

## Yauyos y Tomas

After studying economics and earning a bachelor's degree from New York University, I was excited to come to a country with such a diverse and intriguing economic situation. It is a prosperous time in Peru as more people decide to leave rural life and integrate into urban, populated communities. Small towns are growing at a surprising rate as people reap the rewards from the effects of agglomeration. These effects, coupled with an improving national infrastructure, are raising wages and the overall standard of living for the Peruvian people. The most interesting aspect of Peru is its unique geography and how it applies to the country's economic situation. As a result of the seemingly impassable Andes mountain range and the natural benefits to trade from being near the ocean, a heavy concentration of the population and economic activity is located on the Pacific coast. With over half of Peru considered a part of the Amazon jungle, only a stunning 5% of the population lives in this part of the country. As technology and infrastructure improve, parts of Peru will become much more accessible and it will be fascinating to learn how these areas are affected as a result.

Under the tutelage of Dr. Richard Webb of the Instituto del Peru, based out of the Universidad de San Martin de Porres, I became aware of a newly constructed road from Cañete to Huancayo formally named Route 22. This road stretches through the departments of Lima and Junin, totaling close to 310 kilometers of paved road (Ministerio de Transporte y Comunicaciones). The road was built in segments and in total took close to a decade to finish, which occurred in 2008. The small towns located between Cañete and Huancayo have thus been made increasingly accessible within the past five years and have become a useful case study to seeing how more commercial traffic affects a region. I decided to take a four-day journey starting from Lima and ending in Huancayo, with two overnight stops in towns located in between these two cities. The first night I stayed in the provincial capital Yauyos, located just off of Route 22, and the second night I stayed in a smaller town named Tomas, which was several hours away from Yauyos. My goal was to document, through observing and questioning the local people, how the new road impacted the civilians' lives, specifically in economic prosperity. I attempted to tease out a potential relationship between levels of connectivity and overall prosperity. Connectivity, in this sense, is a combination of things such as road quality, levels of traffic and distance from a major urban area.

To get to my first stop, the town of Yauyos, I had to depart from the La Molina terminal at 6 AM by means of a bus company called San Yuan de Yauyos. Unfortunately, there are several bus terminals in the district of San Luis, Lima and having gone to the wrong terminal first, I was forced to take another taxi to get to the right terminal. Two taxis and twenty-seven soles (\$11) later I arrived at La Molina terminal with only a few minutes to spare to catch my bus. The ticket for the bus was twenty-five soles (\$10), cheaper than the two taxis I had just taken, and I was frustrated at how a six hour bus ride could be cheaper than less than twenty minutes in a cab. In Peru, like many other countries, people pay a very steep tax on convenience. After getting on the correct bus, the nearly

forty passengers were subjected to several minutes of vendors boarding the bus to sell various goods before we were able to finally leave. This was a common theme of the bus ride to Yauyos as many vendors along the way came on board for brief periods of time to sell their juices, grapes, empanadas, sandwiches and other snack items to the passengers of San Yuan de Yauyos. It was actually a surprisingly lucrative business as I saw many people on the bus, myself included, buy goods from several of the vendors. In addition, there was no shortage of buses heading south of Lima to go to the beaches of Asia or further south to Peru's southern cities. Along the way it became apparent that the seat number on my ticket was meaningless as the bus would stop for any passenger that flagged it down. At one point the bus became so crowded there was no place to stand let alone sit down.

Our first stop was at just after 9 AM in the town of Lunahuana for breakfast. I elected to stay on the bus for the duration of the stop, but this is where a large portion of people permanently exited the bus while the rest grabbed a quick breakfast and came back to their seats. The road to Lunahuana had already been paved prior to the construction of Route 22, as it is a popular tourist destination for rafting and is only a couple of hours from the capital. It is only after departing Lunahuana that I was able to observe and travel along the new road. Shortly after leaving Lunahuana I engaged in a conversation with an elderly woman by the name of Emma and her son Felix, who was about my age. Emma had become interested in me as I was the only non-Peruvian on the bus and had expected me to get off of the bus in Lunahuana. Emma asked me what I was doing heading to this remote part of the country and in response I showed her some of the questions I had typed up to ask people about the new road. Emma had family in the area and thus was her reason for heading to Yauyos. This was very convenient for my research because it was clear she had been traveling this route for many years.

