

BOOK REVIEW:

Athens 2004 Olympic NOC Pins and Related Memorabilia, Vol. 1 – A Reference Guide

by Ioannis Thomakos, Epsilon World 2018.

Reviewed by Pete Wade

As the founders of the Modern Olympic Games began to visualize their dream to use sport to “bring the world together”, one of their biggest challenges was the daunting cultural and language barriers that made it difficult for athletes and officials to interact with each other. How can you get the French gymnast to mingle with the Japanese swimmer and the Hungarian boxer? As the Games progressed through their second decade, Olympic participants began to bring various tokens (mostly country flags and pins) as gifts for their counterparts, often using them to trade with each other. During the Athens 1906 Olympic Games, the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Sweden actually produced a pin specifically for this purpose. This trend caught on, and more and more teams participated, using “friendship pins” to make it easier to meet and communicate. By the 1930s, most NOCs were providing their teams with similar items.

After WWII, the concept of trading pins and other memorabilia began to be used by media, Olympic sponsors and advertisers. Not surprisingly, visitors to the Games were attracted by this unique phenomenon and found it to be exciting to take home a German pin or Australian pennant as a token of their Olympic experience. By the 1970s collecting Olympic memorabilia, and especially pins, had become a hobby on a world-wide basis. As this hobby grew, collectors began to realize that their items were a part of Olympic history. However, only recently collectors have begun to appreciate that they have a responsibility to manage their hobby and protect it as part of the legacy of the Olympic Games.

Recognizing this, renowned Greek scholar and Olympic collector Ioannis Thomakos created a compilation of all the pins and memorabilia for the Athens 2004 Summer Olympics, the first of its kind for an individual Games. The result is his beautifully-designed and professionally-produced “Athens 2004 OLYMPIC NOC PINS and Related Memorabilia”. This impressive document, with its

264 pages, encapsulates almost 1700 items from all over the world, complete with detailed images and descriptions, in addition to all kinds of other interesting data about the Games. This publication is not a catalog, but a “reference”.

Mr. Thomakos is to be congratulated for pioneering this extraordinary effort for several reasons. He has produced a valuable resource for both Olympic collectors and historians. He has established the gold standard for the compilation of memorabilia for other individual Games, both past and future. And, above all, he has provided a powerful example of vividly capturing an important part of the legacy of the Athens 2004 Games and its contributions to the Olympic Movement.

Available on Website: www.AthensNocPins.com

