

A study on Cui Guoyin's mission to Peru

*Yuan Huang, Jianlong Yin**

School of History, Center for European Union Studies, Anhui University, Hefei, China

*Corresponding Author. Email: 09024@ahu.edu.cn

Abstract. The coolie trade prevalent in the 1850s and 1860s transported a large number of Chinese laborers to Peru. The oppression of Chinese laborers by Peru triggered a series of resistances, which ultimately led to the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Peru and the abolition of the coolie trade. After the expiration of their contracts, most Chinese laborers engaged in commerce under the influence of free Chinese immigrants who arrived in Peru in the 1870s. The convergence of the two groups drastically increased the influence of Chinese people in Peru's commercial sector, intensifying Peru's hostility toward Chinese immigrants. In 1891, taking the opportunity of presenting his credentials, Cui Guoyin personally visited Peru to investigate the living conditions of local Chinese and negotiate with the Peruvian government on the treatment of Chinese laborers. Cui's mission to Peru exposed many dilemmas faced by late Qing China in its diplomatic transformation. Although the mission failed to fundamentally improve the situation of Chinese in Peru, it achieved several positive outcomes.

Keywords: Cui Guoyin, Chinese in Peru

1. Introduction

In the early 18th century, Spanish American colonies launched successive independence movements. On July 28, 1821, José de San Martín proclaimed Peru's independence in Lima, establishing the "Republic of Peru." Subsequently, after three years of struggle, the Peruvian people completely defeated the Spanish army in the Battle of Ayacucho on December 9, 1824, ending colonial rule. However, although Peru achieved political independence from the Spanish Empire, its national economy remained dependent on mining, guano exports, and plantation agriculture, creating an urgent demand for a large labor force.

Multiple factors led to a severe labor shortage in post-independence Peru. Firstly, Peru was sparsely populated at the time of its final independence in 1824, with a total population of only over two million. Secondly, during the colonial period, Black slaves were the main labor force on plantations. The agricultural crisis caused by Peru's War of Independence reduced plantation profits, prompting plantation owners to intensify the oppression of Black slaves to safeguard their interests. This worsened the living conditions of Black slaves, leading to large-scale escapes and rebellions, which sharply increased the cost of continuing to use Black slave labor. Additionally, influenced by Enlightenment ideas, Peru enacted a series of decrees to emancipate Black slaves after independence, further exacerbating the labor shortage. Unable to attract European immigrants and with slavery abolished, Peru followed the example of Caribbean regions in 1849 and introduced indentured laborers from China's southeastern coastal areas, enacting the Law on the Introduction of Asian Immigrants, also known as the Chinese Law. The promulgation of this law marked the beginning of Chinese immigration history in Peru.

Peruvian scholar Wilma Miranda Berrocal divided the 19th-century Chinese immigration wave in Peru into two phases, with 1874 as the dividing line. The first phase, from the enactment of the Chinese Law in 1849 to the prohibition of the coolie trade in Macau in 1874, was dominated by indentured laborers [1]. In the 1840s and 1850s, the social and economic conditions in China's southeastern coastal areas deteriorated sharply, with severe land shortages, heavy taxes, and exploitation by foreign powers, leaving people living in hardship. The outbreak of the Taiping Rebellion in 1851 and prolonged conflicts between local Han groups and Hakka immigrants in the second half of the 19th century further destabilized the local social environment, prompting a large number of people to migrate overseas to seek livelihoods. Seizing this opportunity, labor brokers sent a large number of Chinese as indentured laborers to Peru through abduction, deception, kidnap, and coercion. At that time, sea travel was the only means of transportation between China and the Americas. To cut costs, Chinese laborers were provided with extremely poor living conditions on ships, resulting in a very high mortality rate. Upon arriving in Peru, most Chinese laborers were sent to work on plantations, railway construction sites, and guano islands with harsh working conditions and high mortality rates, under strict personal control until the expiration of their contracts. Due to its coercive nature, Peruvian sinologist Humberto Rodríguez Pastor referred to it as "semi-slavery under contract [2]."

