SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1

Chapter one gives a general overview which sets the stage for the entire thesis by stipulating that oral literature needs to be viewed and studied as a repository of traditional ecological knowledge whose ideas can be revived to contribute to the contemporary search for answers to the environmental challenges to economic development. The chapter explores three main foundational ideas. First, it underlines that these proverb-poems which have always been interpreted by researchers including J. H. Kwabena Nketia and Ruth Finnegan as metaphors for human-to-human interaction equally have a literal dimension which directly addresses the issues of human interaction with nature. The second is that far from being obscurantist, authoritarian, retrogressive and static, the ideas in traditional African oral literature are progressive and dynamic in nature.

The third idea is to present the work as an interdisciplinary one informed by various academic disciplines whose insights are useful to explore and evaluate the manner in which the environmental knowledge embedded in these texts of traditional oral literature can be used to eventually inspire solutions to the environmental aspects of the general effort at economic and social development today. To these ends the chapter presents the concerns of these proverb-poems and the different ways in which the Asante constructed nature.
Chapter 2

The second chapter begins with an overview of Asante and a review of the generic form and meaning of Asante proverb-poem of the traditional Asante talking drum. The chapter equally offers reasons why the thesis considers that the genre of the proverb-poem is the most appropriate data for uncovering environmental meaning from the oral literature of traditional Asante.

The chapter goes on to review the interconnectedness between the conservation of nature on one hand and the beliefs system and activities of Asante society on the other. This review is aimed at preparing the background evidence to which I make reference to support, to clarify, and to make more convincing my argument that the central message of these proverb-poems is human co-existence with nature. Thus, the chapter serves to provide intertextual concurrence, evidence, and endorsement for my environmental reading of the proverb-poems.

For that reason the chapter presents some pertinent aspects of traditional Asante belief system, the role of drumming and the drum poetry of the talking drum, the daily activities of environmental relevance in Asante, their beliefs about the spirituality of plants and animals, their food abstinences, their impact on their environment, their relation to colonial environmentalism, as well as the nature of their current environmental problems. The chapter presents all these factors as having nurtured, structured, and sustained the environmental ideas and perspectives signaled in the proverb-poems.
Chapter 3

In the third chapter the emphasis is on expounding the various principles, notions and methods by which I articulate the environmental meaning of the proverb-poems and justify their inspiring contemporary role. Thus, I resort to ideas drawn from Ecocriticism, Structuralism, and insight from other disciplines to demonstrate that these texts were derived from Asante society; that they had environmental functions and values which can be revived to help nature conservation in contemporary society. I explain why my analysis will use Ecocriticism as the central approach to present the texts as environmental knowledge, and consciousness-raising texts.

Chapter 4

The fourth chapter uses the notions and principles expounded in chapter three as well as the intertextual evidence of chapter two, to undertake an environmental reading of the texts of the proverb-poems. It reveals the proverb-poems as playing a progressive role in traditional society. The texts are analyzed to show that their thematic content, their internal linguistic structure, and the values of the society from which the texts emanate indicate that they mediate a message of the predilection of co-existence between humans and Nature, as well as reflect the basic local and foreign factors that determine the trend of Asante environmental history.

In this chapter I translate fourteen proverb-poems from the Asante language into English and use them to reconstruct aspects of environmental knowledge of traditional Asante.
These fourteen texts are intended as a case study which illustrates the nature and content of traditional Asante environmental thought. The chapter then classifies the proverb-poems under three themes all of which present a specific nuance or emphasis which is in line with the central theme of human co-existence with nature.

Chapter 5
The fifth chapter reviews the manner in which the concepts, objectives, and aspirations of Ecocriticism respond to ecological, discursive, and developmental challenges. It equally stipulates the international scope and local essence of the broad research concerns of which the conjugation of Ecocriticism and development constitutes an integral part.

Chapter 6
Chapter six is a conclusion which presents the salient points of the thesis and reviews the overall significance of the entire work. It sums up the work by indicating its concerns, its methods, its significance, its horizons and its perspectives on the future.