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When the dead decide: An investigation into the influence of ancestors in the use of mobile phones in a rural community in northern Ghana



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INTRODUCTION

Mobile phone penetration

Country %

South Africa 123

Ghana 84

Senegal 79

Nigeria 70

Kenya 59

Tanzania 50

Source: African Observatory Report (2012)

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INTRODUCTION -2

Ghana Population 25,241,998

Mobile phones 25,344,745

African Observatory Report (2012)

-- Ghana crossed the 100% mobile penetration mark by 2013

-- Mobile phone utilization in rural communities still low - full potential of mobile phones yet to be explored



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OBJECTIVE

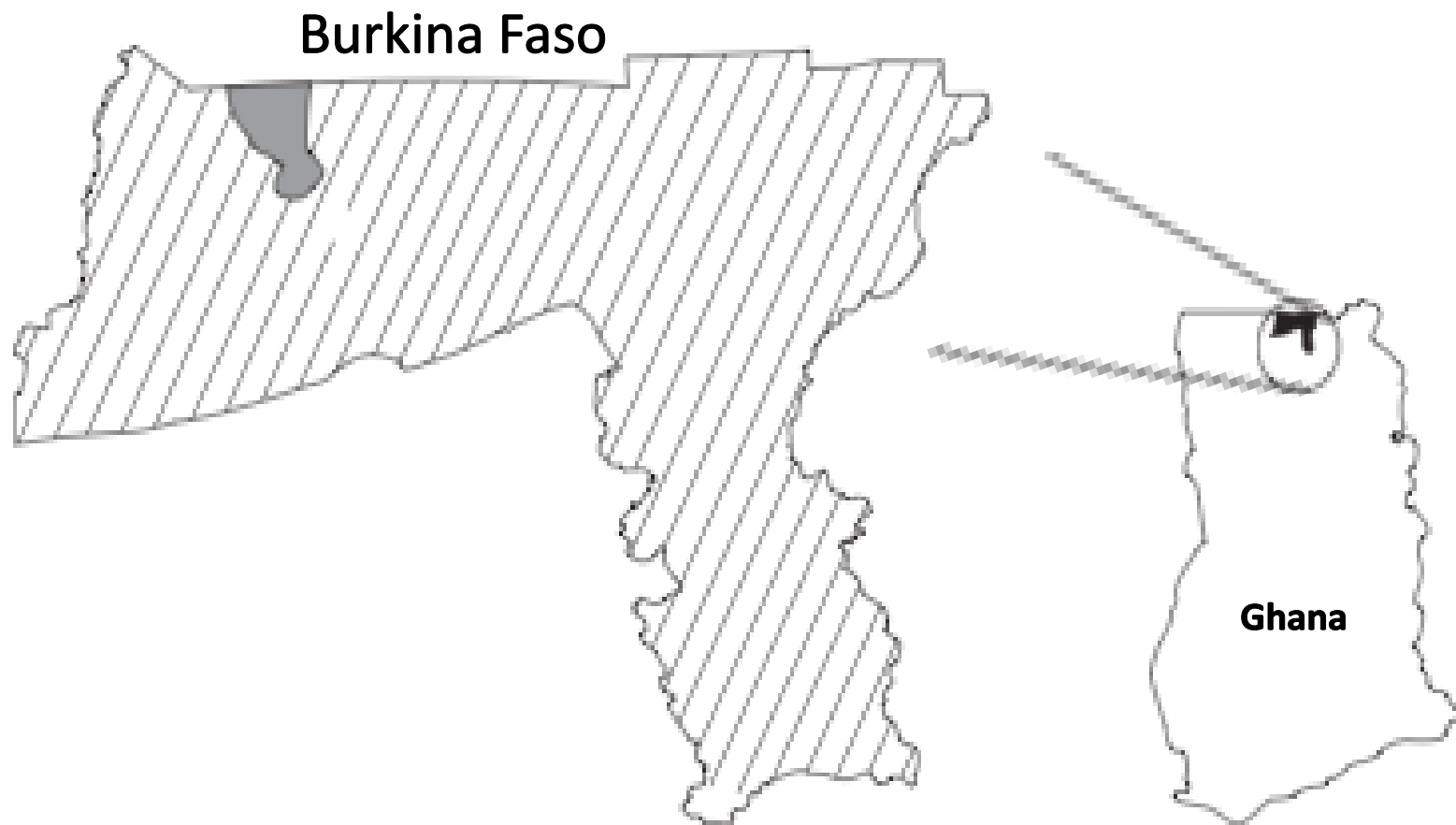
To explore the influence of the ancestors about the use of mobile phones for community development among the Kasena in northern Ghana

METHODOLOGY

- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
- Key Informant Interviews (KII)
- Divination

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Study area: Kasena-Nankana District



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CHALLENGES

- Interviews conducted in the middle of rainy season – not convenient for respondents
- Two soothsayers declined to serve as mediators
- One ancestor declined the interview
- One soothsayer decried the consultation fee as 'too small'
- One ancestor requested the sacrifice of a ram

