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Altın Madenciliği ve Kırsal Ekonomideki Değişimler: Bergama Örneği/ Gold Mining and Changes in Rural Economy: Bergama Case in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

This paper will look at rural economy and environmental impacts of gold cyanidation, a metallurgical technique of extracting gold from low-grade ore in three villages, Çamköy, Narlıca and Ovacık, in Bergama, Turkey since 1990s. I argue that the mining business has transformed existing rural economy in Bergama. The related changes are as follows: 1) the emergence of mining-related job market in Bergama, 2) the decline in agricultural production and public demand to the locally farmed products due to concerns around cyanide contamination in water in Bergama, 3) the impact of mining activities on underground water resources for agricultural production in Bergama. While some members of the community have seen these as inevitable outcomes of the development of mining industry, others have been very much concerned about the environmental and economic impacts of the cyanide use in mining. Parallel to these changes, one also observes that a significant rift among the community members in terms of their support for mining operations. In order to understand the changing dynamics of rural economy and development of mining industry in Bergama, this research will utilize surveys, in-depth interviews, focus groups and will include archival research and available statistics. It also offers insights on differences in public perception towards rural economy, gold cyanidation and mining in the villages of Çamköy, Narlıca and Ovacık.

KEYWORDS Gold mining; rural economy; agricultural production; environmental and economic impacts