Faced with such oppression, Chinese in Peru continuously resisted through suicide, uprisings, and other means. For example, the “Painted Face Uprising” in 1870 targeted plantation owners in Barranco and Pativilca. Imitating the red and blue uniforms of the Taiping Army, the rebels painted their faces red and blue. Since they still wore long braids, they were called “long-haired ones” [3]. Subsequent uprisings included the Huacho Uprising in 1875 and the Trujillo Uprising in 1876. Their resistance achieved significant results, attracting international attention and damaging Peru’s international image. Meanwhile, Chinese laborers contacted the Qing government through the U.S. Embassy in Peru, submitting petitions to accuse Peru of atrocities. Their efforts drew the attention of the Qing government, which resolved to negotiate with Peru on the issue of Chinese laborers.

As China and Peru had not yet established diplomatic relations, Prince Gong Yixin entrusted U.S. Minister to China Ross Browne in 1866 to forward some petitions from Peruvian Chinese laborers to the U.S. government, requesting the U.S. Minister to Lima to “investigate the details and provide assistance to these subjects.” In June 1871, the Qing government received a second petition and immediately took substantive measures to support Chinese in Peru [4]. On May 28, 1872, the ship *Mayesi* docked in Yokohama, Japan, due to bad weather. The coolies on board, unable to bear the abuse, jumped ship and were rescued. Japan tried and punished the captain in accordance with its own laws. The *Mayesi* incident caused a great sensation in the international community. To resolve the incident, the Peruvian government appointed José de Garcíacochea as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to China and Japan on November 6, 1872, intending to use this opportunity to establish diplomatic relations with China and Japan and formalize them through treaties. Significant differences arose between China and Peru on issues such as the expansion of the coolie trade and the treatment of Chinese laborers. Finally, with the mediation of Britain, the United States, and other countries, and through negotiations between China and Peru, the Qing government and Peru signed the Sino-Peruvian Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation on June 26, 1874, marking a new stage in the development of Sino-Peruvian relations. Predicting that the coolie trade was unsustainable, the Portuguese in Macau had already prohibited it on March 27 of the same year [5].

The integration of Chinese into Peruvian society began during the coolie immigration phase. After the expiration of their contracts, most of them retained the Spanish names given by their employers and actively converted to Catholicism. Since almost all Chinese who arrived in Peru as coolies were male, most chose to marry local women, resulting in almost all descendants of the first generation of Chinese Peruvians being mixed-race. However, several factors led to continued severe discrimination against Chinese in Peru, with anti-Chinese atrocities occurring frequently.

Firstly, the assistance provided by Chinese in Peru to Chile during the War of the Pacific deepened post-war Peruvian society’s suspicion of Chinese. During the War of the Pacific (1879–1883), Chile opportunistically supported the resistance of Chinese laborers, and a large number of Chinese laborers joined Chile to oppose the tyranny of Peruvian plantation owners. In 1880, the Chilean expeditionary force led by Patricio Lynch, with the support of emancipated Chinese laborers, destroyed many sugar plantations and refineries in northern Peru that funded the Peruvian government. Some of these Chinese laborers participated in the Battles of San Juan and Miraflores in January 1881, after which Chilean troops successfully occupied Lima, the Peruvian capital [6]. The assistance provided by Chinese to Chilean troops during the war aroused Peruvians’ suspicion and hatred of Chinese, deepening the post-war antagonism between the two groups.

Secondly, the rapid advancement of Chinese in Peru’s commercial sector aroused the vigilance and hostility of local Creole whites. In the early 1870s, a group of Chinese immigrants expelled from the United States due to anti-Chinese movements arrived in Peru, known as “California Chinese.” As free immigrants, these Chinese did not become laborers in Peru but continued their occupations from the United States. A small number opened Chinese restaurants and traditional Chinese medicine clinics, while most engaged in commerce, becoming the earliest group of Chinese merchants in Peru. By 1879, more than half of the Chinese in Peru had fulfilled their contract terms and gained freedom. Most of them did not return to China but followed the example of other successful compatriots in business, becoming small traders and further expanding the influence of Chinese in Peru’s commercial sector. By the late 1880s, more than a dozen Chinese associations, such as those from Nanhai, Panyu, and Zhongshan, had been established in Lima. In 1886, to protect the rights and interests of Chinese in Peru, Chinese merchants established the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce and Charity under the promotion of then Minister to Peru Zheng Zaoru. The commercial success of Chinese greatly alarmed local Peruvian merchants, who launched several joint boycotts to attack Chinese shops, even resorting to violence: on January 15, 1881, atrocities against Chinese shops occurred in Lima amid chaos, resulting in the deaths of over 300 Chinese and the looting of numerous Chinese shops. Although the Qing government held the Chilean army responsible for the incident and repeatedly demanded compensation from the Chilean government, according to research by Chilean scholar Marcelo Segal, the main perpetrators were Peruvian soldiers and even Lima citizens [7].

