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## Sergey Esenin: the Baku Period of Life and Creativity of the Great Russian Poet

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**Abstract** – Sergey Esenin is one of the most read Russian poets and at the same time remains one of the least studied. Thus, this article is devoted to the Baku period of Esenin's life, as he lived in Azerbaijan in 1924-1925. We have studied this period on the basis of newspaper articles, contemporaries' memoirs, as well as scientific works of 60 Azerbaijani researchers. These works are important not only for the popularization of Esenin's poetry and classical Russian poetry in general, but also for Azerbaijani-Russian literary and cultural ties.

**Keywords** – Russian poetry; Sergey Esenin; Baku period; Azerbaijani-Russian literary and cultural ties; contemporaries' memoirs.

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# Sergey Esenin: the Baku Period of Life and Creativity of the Great Russian Poet

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## 1. Introduction

Particular forms of literary ties have always been widely used and continue to be used in the world to relate different cultures and different peoples (Eagleton; Bochner). Although Azerbaijan regained its state independence in 1991, there was a certain stagnation in the Azerbaijani-Russian literary ties during a short period of time (Cornell). These ties and interethnic relations in various areas of life have been revealing themselves in even more rational form since the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Swietochowski). In our case, communication and mutual understanding between people have a great impact on the efficiency of such ties and on their regular development. The impact of outstanding literary artists of different people, as well as the impact of their personal ties in literary creativity, is undeniable in this matter.

Undoubtedly, friendship ties between the representatives of the leading intellectual class of Azerbaijan and Russia – Bakikhanov and Griboyedov, Bakikhanov and Pushkin, Bestuzhev-Marlinsky and Akhundov, Zardabi and Tolstoy – had a significant impact on the development of Azerbaijani-Russian cultural ties, as well as on the growing interest of Russian poets and writers for Azerbaijan.

In the first half of the XIX century, Azerbaijan was visited by such famous representatives of the Russian intellectual class as A. Griboyedov, A. Pushkin, M. Lermontov, and A. Bestuzhev-Marlinsky; in the second half of the century – by Ya. Polonsky, A. Ostrovsky, A. Chekhov and M. Gorky. In the early twentieth century (before the revolution), V. Bryusov and A. Kuprin visited Baku. After the revolution, the same city was visited by a number of famous Russian poets and writers – M. Gorky, V. Ivanov, V. Khlebnikov, S. Gorodetsky, V. Kamensky, N.N. Tikhonov, A. Fadeyev, D. Bedny, S. Yesenin, V. Mayakovsky, V. Kirshon, I. Utkin, N. Aseev, P. Antokolsky, K. Simonov, M. Aliger, V. Lugovskoy, A. Adalis, Y. Dolmatovskiy, etc. Although most of them had short-term visits to Baku, there were writers (for example, V. Ivanov, S. Gorodetsky, V. Khlebnikov, S. Esenin), who lived and worked there for a while. For instance, Maxim Gorkiy wrote after visiting Baku: «The oil fields remained in my memory as a perfect picture of the grave hell. This picture suppressed all the fantastic ideas of depressed me, I was aware of». And V. Ivanov lived in Baku almost for five years, giving lectures at the Baku University. He was awarded a D.Litt. degree and an academic status of a Professor. S. Gorodetsky, who lived in Baku for some time, was a member of several literary societies during the period of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (May 1918 - April 1920). He wrote a series of poems dedicated to oil worker's life.

It is pertinent to point out that Gorodetsky is a witness to the fact that parts of the XI Army of the Red Army entered Baku, and Soviet power was established in Azerbaijan, which he accepted with enthusiasm and immediately joined in cultural and organizational work. «Baku was still free from the Bolsheviks, and in the local café “Merry Harlequin” the visiting avant-gardists discussed anxiously the eternal problems of art and the problem of survival. [...] In December 1919 I read a poem “Coffee” about the island of Java, which was soon translated into English, French and Dutch» (Gorodetsky).

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V. Khlebnikov visited Baku several times, as he was seriously interested in the East. Impressed by the great Nizami's poem "Layla and Majnun" he even wrote his own poem – "Layla and Madlum". At the end of his life, V. Khlebnikov returned to Baku and lived there for a certain period of time.

