it, resilience in the Anthropocene reconfigures environmental governance around new practices of adaptive management and adaptive governance, bouncing forward rather than merely bouncing back to a previous equilibrium. In this regard, resilience ontologies of life offer a theory of growth, development, and improvement by embracing life as a dynamic process, characterized by non-linear dynamics of complex adaptive management, reflexivity, and institutional change. Significantly, rather than universalizing understandings of command-and-control governance practices, resilience should be more about possibilities that open new conceptual and analytical challenges for critical theorists alike in the Anthropocene. Crucial for me, then, is how resilience in the Anthropocene brings into sharp focus the more-than-hybrid ontologies of the indigenous African community, which pushes away from the limits of modernist understandings or liberal binary assumptions of subject/object or human/nature

asymmetry. Resilience seeks to elide any form of subject/object or human/nature false binary that structures modernist or liberal universal frameworks of thought in the face of the Anthropocene's human and non-human radical asymmetry. This provides a much richer perspective of the indigenous African community, more-than-human hybrid ontologies. Indigenous African community more-than-human hybrid ontologies remain significant to dominant tropes on resilience in ways that give due cognisance to both subject/object or human/nature agency, which seems to diverge radically from most Anthropocene thinking on the same matter.

Ontological tropes of relational environmental entanglement

Non-humans, things, and nature's deep entanglement with humans, rather than modernist ontological framings, make up contemporary indigenous African understanding of the world. Here, the critical question is what difference more-than-human hybrid ontologies make for philosophical issues around environmental ethics in thinking influenced by the Anthropocene. Indigenous African communities have distinctive relational approaches to ontology. Indigenous African people are deemed to have attributes of resistance in the Anthropocene because of their capacity for resilient forms of adaptation. To this end, the Indigenous African community has become a profoundly productive site for understanding and developing resilience discourses and vulnerability in the Anthropocene. Resilient adaptive capacities of indigenous African community life are part and parcel of a broader scale for understanding the catastrophic unintended consequences of climate change and its social-ecological effects.

The indigenous African community believes that human and non-human objects were created by *Onyankropon* (the Supreme Being), who controls, sustains, and upholds them (Odei Ajei, 2012). Indigenous African community life takes into account more-than-human hybrid ontologies: places, things, and beings enable different forms of reality. This is a resilient reconfiguration of human-non-human relationships (Lajul, 2021) that modernist framings of universal causality and homogeneity underpinning global North social and natural sciences cannot easily access. African subjectivity, as Mangena (2013, pp.30) aptly notes, is expressed in "association with non-human animals." Moreover, human hybrid ontologies of indigenous people create new imaginaries through subject formation by taking action and creating a new world that does not primarily rely on global North modernity. To put this succinctly, the subjectivity of indigenous human beings is properly grasped only in dialogue with other beings within the eco-community. Indigenous groups, including the Akan, use seasonal mobility to help adapt to changing weather patterns (Antwi-Agyei & Nyantakyi-Frimpong, 2019). Through local memories and observations, conversations are constructed by the Akan and grounded in place through farming practices (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2014; Densu, 2017). Historically, the Frafra ethnic group travelled throughout their territories in search of food and other resources on a seasonal basis (Anabila, 2020). The Akan and the Frafra community used seasonal mobility in times of perturbation, insecurity, vulnerability, and crisis to turn reality on its head by (re)imagining a new way to shape their world and the very being-in-the-world, but also importantly for understanding resilience and adaptability in the Anthropocene.

The adaptive capacity of the indigenous African community in the Anthropocene decentered global North ontological positionalities, facilitating the possibility of being differently in the world. For instance, the Akan and the Frafra self-adaptive and self-regulating capacities are bolstered by ontologies of the self that engender being and

