

**PERSISTENCE OF DIFFERENCE: A HISTORY OF CORNISH
WRESTLING**

Volume 1 of 2

**Submitted by Michael Tripp, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for
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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to provide an historical analysis of Cornish wrestling and in particular to address the following key questions: How has Cornish wrestling developed as a sport? Why is Cornish wrestling 'different'? Why has Cornish wrestling survived? It was argued that in order to provide an adequate historical analysis it was necessary to locate the sport within an appropriate and relevant conceptual framework. Two fields of enquiry were identified as having the potential to provide this; mainstream British sport history and the 'new Cornish Studies'. The main ideas and debates that form the basis for these two areas were reviewed and it was argued that British sport history offered only a partial interpretation for the history of Cornish wrestling as the evidence suggests it is different from other sports. It was further argued that with its emphasis upon 'difference' the 'new Cornish Studies' in general and Payton's 'centre-periphery model' in particular offers a more appropriate conceptual framework, which is also rooted in a relevant local context. Payton developed his model to answer a number of questions relating to Cornwall's distinctiveness: Why is Cornwall 'different'? Why has this persisted? Why is there a strong sense of 'Cornishness' and separate identity which has survived until today? He concluded that Cornwall's 'difference' has persisted because of its historical experience, which in each period has been distinct from other areas of Britain and has led directly to a unique identity. In Payton's model, the privileged 'centre', which is the location of power and influence, is based largely in London and the south-east of England; whereas the 'periphery' is geographically remote from the 'centre', but dependent upon it. Payton proposed three phases of peripherality: 'First' or 'Older Peripheralism', characterised by geographical and cultural isolation from the centre; 'Second Peripheralism', which recognises the central importance of industrial change, producing economic and social marginality and 'Third Peripheralism' characterised by a 'branch-factory' economy promoting a process of 'counter-urbanisation'. The structure of the thesis follows the phases of peripherality and argues the evidence is consistent with Payton's 'centre-periphery model'. The evidence also demonstrates that Cornish wrestling is 'different' and that 'difference' has persisted over time because of Cornwall's historical experience, which in each period of peripherality has been distinct. Furthermore, throughout the entire period of the study, Cornish wrestling has been, and still remains, an important icon of Cornishness, which has ensured its survival.

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