Despite the fact that Sergey Esenin is the most widely read Russian poet, unfortunately, he is also considered as one of the least studied (Yushin). However, if this statement can be attributed to Esenin's work as a whole, it is impossible to affirm the same with regard to the Baku period. The poet's connections with the literary process in Azerbaijan, his work used by translators, and the problem of poetic exploration have been studied in various aspects of Azerbaijani literature (Turabov; Khalilov; Kurbanova; Shipulina; Mammadova; Mahmudova; Isaxanli). However, this does not mean that the Baku period of Esenin's creative work was studied entirely, that there were no pages left unexplored.

Despite the fact that almost a whole century has passed since the Sergey Esenin's first visit to Azerbaijan, new information, facts and memories are still emerging today. His work is still considered as an 'unflagging source' for readers and researchers (McVay; Tagisoy). Moreover, Esenin's works are translated into different languages, there is music composed on the basis of his poems, and poetic works are dedicated to him. Artists, sculptors and representatives of other arts are inspired by his creativity in creating their own masterpieces. This is a clear demonstration not only of the Azerbaijani interest in the creativity and personality of the Great Russian poet, but also of the world's (Skorokhodov). In Mardakan there is still a three-room house where in 1924 and 1925 years the great Russian poet Sergey Aleksandrovich Yesenin lived. Now this is a house-museum. Since 1999, becoming a branch of the Nizami Museum, it is available to anyone who wishes to bow to the eternal memory of an early departed poet.

The period of stagnation in studying S. Esenin's creativity and his relationship with Azerbaijan has begun when the Azerbaijani-Russian literary ties weakened on the back of political events in the 1980s and early 1990s. However, the decree of the President of Azerbaijan (1995), issued on the back of the 100th anniversary of the poet's birth, started a period of more intensive work in this direction. The number of articles related to S. Esenin's creativity, studies and works translated into Azerbaijani language has increased. Esenin's works have been not accidentally re-translated in Azerbaijani over the past two decades. There have been attempts made to examine the period of his work, tied to Azerbaijan, under a new perspective. Azerbaijan's literary community has been paying close attention to S. Esenin's creativity and personality for a long time, and the process has not stopped yet. His translated works and poetic dedications written by A. Nazim, S. Rustam, M. Rahim, R. Zyak, F. Godzha, A. Ziyataya, M. Araz, N. Kesemenli, R. Rovshan, Anar, A. Kurchayli, A. Jamil, J. Novruaz, N. Hazri, M. Ismayil, S. Mamedzade, E. Borchaly and dozens of other well-known Azerbaijani poets are considered as an expression of great interest, love, respect and honour to the Great Poet. In the monographs and other articles, reflecting on S. Esenin's relations with Azerbaijan, the author of these lines tried to present these dedications, translations and information about where they were printed to the readers as fully as possible.

S. Esenin's relations with Azerbaijan, as well as the Baku period of his life and creativity, are so rich, varied, interesting and attractive that they require a comprehensive and in-depth study of all the details. This proves that there are many white pages in the Azerbaijani Esenin Studies; "Sergey Esenin and Azerbaijan" can be considered as a timeless subject matter. If we bear in mind that almost a century passed since Esenin's first visit to Azerbaijan, it will become even more urgent to study the literary environment that existed during that period of time, the true facts, based on an impartial analysis, as well as to consider and present the process of developing Azerbaijani-Russian literary ties objectively based on the work of the Russian poet.

At the same time, there are many unexplored moments related to the Baku period, which are important. Thus, this article is the first paper to present the Baku period of S. Esenin's life

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and creativity through the prism of Azerbaijani scientists' research and contemporaries' memoirs. Research materials were taken from the archives of the Azerbaijan National Library, the Library of the Academy of Sciences and the libraries of Azerbaijani universities. The subject of the study involved scientific research (articles, theses, monographs) by sixty Azerbaijani researchers concerning the Baku period. In addition, the materials of eleven periodicals were analyzed. Namely: *Bakinskij Rabochij* (Baku Worker), *Trud* (Labor), *Baku, Molodezh Azerbaydzhana* (The Youth of Azerbaijan), *KASPIY, Literaturnaya Rossiya* (Literary Russia), *Sovetskaya Kultura* (Soviet Culture) newspapers and *Moskva* (Moscow), *SLOVO, Literatura Azerbaydzhana* (Azerbaijan Literature), *Revolutsiya I Kultura* (Revolution and Culture) journals. Some articles and various materials are taken from the authors personally.

