E’jiao is a gelatin obtained by processing the dehaired skin of donkeys, and has been used as an ingredient in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). In the Chinese retail market, e’jiao has become the top-ranking of all medical commodities and in 2019, its retail revenue was CNY 4.2 billion (USD 59 million). Since e’jiao is the only industry in demand for donkey hides worldwide, the fluctuation of the global donkey and donkey hide market is closely related to the rise and fall of the Chinese e’jiao market.

This talk examines the assemblages of ideas, things, and capitals: starting with a businesswoman’s story of searching for cheap donkey hides all over the world, it will discuss why and how Kenya has become the regional hub of producing and transporting donkey hides as well as smuggling donkeys from bordering countries.