Thirdly, the legacy of the colonial racial hierarchy and the influence of Social Darwinist ideology led fanatical Peruvian nationalists to refer to Asians, including Chinese, as “inferior races.” This was reflected in the bills they enacted. For example, in the original text of the 1856 decree by the Peruvian Congress revoking the Chinese Law, the first item stated: “The importation of Asian immigrants has degenerated into a trade similar to the slave trade; furthermore, as Asian immigrants are an inferior race, they are unsuitable for the needs of this country...[8]” This openly referred to Chinese and other Asian nations as inferior peoples.

Finally, the weakness of the Qing government and its lack of understanding of modern diplomacy prevented it from fully fulfilling its obligation to protect Chinese in Peru. The Qing government dispatched several delegations to Peru, but these officials were often deceived by the Peruvian government due to their unfamiliarity with modern diplomacy, resulting in minimal

achievements. These factors combined to make life extremely difficult for Chinese in Peru in the 1880s. In 1887, a delegation sent by the Qing government, accompanied by Peruvian officials, conducted an inspection. Visiting plantations one by one to investigate the conditions of Chinese laborers, they found that their treatment remained harsh: Chinese laborers had to work on Sundays, received extremely low wages and meager food rations, and were often punished with shackles and flogging [5]. The large number of Chinese in Peru and their tragic treatment made it more urgent for China to send a minister to negotiate with Peru.

2. Cui Guoyin's position on protecting overseas Chinese and his diplomatic strategies

Cui Guoyin (1831–1909), courtesy name Hui ren, also known as Xuansou, was a native of Taiping County, Anhui Province (now Huangshan District, Huangshan City). He passed the imperial examination in the tenth year of the Tongzhi reign (1871) and was appointed a Compiler of the Hanlin Academy in the thirteenth year. In the fifteenth year of the Guangxu reign (1889), he was recommended as a Reader of the Hanlin Academy and appointed Minister to the United States, Spain, and Peru. In 1891, he was ordered to transfer to the position of Compiler-in-Chief of the Hanlin Academy. During his tenure as Minister to the United States, Spain, and Peru, Cui Guoyin was stationed in the United States. Before his two-year mission to Peru, he had repeatedly negotiated with the U.S. government on the anti-Chinese laws enacted by the United States and the frequent anti-Chinese movements across the country. He also handled numerous anti-Chinese movements in other Latin American countries besides Peru, accumulating rich diplomatic experience. After dealing with the anti-Chinese incident in San Francisco in 1890, Cui Guoyin began preparing for his mission to Peru.

Cui Guoyin's direct purpose in visiting Peru in 1891 was to present his credentials, while his actual purpose was to investigate the living conditions of Chinese in Peru. In a letter to Cui Guoyin, Wu Jun, Counselor to Peru, wrote: "No overseas Chinese have suffered more abuse than those in Peru." Although China and Peru had established diplomatic relations and explicitly stipulated the protection of Chinese in the treaty, "the country has no proper governance, and superiors and subordinates collude; the treaty is not enforced, merely empty words," leaving Chinese in Peru "still suffering under tyrannical rule" [9]. Cui's visit was to represent China in inspecting the Peruvian government's fulfillment of its obligations to protect Chinese as stipulated in the treaty, so as to decide whether to allow Peru to import Chinese laborers.