## 2. Results and Discussion

### 2.1. Esenin's «Baku period» in newspapers (1924-1995)

The period of Esenin's life in Baku is considered as one of the most interesting and fruitful in his work. It is not accidentally called the "Golden Time", compared to the "Boldinsky Autumn" in A. Pushkin's creativity (Khalilov). During Esenin's lifetime, a number of his contemporaries appeared on the pages of the Baku press with articles about the poet's work. They were printed mainly in *Bakinskij Rabochij* (1924-1925) and partly in *Trud* (1924).

After his death (on December 30th, 1925), there were many writers published on the pages of the same *Bakinskij Rabochij* and *Trud* (1925, 1926). Those articles were related to Esenin's work highlighting the causes of his death. After that, there were no related publications for quite a long time, almost 30 years. It has been about 30 years since the first translation; there have been no references to his work until 1955. This is not a sign of indifference to his creativity in Azerbaijan, but a process coming from the attitude towards S. Esenin in the Soviet Union in general. Thus, while being in Baku in May 1925, Russian poet Yesenin wrote:

Farewell to Baku! I'll see you no more  
A sorrow and fright are now in the soul  
And a heart under the hand is more painful and closer  
And I feel the simple word "friend" more distinctly. (Faynstein 118)

However, the poet returned to the city on 28 July of the same year.

It's no secret that Esenin's life and career were full of successes and failures, twists and turns. His glory, not gained by others at his age, came with sometimes fair, but often inappropriate, malicious criticism, intolerable insults and even political persecution (Liang 017). On the one hand, this proved that Esenin's creativity perception is tricky, and on the other hand, this indicates that his work will forever remain a shining star on the poetic horizon.

These issues not only did not diminish during the poet's life, but neither after his death. On the contrary, their scope became wider in the political quarters. Thus, N. Bukharin, member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (b), published the "Evil Notes" (January 12th, 1927) in the leading Moscow newspaper – *Pravda* (at that time, N. Bukharin was its editor-in-chief). This paper has rung the curtain up for the "Yeseninism" phenomenon – prejudiced and targeted campaign against Esenin's personality and creativity. It has been strong by the middle of the century. On the one hand, "Evil Notes" were a 'literary' response to an article published in the same newspaper about a year ago by L. Trotsky, whose attitude towards Esenin's poetry was positive. On the other hand, it was an open manifestation of the political struggle between Bukharin and Trotsky.

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The attitude towards Esenin's work had a new character in the Soviet and in Azerbaijan since the 1960s of the last century (Logvinenko; Turabov). The poet's creativity began to be learned in a broader context: Azerbaijani poets, translators, art workers, writers aspired to keep it in the center of attention. The eve of the 70th anniversary of Esenin's birth presented us with memoirs of some Esenin's contemporaries, as well as articles, printed in various newspapers in Azerbaijani and Russian (Gurvich; Nepryakhin; Schweitzer; Chagin; Chagina).

There were more than 300 boiler-plates published in Baku in Azerbaijan and Russian. Let us note that 16 stories (8 articles and 8 advertisements) were printed during the poet's lifetime, the rest – after his death. In general, 24 stories related to Esenin were published in the Baku press (13 articles and 11 advertisements) during his lifetime. As we noted above, 16 of them were printed in the *Bakinskiy Rabochiy* newspaper, and 8 – in the *Trud* newspaper (5 articles and 3 advertisements). In general, *Bakinskiy Rabochiy* [Baku Worker] is a print newspaper, where Esenin was most often published. During his lifetime, 45 of his works were published on the pages of this newspaper. From this point of view, *Krasnaya Nov* journal, published under the editorship of A.V. Voronskoy since 1921, occupies the second place, as it published about 30 Esenin's works in 1922 - 1925. Unlike in *Bakinskiy Rabochiy*, the attitude towards Esenin and his work was ambiguous in the *Trud* newspaper. In some cases, there were pressmen, including M. Kamsky, publishing articles with gross expressions about Esenin's creativity and personality, showing a biased attitude towards the poet.