Emma told me that before the new road had been constructed it was impossible to take a bus anywhere close to Yauyos. The only way to travel there would be to pack into a taxi or minibus for over twelve hours. Now, even with various stops along the way and at a comfortable pace it only takes about six hours. Emma informed me that now it is possible for her and Felix to go to visit their family for a few days at a time and much more frequently as there are scheduled bus departures. Before the new road she would visit once or twice a year because of the rigorous nature of the journey and the infrequent and irregular departure times would force her to stay a week or two at a time. Emma noticed that I was taking numerous pictures, so when she saw any trace of the previous road she would almost forcefully insist that I take a picture of it. She was ecstatic for me to be visually capturing and taking a genuine interest in part of her history and life. I quickly realized that the construction of Route 22 was less the manufacturing of a new road but more the creation of the only road that had ever really existed in this remote area. The glimpses of the previous road she showed me were nothing more than a dirt path snaking up into the mountains.

The second time the bus stopped for an extended period of time was in a village called Catahuasi for lunch. I was invited to sit and eat lunch with Emma and Felix and did so. It was clear that the workers in the restaurant were expecting us and within no more than a couple minutes the twenty

plus people in the restaurant all had food in front of them. The restaurant owner was aware of the tight schedule the bus was running and was flying around as fast as humanly possible to serve us all within this allocated time frame. Felix had taken quite a liking to me and after showing me pictures of all of his friends and family insisted to pay for my lunch, a very generous offer.

It was at this time that I began to comprehend the trickle down effects of the new road and what it meant to the people along it. The obvious affects, such as the bus company being able to operate and the people it employs, as well as life being made easier for people like Emma and Felix were clear. However the restaurant owners, and more generally the people of Catahuasi, are able to make a living based around the several buses stopping daily and eating food in their town. I think it would be fair to say that the economy of Catahuasi has been entirely transformed by its fortunate location on Route 22 as well as its favorable distance from Lima. More so, the numerous vendors that boarded the bus throughout the journey were able to make money through the sale of their goods to the passengers. It is similar to the idea of the multiplier effect with regards to monetary policy in economics. Even the smallest changes can have a much greater impact than anticipated.

Moreover, the operator of our specific bus had a close relationship with many of the people in the villages we passed. Before we left Lima he had purchased a stack of newspapers and along the road to Yauyos had a predetermined route in which he would drop off newspapers and chat with the local people for several minutes before continuing. Whereas outside knowledge and important news once was limited in these areas, the local people now are able to read about and learn what is going on in other parts of Peru through this facet.

After six hours the bus went through a village called Magdalena and I was instructed to exit. The bus that I was on only traveled along Route 22 with its final destination being the city of Huancayo. Yauyos is ten kilometers off the main road up a windy mountain path and only certain buses go along this route. I had to transfer for a nominal fee to a bus that was conveniently right behind San Yuan de Yauyos to another bus company, Bus Reyes. The road heading up to Yauyos was clearly much older and more worn down than any stretch of the Route 22 and could only be traversed at about half the speed. Yauyos is one of the bigger towns in this region and is the capital of the province that shares its name. However, arriving in Yauyos I was surprised that it was not nearly as big as I anticipated. There are only two roads in the town, one that goes into the town and the other that leaves. There are very few sleeping accommodations and similarly not many places to eat. Yauyos, like the road that led to Yauyos off the main Route 22, had clearly seen better days.

I eventually found a place to sleep called Hotel Inge. However, it was not as much a hotel as it was a woman's poorly repaired house that had extra rooms for guests to sleep. My room had a door that was a plank of wood that you could padlock to the wall to prevent unwanted entry. The bed had an unusual and terribly uncomfortably U-shape which made it impossible for me to sleep on my side. However, for a mere seven soles (\$2.5) per night I can safely say that the price was right. The woman who owned the building was shocked to see me and was almost suspicious of why I had come to Yauyos. I showed her the same questions I had shown Emma but received a much different reaction.

Unlike Emma, who had been excited to help and offer whatever information she could, the woman at the hotel begrudgingly answered some questions but refused to give me her name.

