



Kwangde Nup, northwest face to west ridge, Slovo od Mladosti

Nepal, Rolwaling Himal

Matic Primožič on the lower section of the northwest face of Kwangde Nup. Photo by Urh Primožič
Matic Primožič and I (Urh Primožič, no relation) arrived in Nepal on September 20 to find completely dry conditions. We based ourselves in the Valley View Lodge (3,800m) at Thame. We originally decided to repeat Nick Bullock and Nick Carter's Edge of Darkness on the right side of the northwest face of Tengkangpoche, as it was the only significant line we could see that held any snow. However, in early October, five days of heavy snowfall created avalanche-prone conditions on most faces, and this forced us to turn to Kwangde Nup (6,035m, 27°48'1.92"N, 86°37'54.94"E). Its shaded northwest face offered safer post-storm conditions.

On October 7, after short acclimatization outings and a week of illness, we traversed from the settlement of Thyangbo (4,500m), beneath Tengkangpoche, to reach the northwest face of Kwangde Nup, where we cached gear. We rested back at the lodge for a day, then returned to Kwangde Nup and bivouacked below the face.

We began climbing at 3 a.m. on October 12. Unfortunately, Matic was still experiencing breathing difficulties, so I led throughout. We first climbed a prominent corner, then followed this with two steep pitches of technical, faceted snow and 300 meters of simul-climbing on a 60°–70° ramp with sections of WI3. Above, the face steepened and conditions deteriorated. A long, insecure pitch of AI5+ with no protection led to slightly easier terrain (70°), where at 5,500 meters we cut a narrow ledge for an uncomfortable bivouac.

On the 13th, our progress slowed as the snow quality worsened. After two demanding pitches on the left wall of a dihedral (M5 and M6+), we attempted to bypass the main difficulties above by traversing to the right across delicate snow shelves. Constant excavation was required to create foot placements and protection.

In midafternoon we encountered slabs covered with thin, poorly bonded ice. Moving back left, our attempts to climb a dry chimney of loose rock proved futile, but eventually we located a parallel system of rock ledges, reached via a short traverse left on unstable flakes. After two pitches (5.7/5.8), a rappel and pendulum got us back into the main corner as darkness arrived. A final pitch of steep, unconsolidated snow brought us to the west ridge (ca 5,850m) at 9 p.m. We bivouacked here under a rock overhang.

The next day, strong winds and an eyewear malfunction discouraged us from climbing the west ridge to the summit. We descended the route with many rappels and reached the bottom of the face in five hours. That evening, we were back in Thame, just one day before our scheduled departure date.

We named our new route to the west ridge Slovo od Mladosti (1,000m, AI5+ WI3 M6+, one move of A0/A1).

—Urh Primožič, Slovenia

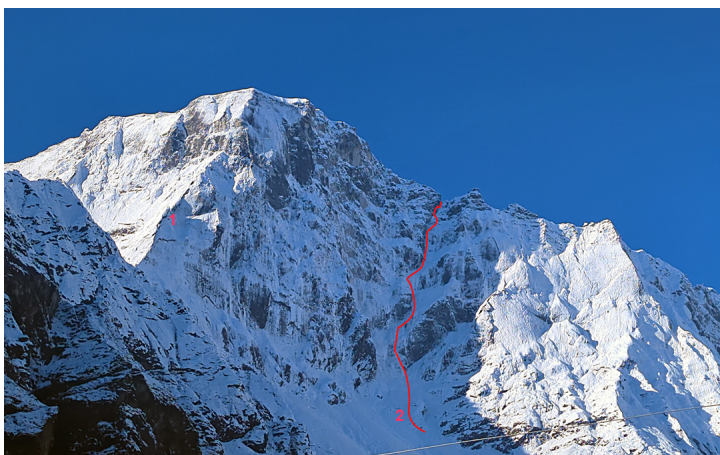
Historical Notes on Kwangde Nup: The likely first ascent of Kwangde Nup was in the autumn of 1984 by Kurt Arenoe (USA) and John Ball (U.K.). It is believed they climbed via the west ridge. Alan Kearney

(USA) soloed the northeast rib in 1989, and Americans Alex Lowe and Steve Swenson succeeded on the north pillar that same year, angling left to finish. A direct finish to the north pillar was climbed by two alpinists from the Czech Republic in 2001, while in 2008 Czech alpinists climbed the northeast face to the right of the Kearney route.

Images



Detail on the new route Slovo od Mladosti, climbed to the west ridge of Kwangde Nup in 2025.



The north side of Kwangde Nup (6,035m). (1) The north pillar, climbed in 1989 by Alex Lowe and Steve Swenson, who angled left to finish; a direct finish through the rock band was climbed in 2001. (2) Slovo od Mladosti (2025), the first route up the northwest face, climbed as far as the west ridge.



Bivouac below the foot of the northwest face of Kwangde Nup with the north pillar in profile behind.



Matic Primožič on the lower section of the northwest face of Kwangde Nup with the Thame Valley below.



Climbing into mixed terrain on the first day of the Slovo od Mladosti, northwest face of Kwangde Nup.



Matic Primožič on the rightward trending snow ramps of Slovo od Mladosti on the northwest face of Kwangde Nup.

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