He published an interesting note *Our About Yesenin* in which he told of the poet's performances in Baku and ironically responded to the content of the *Stans*:

We also heard that he wants to “sit down” for Marx. But we again know: today he promises to “sit down” for Marx, and tomorrow he, Yesenin, will drink it in a tavern. (...) Yesenin says: “I am a poet, and not a couple of Demyan, – twenty-five million people read me.” We do not undertake to refute this statement (it is not necessary!), but at the same time we remind that Demyanov reads these entire hundred millionth Union. Yesenin, however, knows only those who did not swim in the springs of Marx and Lenin, and those who are so crazy, like Esenin himself, yearn for “those banks”. (Kamsky 5)

The *Baku* newspaper is the second after “*Bakinskiy Rabochiy*” that represented Esenin's most extensive work on its pages. Among 70 articles published by this newspaper, 50 were in Russian language and 20 in Azerbaijani. The “*Literatura i iskusstvo*” newspaper [Literature and Art] has printed the greatest part of articles about Esenin in the Azerbaijani (about 50). Based on the great interest and love for Esenin's personality and creativity in Azerbaijan, we assume that interest in S. Esenin's creativity will grow.

### 2.2. Esenin in contemporaries' memoirs

We can also find interesting information related to the Baku period of S. Esenin in the memoirs of his contemporaries (Faynstein 116; Gurvich 3; Nepryakhin 4; Schweitzer 183, 57; Chagin 252, 160; Chagina 5, 3; Manuylov 165; Boldovkin 84): how the poet travelled, what his habits were, how he treated the literary process of that time and how he behaved at the poetry evenings. Here is what P. Chagin wrote:

We went to the summer residence in Mardakan, near Baku, where Esenin sincerely read his new poems from the “Persian motifs” in the presence of Sergey Mironovich Kirov. Kirov, a man of great aesthetic taste, a brilliant literary figure and an outstanding literary critic in the pre-revolutionary past, reproachfully addressed me after Esenin's reading: «Why have not you created an illusion of Persia for Esenin in Baku yet?». Listen how he wrote, as if he was in Persia. We did not let him to go to Persia, considering the dangers that he could find there, and being afraid for

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his life. But you were instructed to create an illusion of Persia for him in Baku. Then do it! If it is not enough, he will imagine the rest. He is a poet, and a great one! (Chagin 253)

V. Manuylov learned about Esenin's return from Tiflis to Baku (September 20th, 1924) from P. Chagin in the editorial office of the *Bakinskiy Rabochiy* [Baku Worker] newspaper:

Sergey Aleksandrovich, dressed in a blue shirt with an unbuttoned band, without a jacket, has been exercising before my arrival. He was cheerful and friendly. The man recognized me immediately and, setting me on a chair, began to ask about my life for those three years that we had not seen each other. I have often noticed that separation does not alienate, but brings together. This was our case. We did not communicate and did not write letters, but nevertheless, we were even closer than were before parting.

While we were waiting for breakfast, Esenin spoke about his new poems, about the fact that almost all of them have already been attached to different editorial offices ... Then the breakfast was served. Esenin asked for a bottle of *tsinandali*. I ordered Turkish coffee. When he drank, he got a little cheerful ... and began to read in a low voice:

A golden grove has ceased at last its chatter  
In a merry accent of its birches' tongue  
Afar, a flight of cranes, dejected, flutter,  
No more lamenting over anyone...

Almost on the eve of his leaving, around the six of October, Esenin read poetry in a small narrow room full of literary members of the Bakinskiy Rabochiy. There were a lot of people. They were sitting on chairs, tables, window-sills, standing in the doorway. Esenin was leaning his elbows on the editorial table and was quietly, in an undertone, reading his newly written poems without looking at anyone[...].

E. Khlystalov wrote:

It is known that the poet visited Azerbaijan four times, here he wrote outstanding works, but only now (1989) it became known that Yesenin twice came to Baku to hide from the arrest and judicial reprisal, which was being prepared against him in Moscow. That is why the restoration of all the circumstances of the life of the poet in Azerbaijan is of undoubted interest ... I have no doubt that there are many people in Azerbaijan who personally knew Yesenin or they know about his activities in Baku from his parents, relatives and acquaintances. Their memories will help to open much new about the outstanding Russian poet. (225)

### 2.3. Esenin's creativity by Azerbaijani researchers

During Esenin's lifetime and even today, there were representatives of various nationalities among those who wrote about his work, especially related to the Baku period – Russians, Jews, Armenians, Georgians and other residents of Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani authors occupy a special place among the scholars studying the Baku period of Esenin's life and creativity. The Baku period of his life has been studied by a number of Azerbaijani researchers: S. Turabov, A. Khalilov, J. Guluzade, R. Novruzov, N. Tagisoy, G. Gurbanova, P. Mammadova etc. These researchers have published numerous articles, books, and monographs. They have defended the thesis not only about the Baku period of life of the great poet, but also about all his work in general. It should be noted that S. Turabov, A. Khalilov, G. Gurbanova, and P. Mammadova have studied Esenin's creativity more widely and more systematically than other researches.

