



AAC Publications

Asatiani, East Face, Imnaishvili, and Archil Peak, First Ascent

Georgia, Caucasus, Chaukhi Range

The east face of Asatiani is on the left, showing the 2024 route (yellow line) and 2016 route (blue line, first ascent of the face). The east face of Archil Peak, with the 2025 route in red, the first ascent of the peak.

Photo by Giorgi Tepnadze

In early October 2024, Bakar Gelashvili, Temo Qurdiani, and Giorgi Tepnadze climbed a new route up the east face of Asatiani (3,820m) in the Chaukhi massif. The remote eastern wall of Asatiani is part of the so-called Sajikhveebi cliffs, rising from Georgia's Khevsureti region. (Sajikhveebi means the place where the Caucasian steinbock lives.) The new line runs parallel to and left of a route completed in 2016 by Tepnadze and Archil Badriashvili (AAJ 2017).

Returning to the Chaukhi carried emotional weight because Badriashvili, the trio's friend and climbing partner, had died in an accident on Shkhelda just two months earlier. "For the first time, we gathered in the mountains without Archil," Tepnadze said. "Our hearts led us to this climb."

Unstable autumn weather and fresh snowfall led the team to question whether a high-grade rock route was the right goal. But when they reached the settlement of Roshka below the east side of the Chaukhi massif, their decision became clear. The closer they got to Sajikhveebi, the stronger the pull of the wall.

On October 5, after quickly setting up a base camp below the east side of the massif, they proceeded onto the glacier for a reconnaissance. Fresh snowfall had powdered the summits, but a single dry, golden wall stood out: clean, direct, and inviting. Anticipating a bivouac on the wall, the team packed a portaledge.

Early the next morning, the three men crossed the glacier, and at around 3,220 meters, they began simul-climbing Asatiani's lower rocky slopes. Above 3,500 meters, the main wall rose steeply, and the three belayed five long pitches, with significantly more free climbing than aid, up an obvious chimney system. This defining feature of the climb was vertical and sometimes tricky to protect, but offered a strong natural line.

By dusk, they reached a bivouac site in the snowy chimney where they could set up their portaledge like a tent, an unexpectedly comfortable shelter. The following morning brought stable weather, and the climbers soon topped out.

The new route had totaled 600 meters in height and was graded Caucasian 5B A2+. The climbers named the route Imnaishvili after a friend, Vano Imnaishvili, who had died on Mkinvartsveri (Mt. Kazbek) in December 2023.

During the descent, along the same route, the team observed a lower but still striking peak to the northeast—one they realized none of them had previously perceived so distinctly. When they returned to the village of Roshka, below the massif, they learned this summit was unclimbed and unnamed. Following a discussion with locals, the three climbers laid a plan to return and attempt the unclimbed peak, hoping to name it in honor of Badriashvili.

In late October 2025, the same trio—Gelashvili, Qurdiani, and Tepnadze—was joined by Vakho

Blagidze and Tornike Tepnadze for this mission. The team traveled from Tbilisi and established a base camp, and that evening they inspected a line on the east face.

They set off before dawn on October 31, crossing the glacier and moving by headlamp over snow-covered moderate rock. Sunrise greeted them on the first mixed pitch. Their line led through steep, wet terrain with sections of loose rock, demanding constant attention. All the pitches were led free. By afternoon, they reached the summit and shared a quiet, symbolic toast to “Archil Peak.” The descent largely followed their line of ascent. The 680-meter route was graded Caucasian 5B (TD+) M5+.

The decision to name this summit was made after careful deliberation. These climbers usually avoid naming peaks or routes, but in this case both the climbers and, most importantly, the local Khevsur community supported the new name.

For me, as Archil’s sister, it was deeply touching that the Khevsur people chose to name one of their peaks after him. This gesture goes beyond simple remembrance; it signifies respect and acceptance of Archil into a landscape where memories endure beyond individual lives. My brother had a deep fondness for the region and was passionate about the mountain mythology of the Caucasus; four-year-old Archil’s first “poem” mentioned Kopala, the Khevsuretian demigod. Archil’s peak rises above Abudelauri Lake, where, according to myth, Kopala fought the last devi, a malicious creature. A mountain named for Archil is not just a memorial but also a symbol that quietly mirrors who he was.

—Rusudan (Ruska) Badriashvili, Georgia, with information from Giorgi Tepnadze

Additional Thanks: The team behind these two climbs extends its gratitude to the people of Khevsureti for their encouragement and support, especially to Mindia Tsiklauri and Mindia Arabuli, who guided them in the region; to Babua Aludauri and Levan Qetelauri, their local contact and now close friends; and to the United Federation of Georgian Mountaineers. They also want to thank Dedali, the horse that carried their equipment during both the 2016 and more recent expeditions.

Video of the first ascent of Imnaishvili on Asatiani (English subtitles):

Images



Approaching Asatiani (left center) and Archil Peak (right center) from the east at the end of October 2025.



The east face of Asatiani is on the left, showing the 2024 route (yellow line) and 2016 route (blue line, first ascent of the face). The east face of Archil Peak is on the right, showing the 2025 route in red, the first ascent of the peak.



Giorgi Tepnadze climbing in the huge chimney followed by the 2024 route up the east face of Asatiani.



Temo Qurdiani (center) and Giorgi Tepnadze toasting the late Archil Badriashvili on top of of Archil Peak. The peak in back is Asatiani.



The late Archil Badriashvili dressed in traditional clothing from Khevsureti, near the base of Asatiani. Badriashvili died in an accident on Shkhelda in the Caucasus in 2024.

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