Before his departure, Cui Guoyin utilized his planned itinerary to seek protection for Chinese from local officials through consular relations with other countries along the way. On the twenty-first day of the twelfth lunar month in the sixteenth year of the Guangxu reign, Cui Guoyin visited Secretary of State James G. Blaine at the U.S. Department of State to take his leave, informing him that he would depart for Peru on Chinese New Year's Day. Blaine stated that he would instruct the U.S. Minister to Peru and the U.S. Consul in Panama to assist the Chinese mission, and Cui Guoyin thanked him for his kindness. On the second day of the first lunar month in the seventeenth year of the Guangxu reign, Cui Guoyin's mission boarded a ship in New York bound for Peru. While passing through Panama, Cui's prior preparations paid off: the Governor of Panama invited him to a meeting. During the meeting, Cui ingratiated himself with the Governor by presenting gifts and obtained his promise to protect Chinese. After arriving in Peru on the twenty-second day of the first lunar month, Cui Guoyin learned of the civil unrest in Chile, Peru's neighboring country. Since China and Chile had not established diplomatic relations, Cui could only request the British Minister to forward a message to the British Minister to Chile, asking for protection on behalf of Chinese there.

After arriving in Peru, through contact with local Chinese organizations, Cui Guoyin was able to gain an understanding of the situation from the perspective of Chinese in Peru. On the twenty-first day of the first lunar month, Cui Guoyin's mission arrived in Callao. Wu Jun, Counselor to Peru, and more than twenty Chinese merchants came to greet them, and they traveled to Lima by special train. On the third day after arriving in Peru, the twenty-third day of the first lunar month, Cui Guoyin visited the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce and Charity to pay his respects and inquire about the conditions of Chinese in Peru. During the meeting, Cui focused on two issues: the number of Chinese in Peru and the Chinese-Western School. When Cui asked about the total number of Chinese in Peru, the Chinese merchants were unable to answer, so Cui instructed them to conduct a survey. He then asked whether the number of Chinese in Peru had increased or decreased in recent years and was informed that more Chinese had left than arrived, so the number should be smaller than before. Finally, Cui asked why the Chinese-Western School had so few students. The Chinese merchants replied that traditional education such as the Four Books and Five Classics could be taught by the older generation who had received traditional education, and they did not expect the next generation to achieve profound attainments in traditional scholarship, so there was no need for special schooling. Western education, on the other hand, required hiring foreign language teachers at a high cost, and funding could not be raised, so they hoped to close the Chinese-Western School. Faced with their refusal, Cui tried repeatedly to persuade them, but the Chinese merchants remained stubborn on this matter. In the end, Cui had no choice but to set the matter aside. Establishing the Chinese-Western School would have better promoted the integration of Chinese in Peru into Peruvian society and cultivated a group of talented individuals proficient in both Chinese and Western learning among Chinese in Peru. Although he did not succeed, Cui's urging of Chinese merchants to establish the Chinese-Western School reflected his open-mindedness and foresight.

In the process of negotiating with the Peruvian government, Cui Guoyin flexibly used diplomatic means to collect information, utilized public opinion to gain sympathy from all sectors of Peruvian society, and urged the Peruvian government to protect the rights and interests of Chinese. On the twenty-fourth day of the first lunar month, the former Peruvian President and the former Peruvian Minister to China visited Cui Guoyin, and Cui took the opportunity to request the Peruvian side to verify the number of Chinese in Peru. On the first day of the second lunar month, the number of Chinese in Peru was finally confirmed: “(Peru has) a population of 2,631,000, indigenous people of 250,000, and foreign businessmen and workers of 78,000, including over 60,000 Chinese” [9]. This indicates that Chinese merchants accounted for the majority of foreign businessmen in Peru. On the twenty-sixth day, Cui Guoyin, on behalf of the Qing government, presented his credentials to the Peruvian President, emphasizing Sino-Peruvian friendship and requesting the protection of Chinese rights and interests in accordance with the Sino-Peruvian Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation. During his stay in Peru after presenting his credentials, Cui met with ministers from various countries and figures from all sectors of Peruvian society. Through interactions with these senior officials, Cui created a favorable public opinion environment for China in Peru. In addition, through Cui’s efforts, the Qing government was able to collect a series of data on Peru’s finance, railways, military, specialties, and population, enhancing China’s understanding of various aspects of Peru and facilitating the work of protecting overseas Chinese.