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S. Turabov was recognized as the first Azerbaijani, who wrote about Esenin's work, occupying a peculiar place in the study of the Baku period in Esenin's life. In 1959, he published his first article, related to the Baku period of Esenin's creative work, in *Literaturnyy Azerbaydzhan* [Literary Azerbaijan] journal (Turabov). Later, he often turned to Esenin's literary heritage, covering certain aspects of his work in newspapers and journals. In 1964, S. Turabov published an *Azerbaijan in Russian Poetry* monograph. In this work, he devoted a rather large place to Esenin's work, expressed interesting thoughts about the influence of the Baku period on poet's general creativity, highly appreciated the role of his work in Azerbaijani-Russian literary ties development in general. Here is what S. Turabov writes about Esenin's unflinching love for his homeland: «The poet's greatest love is his love for his country. The poet expressed this love with such an impressive and amazing force that Pushkin himself would put his signature under those poems» (18).

A. Khalilov is one of the Azerbaijani researchers, who studied Esenin's work. He is the author of a number of articles and two books about Esenin. In his works, he expresses opinions about the place and role of the Baku period in Esenin's work, analyses various poems translated into Azerbaijani language, and notes the positive influence of Esenin's poetry on the work of a number of Azerbaijani poets. Speaking about how the poetry of the East has influenced Esenin's poetry (in the context of 'Persian motifs'), A. Khalilov comprehensively considers various aspects of the poet's work. Unlike another nine translators who turned to the 'Persian motives', only three – A. Kyurchayly, S. Mamedzade and E. Borchaly – completely translated all 15 verses of the cycle. With a close acquaintance with the translations clearly shows that translating S. Yesenin's poems is a matter of great complexity. In this regard, one of the best translators of S. Yesenin A. Kyurchayly wrote:

Yesenin is one of those poets that is read most of all and with love. At the same time he is the hardest-to-learn poet. This, in my opinion, is due to the fact that his poetry is colourful and distinctive. As the translator of the first book published in Azerbaijani, this difficulty, one might say, was felt in the process of work in every line, in every word and expression. (Novruzov 12)

In his *World Literature* monograph, A. Khalilov presents wide information about Esenin's work. Based on the *Coryphaeus of New Arabic Literature* written by A. Imanguliyeva (2003), the author conducts very interesting parallels between the life, creativity, personality and world views of Esenin and Jubran Khalil Jubran (1883-1931), an Arab poet and writer from Lebanon, «heir and bearer of Western and Arab cultures», «one of the prominent representatives of the Syrian-American school». He also notes that «this spiritual and moral affinity» is the topic for a broader study. A. Khalilov paid attention to Esenin's theme. In 1987, he defended his doctoral thesis "Development Stages of Interrelations between Russian and Azerbaijani Soviet Poetry", calling the second paragraph of the first chapter – "Esenin and Azerbaijan", and considering various issues on this topic.

In Azerbaijan, there have been two PhD theses in Philology devoted to Esenin's work by modern time: G. Kurbanova's thesis based on S. Esenin's and S. Rustem's poetry – "Folklore motifs and traditions in poetic creativity" – and P. Mammadova's thesis – "Azerbaijani translated versions of S. Esenin's works and their study". G. Kurbanova has devoted the first paragraph of her study to Esenin, the place and role of folklore in Russian poetry on the example of his poetic creativity, to the interrelation between tradition and innovation in poetic creativity. She writes:

Esenin's creative path was hard and tricky. There were dizzying ups along this path, there were insulting falls, but even in the most difficult times the poet did not break with the people's poetic tradition. This relationship has reflected itself not only in themes and genres, but also in the means of poetic style, intonation, melodiousness, in a sticking, juicy folk word. (Kurbanova 103)