becoming more human, and an understanding of our shared humanity. More-than-human hybrid ontologies of climate resilience and environmental adaptation within indigenous African community cultures and practices exemplify the dynamic redistribution of understandings of agency, which are central to thinking within contemporary Anthropocene policy governance. The Akan and the Frafra socio-ecological systems constitute, and are constitutive of, a living system that modern human beings/generations may learn from, a way of surviving after the end of the world. Indigenous African resilience ontologies compared to modernist imaginaries rearticulate and reconceptualize the debate towards a more pluralized world rather than reductive and mechanistic understandings in the face of multiple crises wrought by planetary change (Chandler, 2021; Kueffer & Kinney, 2017; Kelbessa, 2018). The Akan and the Frafra more-than-human ontologies in resilience, in other words, are starkly different from the “one world” ontology of modern frameworks of reasoning. In the following, I highlight the importance of engaging and thinking with indigenous African peoples’ more-than-human hybrid ontologies for the development of climate resilience and environmental adaptation with a variety of examples. These include, among many others, their ecological processes and the management of biocultural diversity based on their unique understanding of seasonal cycles that open up modern processes of world-making practices and move beyond human/non-human dualism (Kelbessa, 2018; Onyebuchi Eze, 2017). Indigenous African unique ways of being cannot be separated (Wiredu, 1996). In this view, it is legitimate to claim that Indigenous African unique ways must be understood as two aspects of the same reality. It is worth noting that Akan thinkers, for example, enunciate reality as inhabited by a multiplicity of beings, visible and invisible dimensions of existence (Wiredu, 1996). In ontologies, human beings and other non-beings within traditional African relational existence are seen as possessing the same existence and reality (Wiredu, 1996; Prah et al., 2019).

Indigenous African-oriented resilience regarding more-than-human ontologies offers a plausible alternative to discourses of resilience and environmental adaptation in the Anthropocene. Indigenous African notions of relational existence in ontologies necessitate the idea of the ability of indigenous human beings to cope and adapt to environmental stress and navigate uncertainties wrought by the Anthropocene. Indigenous Africans are reductively framed in modernist fantasies as extremely vulnerable, passive victims, and helpless to catastrophic climate change in debates influenced by the Anthropocene, more widely. The discussion here is intended to show that indigenous African people are not vulnerable, passive victims, and hapless to catastrophic climate change within the dominant tropes of resilience discourses and the Anthropocene. It is argued that indigenous more-than-human hybrid ontologies show resilience to counter vulnerability and creatively reimagine alternative worlds such that life can be secured in the Anthropocene (Chipato & Chandler, 2022). To be sure, a self-adaptive, self-regulating African indigenous community is able to live a sustainable life for as long as possible, in contrast to reductionist atomized understandings of life dominant in modernist imaginaries.

African more-than-human hybrid ontologies more generally relate to the environment in different ways from contemporary human beings or generations. The African more-than-human hybrid ontologies on the natural environment stress its mutual interconnectedness and interdependence with nature (Densu, 2017; Akpan & Pimaro, 2019). Indigenous African interconnectedness with nature emphasizes the notion of how humans are connected to themselves, every other being, and the universe as a community

of beings (Wiredu, 1996; Chemhuru, 2021). A hierarchy of beings at the apex of which is the Supreme Being (God), for instance, is espoused by Akan more-than-human hybrid ontologies (Densu, 2017; Prah et al., 2019). Thus, according to Wiredu (1996, p.49), “everything that exists in (the ontology) exists in exactly the same sense as everything else.” Regarding this, it is apposite to emphasize the point that the indigenous African community paradigmatic place of human–environment relationships (Kelbessa, 2018; Chemhuru, 2021) directly challenges modernist binary and dualism of human/nature and subject/object in the Anthropocene (Chipato & Chandler, 2022; Chandler, 2021). This indigenous African community offers new ways of being and reimagining a different world in the dominant discursive governmental framing of the epoch of the Anthropocene.