During his mission to Peru, while handling mission-related work, Cui Guoyin also paid close attention to world affairs and China’s border issues. On the third day of the first lunar month, while on the ship, Cui learned about the United States’ recent shipbuilding plan through conversations with the American captain, including the number of ships to be built, materials used, and hull data. He sighed that the Qing court should learn from the United States and develop its own shipbuilding industry instead of blindly purchasing from foreign countries. On the fourth day, he paid attention to the newly built Siberian Railway in Russia and analyzed the benefits it would bring to Russia after completion. On the sixth day, he heard that Russia had stationed troops in Hunchun and felt anxious; he also commented on the new tariff policy introduced by the United States. On the eleventh day, he learned that Britain had built a new railway in Burma to connect to Yunnan. Cui attached great importance to the new railways built by Western powers around China, believing that they would deepen China’s border crisis. He wrote in his diary: “Russia is building a railway in Hunchun, connecting to the north; France is building a railway in Vietnam, and Britain is building a railway in Burma, pressing against the south. In a few decades, China’s border defense will be in urgent danger [9]!” Before and after arriving in Peru, unrest occurred in both Peru and Chile. Cui was worried that this would endanger local Chinese and made arrangements accordingly. On the third day of the second lunar month in Peru, while meeting with the Brazilian Minister and the Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cui also paid attention to the U.S. tariff increase and the European situation, pointing out that the Triple Alliance of Germany, Italy, and Austria-Hungary was intended to contain Russia. Such examples are numerous. His willingness to absorb new foreign things without exclusion and his calm analysis of foreign threats instead of blind arrogance fully demonstrate his pragmatic nature.

The issue of Chinese laborers was an important part of Cui Guoyin’s mission to Peru. Sino-Peruvian relations during this period were relatively stable. On the one hand, Peru had an urgent labor shortage and needed Chinese laborers, so it had demands on China. On the other hand, Peru was relatively weaker than China and unable to act like Western powers. Although China and Peru had signed the Sino-Peruvian Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation as early as 1874, Peru not only failed to fulfill its obligations to protect Chinese as stipulated in the treaty but also frequently violated it. The Qing government dispatched several investigation teams to Peru to conduct on-the-spot investigations into the treatment of Chinese laborers, but their living conditions failed to improve fundamentally. As mentioned earlier, the investigation teams found that the living and working conditions of Chinese laborers remained harsh, and they were even shackled like slaves. The Peruvian government’s actions violated the Treaty in fact and lacked a basis in international law. In his negotiations with Peru, Cui Guoyin actively sought sympathy from both Peruvian society and the international community, and at the same time submitted credentials to Peru through diplomatic channels to express China’s legitimate demands, making efforts to protect the rights and interests of Chinese in Peru.

3. The dilemmas of late Qing diplomacy reflected in Cui Guoyin’s mission to Peru

Since the signing of the Sino-Peruvian Treaty of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation in 1874, to confirm the situation of Chinese in Peru and protect their interests, the Qing government has dispatched several investigation teams to Peru for on-the-spot inspections. The more influential ones include Yung Wing’s mission to Peru in 1874 and Zheng Zaoru’s mission in 1884. Consulates were also planned to be established in Peru to strengthen exchanges with the Peruvian side. However, by the time of Cui Guoyin’s visit to Peru in 1891, the treatment of Chinese laborers on plantations was still tragic, a large number of Chinese immigrants had left Peru, and the living conditions of Chinese had not been fundamentally improved. The slow progress in protecting Chinese in Peru reflected the multiple dilemmas faced by the Qing government in its transformation from traditional diplomacy to modern diplomacy, which were manifested in Cui Guoyin’s diplomatic work.