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DATA COLLECTION

3 FGDs conducted

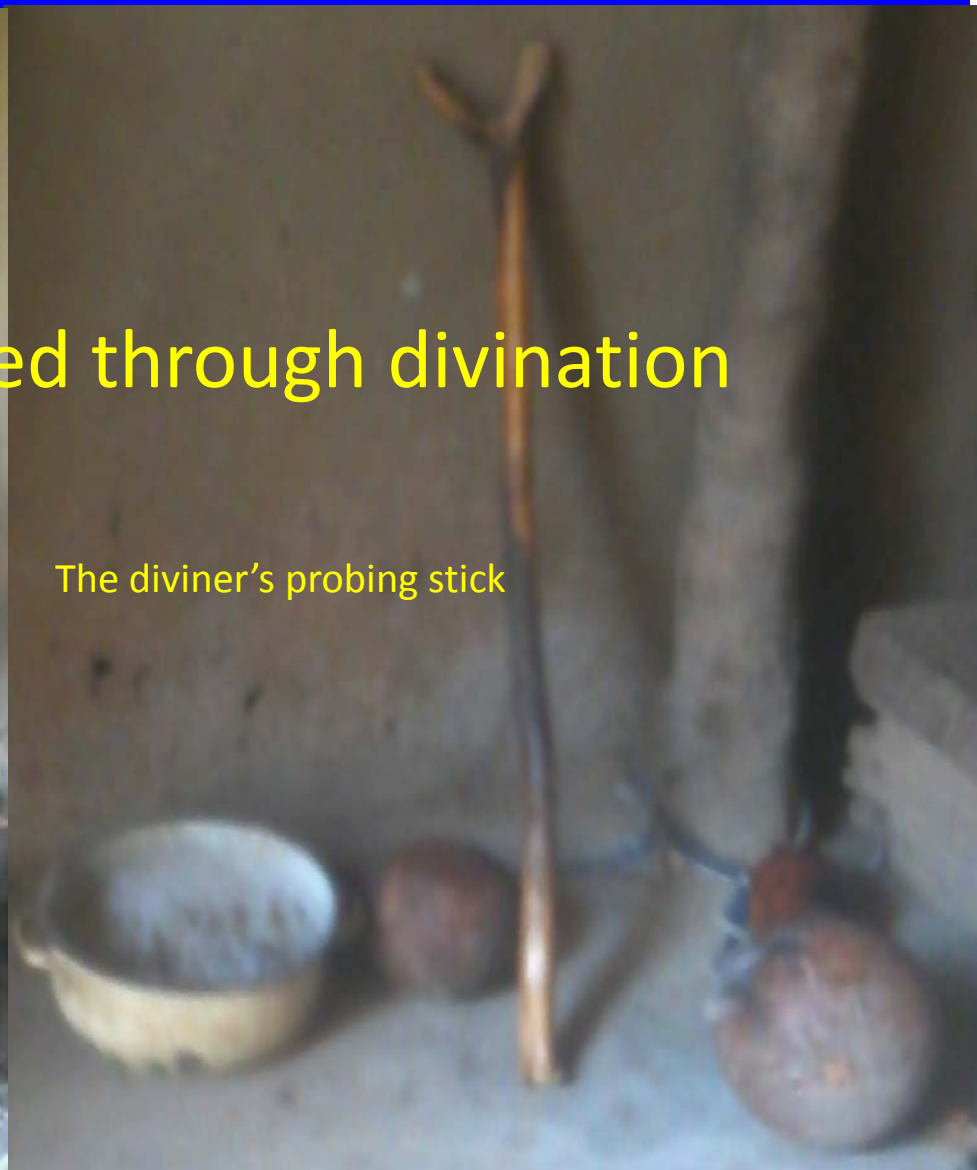


10 Key Informant Interviews with clan heads conducted

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DATA COLLECTION

10 ancestors interviewed through divination



The diviner's probing stick

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IMPRESSIONS FROM THE FIELD

- Ancestors influence the decision to use mobile phones
- All ancestors and all clan heads approve the use of mobile phones for making and receiving calls, texting, sending and receiving money
- All ancestors and all clan heads disapprove of the use of mobile phones for committing crimes and for activities described 'immoral'

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IMPRESSIONS FROM THE FIELD -2

Advantages of the mobile phone

1. *“I have heard they can send money through ‘Atogedevio’ (through the air) for you to go and collect at a place closer to you...without travelling and paying lorry fares...this is good.” – Clan head*
2. *“when we visit the clinic here and they realize your problem is big, they make a call for a vehicle to come and carry you.” – Clan head*

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IMPRESSIONS FROM THE FIELD -3

Disadvantages of the mobile phone

1. *“...you see a girl talking on phone and suddenly she disappears... They [she and her boyfriend] will meet and you the father will not know.”* – Clan head
2. *“Also, some young men make calls while on the footpath; they don't care to give way to an elder...”* – Clan head

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IMPRESSIONS FROM THE FIELD -4

Disadvantages of the mobile phone

Inappropriate communication hurts social cohesion: *“If you call me on a mobile phone to inform me that my in-law is dead, I will not attend the funeral because you are not serious. If you were serious you would walk to my house to inform me...”* – Clan head

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CONCLUSION

Mobile technology has revolutionized communication, spurring development and bringing change to people and places around the world. However, in seeking to promote the widespread adoption of mobile communication the social value systems that bind communities and their members must be taken into consideration in order to make quick, desirable and sustainable progress.

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NEXT STEPS

- Complete data analysis and study report
- Share and validate study findings
- Develop publishable papers from study
- Follow up interviews with ancestors who approve the use of mobile phones.