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She speaks about the folklore traditions in Esenin's work in the third chapter of the thesis. However, this time it is not about national, but foreign folklore, about how Esenin skilfully used Azerbaijani folklore. The author notes that Esenin, who widely used Russian national folklore in his work, did not remain indifferent to the folklore of Azerbaijani people, perceiving Azerbaijani folklore in indissoluble connection with all the folklore of the East. Further, she writes that Esenin was deeply interested in Azerbaijani national folklore, used a number of Azerbaijani folklore tales in his works, and did not remain indifferent to Azerbaijani national musical instruments (*tar*, *zurna*) during his visits to Azerbaijan. She also writes that he took advantage of oriental folklore in the broad sense of the word in his works, especially in the "Persian motifs" (Chagina). In discussing the possibilities of even wider use of national Azerbaijani folklore, the researcher writes:

Considering the fact that Esenin was in touch with the East (and Azerbaijan) only the last two years of his life, 1924-25, when he came to our land (Esenin had visited the East, including Azerbaijan by 1924-25), we can assume that if not his untimely tragic death on December 28, 1925, this creative process (the use of Azerbaijani folklore) would be continued. (Chagina 3)

P. Mammadova's thesis is devoted to Esenin's poetry translated into Azerbaijani language. The author studies a number of translated poems, notes the positive influence of his poetry on the Azerbaijani translation school, and highlights the great merits of a number of translators, especially Aliaga Kurchayli. Although the issue of translating Esenin's works into Azerbaijani language and their analysis was reflected at different times by various researchers, it was the first time when this issue was selected as the main research topic and became an object of relatively wide study. The first chapter of the thesis is called "Esenin's Lyrics in Azerbaijani". The author writes: «Azerbaijani poet-translators turned to S. Esenin's creativity in the late 1920s. For known reasons, they, as well as the poets-translators of other national republics, turned to his work much less in the 1930s and 1940s» (Mammadova). Such judgment is somehow inaccurate. In the 1930s and 1940s, Esenin's work was not addressed by any Azerbaijani translator and there was no poem translated into the Azerbaijani language. The first appeal of Azerbaijani translators to Esenin's work dates back to 1955 after S. Rustem's translation in 1928. In that year, I. Soltan and A. Ziyatay translated "The Ballad of 26" and "Farewell to Baku". Then, the researcher compares the translated version with the original, as well as with other translated poems: "Scarlet light of sunset shows up on the lake..." (by A. Kurchayli and S. Mamedzade), "I do not regret, and I do not shed tears..." (by Anar and S. Mamedzade), "Good-bye, my friend, goodbye" (by Sh. Sadig, N. Kesemenly, Anar and A. Kurchayli), "A Letter to the Woman" (by A. Kurchayli and S. Mamedzade), expresses opinions on positive and negative sides of these translated versions.

The second chapter "«Persian motifs» and their versions translated into Azerbaijani language" is devoted to "Persian motifs" translated into the Azerbaijani language, which occupies a central place in Esenin's love lyrics. It should be noted that only eight poems from this cycle are involved in the analysis: "In Horossan there are such doors..." (by A. Kurchayli and S. Mamedzade), "My wound has stopped hurting...", "Blue homeland of Firdaus", "Silly heart, don't beat!", "The moon's cold gold...", "The evening light of the saffron land...", "To be a poet...", "Blue and merry land..." (by A. Kurchayli and S. Mamedzade). At the end of the paragraph, the author comes to the following conclusion: «Thus, it can be said that the translators of "Persian motifs" managed to convey its content in the Azerbaijani language» (Mammadova). The thesis extensively analyses only the first four poems. Since the remaining seven poems included in the cycle of fifteen are not involved in analysis at all, we cannot judge whether the translation is successful or unsuccessful. This is why we have to study and analyse the translated poems included in the "Persian motifs" more thoroughly. Only then we will be



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able to judge the quality of Azerbaijani translation. The first attempt to analyse the all translated poems of the cycle was undertaken by the author of these lines. Paradoxically, the author of the thesis devoted to the poems of the “Persian motifs” cycle analyses the “Farewell to Baku” translated by A. Ziyatay, R. Zyaka, A. Dzhamil and A. Kurchayli. However, this poem’s analysis is an unfortunate choice for the second paragraph. The very analysis of translated poems is sufficiently substantiated. The author is right in considering two poems translated by A. Dzhamil and A. Kurchayli as good ones.

