ABSTRACT

This article is about a short moment in Chinese-Australian history at the turn of the 20th century when Chinese fruit and vegetable traders in Sydney were on the verge of major international success. The concerns of this new urban elite can be gleaned from their Chinese-language newspapers and civil societies which played an important role in the evolution of the diasporic identity of the Chinese in “White-Australia” — an experience involving more than merely a refinement of native kinship practices and inherited identities — in a process that invoked a distinctively modern sense of time, space, and the unfolding of history. This is an attempt to recount their experience chiefly by reference to the developments recorded in Chinese newspapers and the narratives related to the social institutions and networks associated with them in the Federation Era (1890s-1900s).