Indigenous African people’s relational interaction is widely reflected and encoded in traditional African society, so there is no dichotomy of physical or non-physical, immaterial/material, or spiritual/physical in the Akan language and philosophical thinking. It is also interesting to note that the Yoruba of western Nigeria, the Igbo, and the Esan of southern Nigeria ontologies prescribe and, in this sense, establish a relation of dependency, in contrast to reductionist and atomized understandings (Unuigbo, 2020). In fact, an interconnectedness of the visible and invisible beings, physical or non-physical, immaterial objects/material, or the existence of spiritual/physical among the Yoruba of western Nigeria more-than-human hybrid ontologies is reflected and represented in such linguistic examples as *Eni ti o ba mi kukute, ara re lo mi* (he who tries to shake the trunk of a tree only shakes himself) (Okpokoc, 2020; Unuigbo, 2020). The other is *Nigbati ake wo inu igbo, awon igi igbo naa so pe wo, itoju naa je okan ninu wa* (when the axe entered the forest, the trees said “look, the handle is one of you) and *Ai negbera otoa* (you cannot run away from the earth) (Okpoko, 2020). The Yoruba culture, for instance, regards plants, animals, and human beings as possessing sacred life (Okpoko, 2020).

Relationality is a core feature and a long-standing concern of the Southern African tradition of *unhu/Ubuntu*. The *unhu/Ubuntu* (in Southern Africa) ethic of the environment and the idea of the community are that of interconnectedness and interdependence (Chemhuru, 2021), which poses a clear challenge to modernist separations of human/nature and subject/object. As Mbiti (1970, pp. 141) aptly notes “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am.” This maxim enjoins us to recognize that we are human by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish humane relations with them (Ramose, 2017). This underpins the idea of interdependence of persons as opposed to modernist imaginaries and perspectives of personhood, which emphasize individuality (Okpoko, 2020). In apparent contrast to modernist imaginaries and perspectives of personhood, which emphasize individuality within relational existence in African ontologies, individual personhood can best be grasped in terms of the community (Molefe, 2020). Afro-communitarian cultures are characterized primarily by solidarity, friendship, and care; seeking the common good is a core element of the African conception of personhood. In some fundamental sense, personhood individuals as a dominant understanding of relational existence in African ontologies are founded on shared communal interests, social relationships, obligations, and duties that are distinct from Western notions (Wiredu, 2009). The reasoning that the community serves as the best and only means to secure the individual good is the relational existence in African ontologies regarding the environment. The individual conception of the community as the best might offer a useful way to debate indigenous contributions to environmental ethics in the epoch of the Anthropocene.

It is uncontroversial to submit that indigenous African societies' long-term familiarity with the anthropogenic and natural environments enables them to adapt and cope accordingly. Indigenous African more-than-human hybrid ontologies tend to understand every reality in the African world as an inseparable link to every reality; all other life forms within an interrelated and inextricably related web (Chemhuru, 2021). Implicit in this assumption is that reality itself is understood relationally, in and by relationships with various beings; this moves beyond hegemonic impositions and understanding. Relationships with various beings are not separate from the existence of other things; instead, they are deeply interlaced with the relationships with various beings through intimate and intricate interaction with others, and that one is not separate from what others are. The importance of indigenous African more-than-human hybrid ontologies is insufficiently theorized from different philosophical perspectives, allowing global North philosophical conceptions to dominate thinking within the Anthropocene. The African perspective emphasizes relationality through its incorporation of diverse beings, diversity, and the richness of environmental ethics. This call addresses the challenge of ecological crisis and ensures climate resilience, environmental preservation, and conservation by reinventing their ontological orientation of care and reverence for nature (Chemhuru, 2021). For example, the *unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy that places human beings and communities at the center could help address issues pertaining to African environmental ethical perspectives.

The centrality of relational ethics emerging from huge ecological crises and colossal consequences for humanity informs alternative perspectives or approaches in the face of anthropogenic climate change. It seems to me that the belief that the ruin of the environment entails the ruin of the human being is deeply rooted in the indigenous African more-than-human hybrid. Everything exists as a being with others, because the safety of the natural world entails the safety of human beings. Given that the natural world is an integral part of their being, it helps indigenous African people to treat the environment and nature with the same respect that they deserve. The notion of existence and relationships between human beings and nature, which is fundamentally independent of theocentric beliefs, is an essential aspect of African ontologies (Taringa, 2020). For example, the relationship between human and non-human beings is fundamental to both human and non-human well-being within the context of *unhu/Ubuntu* (in Southern Africa) and interconnectedness and interdependence of beings, enabling distinctive characteristics and the sources of its perspective (Taringa, 2020). Concomitantly, the consolidation of the human, natural, and spiritual tripartite is centered on *Ubuntu*ness (humanness) (Danford, 2016).