In the third chapter devoted to poems translated into Azerbaijani, the author analyses only two of poet’s poems – “Anna Snegina” and “The Dark Man” not bringing to the analysis the poem “The Ballad of the 26”. At the same time, the author notes that A.Kurchayli has translated only three poems. However, this is true if we mean the first two poems. There were 3 versions of of the poem “The Ballad of the 26” – by A. Kurchayli (1975), I. Soltan (1955) and T. Bayram (1975). Therefore, “The Ballad of 26” would be interesting to analyse in terms of comparison.

In addition to these two theses, Sh. Mahmudova’s thesis “Aliaga Kurchayli and Poetic Translation Issues” was devoted to Esenin’s poetry translated by poets. The second paragraph of second chapter is called “A. Kurchayli and S. Esenin”. It is noted that Esenin is one of those poets, who have the most important place in A.Kurchayli’s translation activity. The paragraph analyses a number of Esenin’s poems translated by A. Kurchayli, highlights the indisputable role of the Great Russian poet in A.Kurchayli’s carrier as a translator. It should be noted that G. Shipulina has a special status among the authors who wrote about Esenin’s work in Azerbaijan . In general, G. Shipulina is the author of more than 50 articles and several books related to Esenin. Her articles are saturated with interesting information related to the Baku period of Esenin’s life, presented to public for the first time. They consider the influence of the Baku period on Esenin’s work, bringing to the forefront the role of his friends, especially the role of P.I. Chagin, Esenin’s connection with the *Bakinskiy Rabochiy* newspaper, and new information on his participation in a number of events during his stay in Baku. There have been discussed topics of Esenin and Russian-language poetry in Azerbaijan, music set to Esenin’s poems, interesting opinions about the prehistory of the “Persian motifs” and the personality of the lead female character of the cycle – Shagane. There also has been highlighted the role of Esenin-Kurchayli creative union in developing Azerbaijani-Russian literary ties, the role of an independent researcher on poet’s death. She also considered the issue of teaching Esenin’s creativity in Russian-language schools in Azerbaijan.

One can note G. Shipulina’s “Baku Esenin Studies” can be considered as the first attempt to study the role of Azerbaijani researchers in studying the Baku period of Esenin’s creativity. In the article, Esenin’s creativity study is divided into three stages: research papers published during Esenin’s lifetime; published immediately after his death and a new wave of research that began in the 60s. Although there is a rather extensive information on articles published during the poet’s lifetime and immediately after his death (Baku publications made during Esenin’s lifetime are more widely studied in another article written by this author (Shipulina 44), Esenin’s work is studied very superficially by Azerbaijani researchers of a later time. We can point only to the A. Khalilov’s book *Esenin and Azerbaijan*, highly appreciated in terms of Azerbaijani Esenin studies. Shipulina’s article provides the statement of a famous Azerbaijani writer I. Gasymov, as well as a quotation of the most popular translator of Esenin’s poetry to Azerbaijani language – A. Kurchayli.

It also mentions the article of the national poet N. Khazri, dedicated to one of Esenin’s lines – “Quietly are the roses running along the fields”– and provides information about Esenin’s poetry translated into Azerbaijani and about Azerbaijani poets, who dedicated their poems to him. In the mentioned article, there is no additional information related to Esenin’s work studied by Azerbaijani researchers. However, this article had a positive effect, as it was

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the first attempt to study Esenin Studies. In the article, the author highly appreciates the role of Azerbaijani researchers in the study of Esenin's creativity and notes the sincere love of Azerbaijani people for his poetry:

In the mid-sixties, before the 70th anniversary of Sergey Esenin's birth, a new stage in the study of his poetry and life begins. It is quite natural that Azerbaijani researchers are attracted mostly by the period of his work in Baku. Every study – both monographs and small articles – notes the genuine love of Azerbaijani people for the Russian poet, who fell in love with the Azerbaijan and the beautiful city of Baku that became his second homeland. (Shipulina 316)