She told me that there had been several important changes to her life since the road was created. She informed me that many cars come and go from Yauyos and there are vans that leave every hour from Cañete to Huancayo that bring goods and allow her to leave town. Before the creation of the road she explained that she would rarely if ever leave town. Now, because the road has drastically cut the travel time and transportation is easily accessible, she leaves town from time to time to buy clothes or visit family. Now she sees different goods more regularly than before including fuel, chicken, different vegetables and clothing. She also told me that occasionally there are tourists who come to stay with her but I had been the first in several months. She assured me that Yauyos had become more prosperous and bigger in size yet I had trouble seeing it.

Yauyos had numerous grand ministry buildings but all of which seemed very rundown and had not been used in many years. There was no evidence of new construction or renovation of infrastructure. The town appeared to be slowly falling apart and the people of the town seemed content to let it happen. Despite a truck that would pass by once every few hours it was clear that there was not an overwhelming amount of commercial traffic. Most trucks and buses continued past the small town instead of heading up the dead end road to Yauyos. From the twenty-four hours I spent in Yauyos I noticed very few people my age. Additionally, of the surprisingly small total population of Yauyos a vast majority were either much older or very young children. I asked one man if this was a normal day in Yauyos or, since I was there near the holidays, if people had left to see their families. He responded by assuring me this is what Yauyos was like on a regular day. When I asked him why there appeared to be so few people in my age demographic he informed me that most people over the age of 16 leave to either Huancayo or Lima for better education. I assume very few of those that leave decide to come back.

I was confused, as I had predicted the road to have a profound economic effect on Yauyos. However the new road seemed to me, an outsider, to have very little effect on the prosperity of Yauyos. People I asked all assured me that the new road not only made their lives much easier but that it had brought economic prosperity to them. However, it was hard for me to find tangible evidence of this. I am sure that the availability of a much wider array of goods are more accessible and to an extent more affordable now in Yauyos. Transportation costs have dramatically decreased and the potential for people to leave without much trouble is clear. The life of an average person in Yauyos is undeniably easier in many ways. Yet the notion that Yauyos was "richer" or commercially much more busy than it used to be would be a hard case to make. It seemed that a significant amount of trade and economic potential never decided to travel those ten kilometers off of Route 22.

After staying in Yauyos for the better part of a day I decided to continue my journey along Route 22 to a small town called Tomas. From asking around the town I found there were two ways to get to Tomas from Yauyos. One would be to wait for Bus Reyes to leave back towards Lima and then wait in Magdalena for a bus towards Huancayo. The other option would be to take a taxi directly from Yauyos

to Tomas. My first choice was to take the more cost effective form of traveling, the series of buses. However, in order to do so I would have had to wait until nighttime, which is when Bus Reyes departed, and then wait for an indeterminate amount of time for a bus to come through Magdalena. Instead I found a row of about five taxis near the small main square, as this appeared to be the taxi station of Yauyos.

I asked the man in the first taxi on line if it was possible to take me to Tomas. At first he asked an exorbitant price of seventy soles (\$27) for what I had found out was only about an hour and half journey. After haggling with him for a short time and explaining why I was in the Yauyos region he told me he could do it for twenty soles (\$8) if I waited thirty minutes to leave. Being in no rush I accepted to wait and ended up spending half of that time asking him questions about the road towards Huancayo.

He informed me that he had been a taxi driver for close to ten years and that even five years ago it was impossible to head further east from Yauyos. The road was of such poor quality that the only way to get to Tomas from Yauyos would be on dirt bike. Before the creation of Route 22 he was limited to driving only between Chupaca, the nearest urban area to Huancayo, and Huancayo. Route 22 has greatly expanded his taxi territory and thus has increased the scope of his business. Now he has half a dozen more destinations he can shuttle people to and from and he was more than happy to draw me a rough sketch of the path he generally takes every day.

In retrospect I was very foolish to think that the taxi I was taking to Tomas would be a direct and personalized journey. This idea should have quickly been diminished when he told me to return in thirty minutes and as I waited saw several people load into my taxi. By the time I returned I noticed that the station wagon I was promised a ride in had been fully loaded with goods and people. I crammed myself next to the three other people sitting in the back seat. One more person hopped on the lap of the man riding in the front seat. It was the first time I had been in a car with seven people meant for five passengers. Not to mention the several hundred pounds of goods on our laps and under or feet. It was at this moment that I realized that twenty soles was probably not the price the other passengers were paying to get to Tomas.