The failure of Cui Guoyin and previous ministers to resolve the Peruvian labor issue was first due to the imperfection of the Qing diplomatic system. Before the establishment of the Zongli Yamen, diplomatic affairs were handled by the Board of Rites

and the Lifan Yuan (Court of Colonial Affairs). In 1861, the Qing court established the Zongli Yamen, and diplomatic affairs were transferred to it. Strictly speaking, the Zongli Yamen was not a specialized diplomatic institution. Its members held a mix of old and new ideas, and their responsibilities were unclear. In terms of work nature, the Zongli Yamen was often intertwined with the Grand Council, to the point where almost all Grand Councilors concurrently served as Zongli Yamen ministers. This made its work content often indistinguishable between internal and external affairs, focusing too much on issues unrelated to diplomacy, which seriously hindered the efficiency of handling diplomatic affairs. In addition, the Qing government's long-term lag in understanding international law created many obstacles to the work of protecting overseas Chinese. The Qing government's understanding of modern sovereignty was fragmented. When other countries violated signed treaties, Qing diplomats often failed to reasonably use international law tools, resulting in the long-term failure of the signed treaties to play their due role. The lack of international law education in the Qing Dynasty further exacerbated this problem. Although the Qing Dynasty translated *Elements of International Law* with the help of American missionary William Martin in 1864, the Qing court only used it as a reference book for negotiations and did not incorporate it into the bureaucratic training system. This meant that a considerable number of Qing officials still relied on traditional "barbarian affairs" experience when handling foreign affairs. Even senior diplomatic officials like Cui Guoyin only gradually accumulated experience in dealing with modern diplomatic affairs through practice after being dispatched abroad, which should have been laid a foundation for in China.

In addition, the generally immature diplomatic thinking among Qing diplomatic officials was another reason for the meager achievements in diplomatic work. Specifically for Cui Guoyin personally, he entered officialdom through the imperial examination and had a solid foundation in traditional Chinese learning. His diplomatic thinking was also deeply influenced by traditional Chinese culture. Cui often compared the modern diplomatic situation he faced to the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, and drew on the methods of ancient people in history books to handle feudal relations when interacting with other countries. Such behavior easily led him to insufficiently in-depth analysis of the diplomatic situation, resulting in misjudgments. Regarding his attitude toward Russia, Cui simply explained Russia's series of actions as "distant friendship and near attack": "Russia's scheming mostly consists of distant friendship and near attack. Distant friendship means maintaining diplomatic relations with all countries in Europe and America; near attack means eagerly seizing territory from neighboring countries" [9]. For Russia's invasion of Afghanistan, he simply attributed it to "innate nature" and failed to perceive the deeper economic and political reasons for the Anglo-Russian confrontation in the late 19th century. This made him overly vigilant against Russia while ignoring threats from other directions, and even proposed allying with Japan to prevent Russia's expansion into Korea. In handling the issue of Chinese laborers in Peru, influenced by the thinking of traditional scholar-officials, Cui spent most of his time in Peru interacting with Peruvian and foreign officials, but did not attach enough importance to contacting the most persecuted Chinese laborers in Peru, which greatly reduced the final diplomatic achievements.

Finally, the weakness of the Qing Dynasty was the fundamental reason why it could not fulfill its responsibility to protect overseas Chinese. Although the "Tongzhi-Xianfeng Restoration" presented by the Qing Dynasty after the Self-Strengthening Movement deceived many foreign observers, Cui Guoyin was well aware of the Qing Dynasty's superficial strength and internal weakness. It had extremely limited resources to counteract the open violation of treaties by other countries. Even though Peru's navy only had "three warships, each of no more than 300–400 tons," and its army had only "4,000 soldiers" and "3,371 street patrols," totaling only over 7,000 troops [9], and its economy was on the verge of collapse after the war, the Qing government was unable to take effective measures to counteract its harsh treatment of Chinese and violations of the treaty, truly powerless. Dealing with border crises had already exhausted the Qing government, making it unable to bear the cost of supporting overseas Chinese across the ocean. Taking the establishment of embassies and consulates as an example, the backwardness of the Qing Dynasty's embassy and consulate construction was not only due to the obstruction of conservative forces but also because the Qing Dynasty's financial strait was unable to cover the operating costs of overseas embassies and consulates. Cui Guoyin himself also held a negative attitude toward the construction of embassies and consulates. He wrote in his diary: "The reason why China is unwilling to establish consulates is that establishing an official position means increasing an expense. The national treasury is tight, and we cannot be extravagant. This intention is very reasonable. However, the cost of establishing consulates in foreign countries is borne by merchants and civilians, because the country establishes officials for the people, and the people naturally raise funds for the officials. When China first proposed establishing a consulate in Singapore, it was suggested that the cost of consulates be covered by ship registration fees. But after the consulate was established, it was not the case. The imperial court did not want to go against their wishes and made concessions. Since then, the cost of consulates has been borne by the state" [9]. This not only shows the limitations of Cui Guoyin's diplomatic thinking but also confirms the fact that the late Qing Dynasty was unable to promote the establishment of embassies and consulates due to financial difficulties.