Since G. Shipulina is a specialist in Russian lexicology, studies devoted to lexical structure of Esenin's language occupy a great place in her work. In this regard, her seven-volume "Esenin's Language Dictionary" is of particular importance. This fundamental work was published in 2013-2015. Its five volumes are devoted to a comprehensive study of poetic creativity (*Esenin's Language Dictionary in 5 Volumes*), two volumes to Esenin's prose. This is the first study that combines a complete lexical description of the poet's work. Its advantage is based on tables given at the end of each volume that cover various aspects related to the issues discussed in this volume. This contributes to a better understanding of studied issues. G. Shipulina's contribution is not limited to writing articles and books related to Esenin's life and work. She also takes an active part in the events dedicated to the Great Russian poet, makes presentations with rich and interesting information about his life and creative path. Thus, she contributes significantly to Esenin's poetry popularization in Azerbaijan, as well as to classical Russian poetry popularization, developing and strengthening the Azerbaijani-Russian literary ties.

### 3. Conclusions

In this article, we presented the Baku period of S. Esenin's life and creativity through the prism of contemporaries' memoirs and the research made by Azerbaijani scholars. Azerbaijani researchers, who have published numerous articles, books and monographs at various times, who defended several theses dedicated to S. Esenin's work, especially to the period of his work in Baku, continue to contribute to the broad study of the poet's work, and thereby, to promote the Russian Poetry popularization in the world. The primary sources and expressed judgments noted here clearly demonstrate the special role of Azerbaijani researchers in studying Esenin's work and also in developing the Azerbaijani-Russian literary and cultural ties, in their systematic studying and deepening.

Azerbaijani-Russian literary ties and mutual influence of these two worlds is expanding and deepening in various directions, including the role of Azerbaijani writers in Russian literature, and vice versa; the issues of translating works written by Azerbaijani poets and writers into Russian, and vice versa (the range of translated works includes Russian poetry of the twentieth century); and the gradually growing interest in these translations in terms of analysis and study. The list may also include such directions as the study of certain aspects of Esenin's creativity in parallel and in comparison with the creativity of Azerbaijani poets; a comparative typological study of translated Russian poetry, in particular Esenin's works and a number of other issues.

This incomplete list shows that the attitude of Azerbaijani literary criticism to Russian literature, its various problems, and, in particular case, to Esenin's relations with the Azerbaijani literary community, is interesting and relevant. Thus, a comprehensive study of certain aspects of S. Esenin's poetry is an important link in the process of studying the interacting Russian and Azerbaijani worlds and their literary ties.

Sergey Esenin's creativity, known to Azerbaijani readers since the 1920s, his poetry traditions had a positive impact on Azerbaijani poetry and more broadly on the entire Azerbaijani

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literature. In different periods, Azerbaijani literary artists have successfully used the opportunities created by Esenin's rich poetic heritage. Now, we can confidently speak about the positive impact that Esenin's creativity had on Azerbaijani literature. This impact as a process should be studied in terms of coherence with the main directions of literary criticism. In other words, the issues of Sergey Esenin and the Azerbaijani-Russian poetry ties, as well as the broader issues of Sergey Esenin and the Azerbaijani-Russian literary and cultural ties, are important, wide, and multi-directional.

In terms of considering various aspects of Russian-Azerbaijani literary ties based on Sergey Esenin's contacts with Azerbaijan, Azerbaijani literary criticism directions can be basically determined as follows:

- Baku period of Esenin's life and creativity: analysis based on a number of historical facts and data that were little studied or generally not studied at all;
- Esenin's Baku addresses and meetings: research based on factual information, including the memoirs of contemporaries and people he met;
- forming an objective picture about the history of Esenin's poems creation, including the cycle of poems entitled "Persian motifs" and dedications;
- preserving the ideologically-meaningful shades of S. Esenin's poems in their translated versions;
  - catching the original stylistic system, means of poetic style and artistic-aesthetic colours;
  - combining the artistic features of Russian poetry with the specific features of Azerbaijani national versification;
  - studying the impact of Esenin's creativity on the Azerbaijani school of translation, its formation and development.

These and other issues were under consideration in Azerbaijani literary criticism. Numerous studies were conducted; various approaches and judgments were made. However, there are still many pending issues within the "Esenin and Azerbaijan" matter. Besides the impact of Esenin's creativity on Azerbaijani poetry and literature, we have to study his poetic heritage in general in order to demonstrate how this subject affects the development of literary ties between the two peoples.

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