The road to Tomas was stunning in terms of scenery but also in road quality. At this point along Route 22, the road snakes along a river and you pass through several crudely made tunnels. The environment is lush with breathtaking mountains totally encapsulating the road. Just driving along this road for a couple of hours made the entire adventure worthwhile and made me forget the fact that it was impossible to move my legs within the car. At each small village the driver would stop and drop off a package he had been given from Yauyos or the previous town and grab another package to take to the next. He had successfully blended the art of the taxi driver and deliveryman.

Once we began to approach Tomas I was surprised to see tourist signs. There were several within a few minutes of each other promoting hiking and lodging within the town. Tomas is located within the Reserva Paisajistica Nor Yauyos-Cochas and there is an expensive tourist lodge located near Tomas. This area, known for its natural beauty, is a tourist destination. However, I'm sure that few tourists actually do make it out this way.

Route 22, unlike in Yauyos, does actually run through Tomas. The only actual road in Tomas is Route 22 and it runs right through the center of town. After stepping out of the taxi once we pulled into town, I was immediately ushered by a young man to enter a hotel, which was right on the main square. The hotel looked modern and was definitely constructed within the past three or four years. I can only assume it coincided closely with the completion of Route 22. The hotel had several satellite dishes attached to its roof and a small internet café located on its first floor. The room was clean and the bed was infinitely more comfortable than the one in my hotel in Yauyos. In addition, each room had a private bathroom and shower. Considering that Tomas is not even on most maps of Peru I was very impressed with the quality of the hotel as well as the infrastructure in the town.

Tomas was indeed smaller than Yauyos and still noticeably impoverished but it had an unquestionable charm that dwarfed that of Yauyos. Tomas is within the province of Yauyos yet seemed to have left its provincial capital city behind in terms of marketability to tourism and economic activity. It was a joy to see a much younger age demographic in Tomas. There were numerous construction workers, as well as owners of small shops and restaurants that all appeared to be in their twenties. At this point I was just pleasantly surprised to meet people that were not shocked to see me enter into their town. At both ends of Tomas there were archways that cars would pass under that said thank you for your visit.

After spending some time organizing my belongings in my room I went down to the little Internet café to tell my family I was alive and well. While it did take close to forty minutes to access my email home page I was eventually able to send a message. I then spent a couple of hours looking around the small town and tried to pay close attention to the traffic habits of Tomas. Luckily, since there is only one car accessible road in the town, this was a relatively easy task. I noticed ten automobiles pass through the town over a two-hour span and, extrapolating from this, would say that at least sixty pass through every day. The automobiles that passed by were anything from a small taxi, like the one I arrived in, to larger trucks used mostly for mining. The town of Tomas had approximately three to four times the amount of traffic I had noticed in Yauyos.

When it came time for dinner I peered into one of the resident's houses that had a poorly designed "restaurant" sign outside. The food in the Yauyos region had been of a significant lesser quality than food in Lima and for some reason, I was craving some fried trout. I asked the woman inside of the house if she could make me some trucha frita and she enthusiastically responded yes and proceeded to lead me inside. As I walked through the restaurant I realized this was not really a restaurant in any traditional sense. The restaurant consisted only of this woman's kitchen within her humble abode. I took my seat at the table next to a couple of elderly gentleman eating soup. They seemed a little surprised to see me sit at their table and once I was seated they began to apologize and get up to leave. I insisted that it was more than fine for them to share my table and that I would actually appreciate them doing so. They were still hesitant until I bought them each a beer and then they began to lighten up.

The more vocal of the gentleman was a man named Arturo, who was the husband of the

woman's house we were eating in. Arturo used to be a mathematics teacher for what I understood as a form of middle school. He was a very intelligent man and was excited to hear that I was doing research and working for a university in Lima. Arturo primarily lived in Huancayo his whole life for work, while the rest of his family lived in Tomas. The construction of Route 22 allowed for him to actually see his family on a regular basis for the first time. At one point Arturo grabbed my notebook and began to read some of my notes. He was mostly interested in the writing of the local people I had accumulated since Lima. He seemed unimpressed with their observations and depth so, after finishing his beer, began to write his own thoughts on the road and its effects.

Arturo stressed the importance of mining on the region and that the majority of the money for the road was put towards this specific purpose. He explained that the vehicles coming to and from Tomas are predominantly trucks shipping mining goods or the cars of mining officials. The local people utilized very few of the vehicles that could be seen on Route 22. The effects of Route 22 were not principally designed to help the people of the Yauyos region, but nonetheless have improved their lives significantly.

