



## THE PULAKU PROJECT

*Instead of returning home, Christoph Herby is diving deep into Fulbe culture*

by Christoph Herby

**I** remember meeting Guida Belco just a few days after arriving in Goumori, my remote post in northern Benin. I'd mentioned something to my neighbors about wanting to learn the local language, so the village gossip mill churned and Guida appeared on my doorstep. Not only did Guida speak both local languages, but he was also one of the lucky few to have attended university, and he was just as curious as I was to explore Goumori through a foreigner's eyes. I had found my interpreter, my companion, my teacher.

Two busy years later, I became a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer—but I didn't return. Guida and I hit the trail to explore the Fulbe world. We traversed West Africa by motorcycle, visiting remote camps in ten different countries to share Fulbe stories through photo, video, and ambient sound. We named this the Pulaku Project, based on the Fulbe word *pulaaku* which describes the pride, stoicism, and identity of the Fulbe people. We documented our journey and the stories of the Fulbe through our website, [www.pulaku.com](http://www.pulaku.com).

Faced with desertification and agricultural development, the traditional Fulbe life is changing. While some assimilate into city-life, others simply incorporate modern elements in their traditional ways. The Pulaku Project explores their changing lifestyle, sharing an intimate perspective on one of Africa's most intriguing cultures.

*Christoph Herby (RPCV Benin 2008-2010) is a self-taught photographer and documentary storyteller.*