Indeed, the rich tradition of human–environment relationships is the *unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy, which emphasizes the process of being-coming-into-being (Chemhuru, 2021). Traditional *unhu/Ubuntu* lived with nature with respect, courtesy, and awe (Chemhuru, 2021; Taringa, 2020), paying attention to human-nonhuman systems and assemblages. This is regarded as fundamental to being human, but perhaps more importantly to the surrounding natural environment (Etieyibo, 2017; Terblanché-Greeff, 2019; Taringa, 2020). The ethics of not taking more than you need from nature within the context of traditional *Ubuntu* culture is a moral code (Chemhuru, 2021). Objects are traditionally believed to possess a distinct spiritual essence, and this is why earth, forest, rivers, wind, and others are treated with respect. The traditional *unhu/Ubuntu* belief that nature will inure to their own survival is the philosophy behind the supernatural means by which the human environment is preserved (Etieyibo, 2017; Terblanché-Greeff, 2019).

In fact, the ethics of care that underlies *Ubuntu*, a *more-than-human* hybrid ontology, is essential to the traditional understanding of conservation, the sustenance of the environment, and the well-being of the human person (Ramose, 2017; Taringa, 2020). When viewed in its traditional context, the *unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy expresses how human beings are inherently connected and dependent on other beings at the level of existence and the responsibility of everyone to each other, including past, present, and future generations, to live a better life as a basis of African communal culture (Chibvongodze, 2016).

My point is that African *unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy can play a vital role in the philosophical area of African environmentalism within the Anthropocene; this extends to the interconnectedness, common humanity, and individuals' relationship with the environment. The hierarchical distinctions between humans and non-human nature in modernist frameworks are not prevalent in *unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy, and many African traditional cultures promote the ethics of environmental sustainability, rehabilitation, biodiversity, and environmental management (Ramose 2017). From this vantage point, the *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy can be leveraged to enhance environmental protection (Taringa, 2020) beyond modernist or liberal approaches to governance. *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy espouses non-anthropocentric ethics (Taringa, 2020) more precisely than dominant modernist or linear ontologies. These insights from *Ubuntu* cosmological ontology define what may constitute an African environmental ethics that is driving African thought and practice today. Key debates focused on a split between humans and nature, which can no longer hold in the present context of ecological crisis, precisely because climate change adaptation and practices question modernist ontological assumptions about resilience in the Anthropocene.

The environment thus becomes a constant symbiotic dialogue and interaction, as well as a critical part of human society. Explicit or implicit in this symbiotic dialogue and interaction is ontological holism with nature defined in terms of human-non-human relationships by way of dialectical subjectivism. Indigenous people's dialectical subjectivism sets the parameters for coexistence in this universe and a harmonious balance with interrelated beings. Understood in this sense, indigenous people on their own right and on their own terms would take charge of their adaptive and coping strategies in dealing with vulnerability, insecurity, and complexity, among others. They radically reconceive and reconceptualize the Anthropocene problem through their capacity to adapt to and cope with vulnerability, insecurity, and complexity. Indeed, among the Akan people, for example, *Asaase Yaa* (earth/land) was loosely interpreted as the spirit of land. According to the Akan day-names and calendar, the Goddess after whom Thursday is named is not just one over whom overall life experience is tied to avoiding those things that might constitute an abomination to the Earth Goddess, but also a generous giver, protector of life, livelihoods, point of spirituality, and renewal (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2014). For the Akan people, one's overall life experience is mutually entangled with things that might constitute an abomination to the Earth Goddess. The concept of totemism in Akan philosophy refers to the cultural characteristics through which people define themselves (Densu, 2017; Awuah-Nyamekye, 2014). Totemism within the Akan cultural context represents a variety of animals, plants, hills, rivers, trees, and other elements (Densu, 2017). Totemism has become a significant source of environmental ethics among the Akan. Significantly, the ontological pretensions underlying discourses of resilience, vulnerability, and adaptation are undermined and fundamentally questioned by indigenous people's subjectivities in thinking within the contemporary Anthropocene.