Arturo described what seemed like a bleak scene for Tomas some years ago. Now there are newly constructed buildings and bridges and Tomas has indeed grown in size and population. The shopping locations are new and have been responding to an increased demand for goods in Tomas, mainly from the people traveling through the town. Arturo told me that the level of education had also been enriched in Tomas. The access to knowledge through books and also the Internet has greatly increased the scope of what the kids in Tomas can learn and talk about. People in Tomas have been given chances to experience a wider range of goods and information. This is an unprecedented change that was not possible before the creation of the new road.

Arturo also explained to me that the population of Tomas was much more dynamic now. People are able to come and go as they please. Instead of spending their entire lives in the town, they go on trips to Lima or study in Huancayo. The agrarian lifestyle was still a major part of life in Tomas, but its importance is dwindling especially among the new generation. People are not forced into this particular way of life anymore and have considerably more opportunities. For example, as we were talking, Arturo's son came in with black and white attire and talked to me about his religious training near Huancayo. While Route 22 was not solely meant to enhance the lives of these people, it is clear that road development can have a profound effect on peoples' way of life. The increased economic prosperity of towns like Tomas and others along Route 22 is a byproduct of having a better road for mining transportation and equipment.

The following day I headed to Huancayo to conclude my journey, passing through the towns of San José de Quero and Yauricocha. I was told a van would be able to take me from Tomas to Huancayo at nine in the morning and ran every three or four hours. I waited in the center of Tomas near my hotel until around ten thirty when the van actually arrived. I noticed a man who had been in my taxi from Yauyos. I remembered that he had brought a bag full of Christmas gifts, mostly digital

items. Now he had a similar bag but with different presents to bring back to Yauyos. I managed to grab the front seat of the van and got to enjoy the beautiful view for just over two hours.

Along the road to Huancayo, Arturo's point became even more apparent. During the two-hour journey we passed six or seven different vehicles. All but one were trucks carrying huge piles of materials and goods. It truly is a shame that so few people actually travel along this brand new road. The local people have never needed cars before and now do not have the capital to acquire one. As the country grows this region will prosper as a result of its close proximity to Lima and natural resources. The region of Yauyos is fortunate to be mineral rich and so close to a major trading route unlike many parts of Peru. This case study would be far different in a more remote part of the country.

Reminiscing on the journey I came away with two significant insights. First was the widespread effect it had on the people in the region. Economic activity has generally increased with people being able to trade more freely. The new road brought an influx of new goods, some of which are helpful for educational purposes. Lower transportation costs and higher bargaining power, due to better access to various forms of communication, have raised the local peoples profits. The vertical nature of the effects are impressive, with everyone from businessmen to juice sellers benefiting from better connectivity. The ability to be more mobile brings access to new markets and allows people to leave and then return with new capital. Lastly, there seemed to be an age demographic shift as younger people took advantage of this mobility and left for bigger cities. These effects are generally beneficial and the overwhelming consensus of the residents of Yauyos about Route 22 was positive.

My second observation is with regards to the drastic differences between the towns of Tomas and Yauyos. Tomas seemed to be on the rise while Yauyos was more stagnant. The only major difference between these two towns is their geographical location and distance from a main road. Even through simple observation I would safely say that there is a positive correlation between what I define as connectivity and increased prosperity. Yauyos and Tomas are similar in many ways but Tomas benefits from a much higher degree of connectivity. There is more commercial traffic, better roads and is only two hours away from the city of Huancayo. Yauyos has all of the ministry buildings and is formally the capital of the province. However, the devastating geography of the town has limited its progress, in a strictly economic standpoint.

As Peru grows so will this region and it will be interesting to see if the trends that I observed continue in Yauyos. I think it would make for another interesting case study to revisit this area in ten years with similar observations in mind. Perhaps a rebound is looming for Yauyos or maybe Tomas will overshadow Yauyos in a few more years. I would like to thank Dr. Richard Webb for all of his help and support throughout this research opportunity. In addition, I would like to commend the people of this region for their welcoming demeanor and help along the way. I was traveling alone and in

unfamiliar terrain yet never felt lost or uncomfortable during any point of the journey. I hope to return to this area and more generally to the wonderful country of Peru in the near future.

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