4. Conclusion

As Minister to the United States, Spain, and Peru, Cui Guoyin focused most of his work and energy on handling Sino-U.S. relations during his tenure, making the part of his diplomatic career related to Peru not particularly prominent. However, it still reflects the normal state and dilemmas of the Qing government in handling diplomatic affairs to a certain extent. During his

negotiations with Peru, Cui met with various figures, presented credentials, held discussions with Chinese merchant groups, and collected various information about Peru through multiple channels. His efforts to seek protection for overseas Chinese were not only out of his love for his compatriots but also the fulfillment of the responsibility of the Qing government as the legitimate government of China at that time to protect its citizens.

The dilemmas faced by Cui Guoyin in his mission to Peru exposed many problems in the modernization transformation of late Qing diplomacy. These problems prevented the Qing government from fulfilling its responsibility to protect its citizens. Although Cui Guoyin realized some of the crux of the problems and put forward targeted solutions, the era he lived in and his own limitations made it impossible for these suggestions to be implemented, ultimately making his entire diplomatic career somewhat difficult. Although Cui Guoyin's mission to Peru failed to significantly improve the situation of Chinese in Peru, it still achieved some results. The credentials he submitted to Peru clearly expressed China's position. The collection of various information about Peru enhanced the Qing government's understanding of Peru, helping to make more pragmatic decisions in future Sino-Peruvian exchanges. The discussions with Chinese groups in Peru strengthened the sense of identity of Chinese in Peru with China and deepened their connection with their motherland. The statistics on the number of Chinese in Peru facilitated the management of Chinese in Peru by the Lima Embassy and Consulate and the protection of their interests.

References

- [1] Berrocal, W. M. (1999). *El otro lado del azul: 150 años de inmigración china en Perú* [The other side of the blue: 150 years of Chinese immigration in Peru]. Fundación Editorial del Congreso del Perú.
- [2] Pastor, H. R. (2018). *Estudio periodizado de la historia de la comunidad china en Perú* [Periodized study of the history of the Chinese community in Peru]. Paper presented at the XVI Congress of the Latin American Association for Asian and African Studies, Lima, Peru.
- [3] Pastor, H. R. (1979). *La revuelta de los rostros pintados* [The Painted Face Uprising]. Instituto Andino de Perú.
- [4] Morse, H. B. (2005). *The international relations of the Chinese empire* [History of the foreign relations of the Chinese Empire]. Shanghai Bookstore Publishing House. (Original work published 1918)
- [5] Stewart, W. (1985). *Chinese coolies in Peru: A history of the Chinese indentured laborers in Peru, 1849–1874* [History of Chinese coolies in Peru]. Ocean Press.
- [6] Pastor, H. R. (1975, May 27). El infierno de los chinos peruanos: Prólogo a “Crónica de los coolies chinos” [The hell of Chinese Peruvians: Prologue to “Chronicle of Chinese coolies”]. *El Diario de Trabajo* (Supplementary Edition), p. 5.
- [7] Segal, M. (1967). Esclavitud y trata de coolies en Chile [Slavery and coolie trade in Chile]. *Revista de la Universidad de Chile*, 75, 120–135.
- [8] El Peruano. (1856, March 8). Decreto de la Congreso revocando la Ley China [Decree of the Congress revoking the Chinese Law] (Official Announcement). Lima, Peru.
- [9] Cui, G. Y. (1988). *Ri ji of the mission to the United States, Spain, and Peru* [Diary of the mission to the United States, Spain, and Peru]. Huangshan Book Society.