African subject, in its most basic form, demands a strategic ontology that questions adaptive practices underpinning contemporary discourses of resilience in the Anthropocene.

Various forms of existence, such as spiritual and physical beings, provide principles that shape African environmental ontologies. In this sense, African distinctive ways of being and of spiritual interconnectedness of reality are intensely and pervasively a manifestation of the spiritual and growing appreciation of the connection between human beings, elements, animate, and inanimate matters of the environment (Kelbessa, 2018; Unuigbo, 2020). Thus, African earth-based spiritual traditions are not only a product of God (the supreme incarnation of vital force through man) but also innovative spiritual practices and every reality in the universe (Kelbessa, 2018; Unuigbo, 2020). They have both physical and spiritual elements that provide answers to fundamental questions in the Anthropocene epoch. For an African Indigenous community, this is very important given the place that both physical and spiritual elements occupy in the world or the universe in ecological discourse. African earth-based spiritual traditions and innovative spiritual practices serve as a sustained source of resilience, environmental adaptation, and vulnerability mitigation for the indigenous African community. It is important to recognize that some kinds of ecosystems flourish with the indigenous African community's ecological imaginary of human/world relations (Chemhuru, 2021). Indigenous African community cultural practices bolster the ecological imaginary of human/world relations rather than merely being adaptively responsive (Lajul, 2021). The salient point with this is that it makes no sense for the indigenous African community to dichotomize and draw strict distinctions between social thought and the material world.

Indigenous African community relational existence in ontologies more fundamentally repositions them much more centrally within the international policy-making debate. This is a key reason for contemporary debates about indigenous climate resilience and environmental adaptation in the Anthropocene. African indigenous communities' spiritual elements at the root of environmental issues are precisely in a way that underscores the interconnectedness of humanity and their understanding of the world around them. Indigenous African people have a rich tradition of human-environment relationships. Immanent in the ontological framing of life as relational is the basis for a responsible and humane relationship with and management of the environment at the center of African spiritual ecology (Kelbessa, 2018; Chemhuru, 2021). Thus, indigenous African people have more-than-human hybrid ontological justification for rejecting modernist reasoning and the imposition of hegemonic understandings that characterize thinking within the contemporary Anthropocene.

Conclusion

Engaging with the indigenous African community and their ontological imaginaries has become a key site for conceiving and framing climate resilience and environmental adaptation in the contemporary Anthropocene. I have sought to draw out how indigenous African community imaginaries of human/world relations serve as a transgressive space to develop alternatives to one-world reasoning so problematic in the era of the Anthropocene. Indigenous relational imaginaries are crucial in developing ontological approaches that seek to go beyond universality, which does not apply to the relational thought of African contexts. There is now an irrefutable need to shift strategies and decision making that focuses on how the indigenous African community is being grasped and productively rethought in contemporary Anthropocene thinking. It is also

important to focus on how the hubris of modernist imaginary reductively grasps the indigenous community (Chandler & Reid, 2019) and its relational imaginaries, as this can lead to a continuation of oppression because vulnerable people are trapped within this discourse and unable to break through it to build a different reality. My point is that alternative ways of being in the world exist and have relevance to the contemporary crisis we face. Alternative ways of being are necessary for more intensive interrogation and a broader critical agenda in the Anthropocene epoch.

This intensive interrogation and broader critical agenda should focus on stressing how the indigenous African community's ontological conceptualizations are today being developed within the Anthropocene. Engaging with African-based ontologies relative to thinking within the Anthropocene thus shapes an understanding of many worlds: the pluriverse of multiplicity of identities, or many worlds that decenter the hubris of the modernist imaginary (subject/object, problem/solution, mind/body, human/nature) (Chandler & Pugh, 2022). This paper has laid the groundwork to address crucial questions concerning indigenous African peoples' contributions to climate resilience and environmental adaptation in the Anthropocene. Working with and drawing upon the indigenous community is generative for Anthropocene scholarship and a wider discussion for further reflection and liminal sites of investigation. Thus, I see this paper as the starting point to spark discussion focusing on and exploring ways of working with the indigenous African community in contemporary debates in Anthropocene scholarship, more broadly.

Declarations on Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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