

# International successes of Turkish judo: a historical perspective

## Authors' Contribution:

- ✍ A Study Design
- 📁 B Data Collection
- 📊 C Statistical Analysis
- 📄 D Manuscript Preparation
- 📁 E Funds Collection

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## Abstract

### Background and Study Aim:

Judo is an Olympic sport which is very popular worldwide. Turkish judo has developed in the recent decades and many successes have been achieved by Turkish judo athletes. However, no study has investigated the successes of Turkish judo. The aim of this study was of summary of successes of Turkish judo male and female athletes (senior category) in the Olympic Games, World Championships, European Championships and Mediterranean Games.

### Material and Methods:

This descriptive study was a research about the development of elite sport of judo in Turkey. Results were then grouped and analyzed according to the decade of success. Data were collected from several official judo websites.

### Results:

At the end of 2019, Turkish judo athletes has taken 100 medals (two in the Olympic Games, 10 in the World Championships, 39 in the European Championships and 49 in the Mediterranean Games). The number of the medals was highest in the 1990s and 2010s. The number of the medals was very low during 1980s. Men athletes contributed to the medal numbers more than women athletes as the percentage of medals achieved by men athletes was 66% of the total medals.

### Conclusions:

Turkish judo started to gain a place on the podium at international level in the 1990s and continued its success so far though during the first two decades all medals were achieved in the Mediterranean Games.

### Keywords:

aikido • combat sports • kurash • wushu

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Authors have declared that no competing interest exists

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**Combat sport** – *noun* a sport in which one person fights another, e.g. wrestling, boxing and the martial arts [15].

**Grappling** – *noun* (in combat sports such as wrestling and martial arts) the act of holding your opponent to subdue or control them [15].

**Aikido** – *noun* a martial art originating in Japan that involves throwing techniques that make use of an opponent's momentum to perform the throw and may also involve some strikes [15].

**Kurash** (also **kuresh**, **koresh**, **kulesh**, and similar variants) – refers to a number of folk wrestling styles practiced in Central Asia. Kurash wrestlers use towels to hold their opponents, and their goal is to throw their opponents off the feet. The wrestling is the main competition at the folk festival Sabantuy [16].

**Taekwondo** *noun* a Korean martial art that resembles karate but also employs a wide range of acrobatic kicking moves [15].

**Wushu** – *noun* Chinese martial arts considered collectively [15].

**Skill** – *noun* an ability to do perform an action well, acquired by training [15].

**Technique** – *noun* a way of performing an action [15].

## INTRODUCTION

Judo is an Olympic grappling sport [1] after being unbalanced in a vertical posture (see more about the judo and relations to other combat sports [2-9]). Judo arrived in Turkey in early 1950s and it started its official activities as a federation within the Wrestling Federation in 1962 [10]. Turkey in the first years of judo, judo advanced techniques unknown, judo was more developed around the person of skill in this sport. Judo has showed significant developments in the country and made a name for itself in the international arena with great moves [10].

Judo became an Olympic sport for the first time in 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games [11]. In 1966 judo became an independent federation in Turkey. Right after the establishment and assignment of the first president of the Judo Federation the first national championship and organized in 1967.

Federation carried out its activities as judo and taekwondo between the years 1969-1979, Judo and Karate Federation between 1980-1990, since 1990 it has served under the name of the Judo Federation. The presidents of the Federation, who were appointed by appointment until its establishment in 1993, started to work by election according to the regulations issued on that date and in the first elections Natk Canca became the President of Judo Federation. Since 1997, wushu, aikido and kurash were placed under the Judo Federation. Wushu and aikido were separated in 2006 and Judo Federation continued its activities as Judo and Kurash Federation until 2011. Finally, in 2011

kurash was separated from the body, from this date it has continued to pursue its activities in Turkey as Judo Federation [10].

Judo sport with these developments showed significant improvements in Turkey. According to Federation data on the Turkey, there are a total of 111,160 licensed judo athletes, including 72,984 male judo athletes and 38,212 female athletes [10]. Despite its the popularity in Turkey and recognition in the international platform, no data is available about its international successes since its foundation.

Thus, the aim of this study was of summary of successes of Turkish judo male and female athletes (senior category) in the Olympic Games, World and European Championships and Mediterranean Games.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

This descriptive study was a research about the development of elite sport of judo in Turkey. The data was obtained from different databases (www.judobase.org, www.judoinside.com and official websites of International Judo Federation [12] and Turkish Judo Federation [10]). Because the data were provided from open access website and athletes' personal information was not used, there are no ethical issues in analyzing or interpreting these data [13]. Olympic Games, World and European Championships and Mediterranean Games successes that Turkey have taken were identified. These results were then grouped and analyzed according to the decade of success.

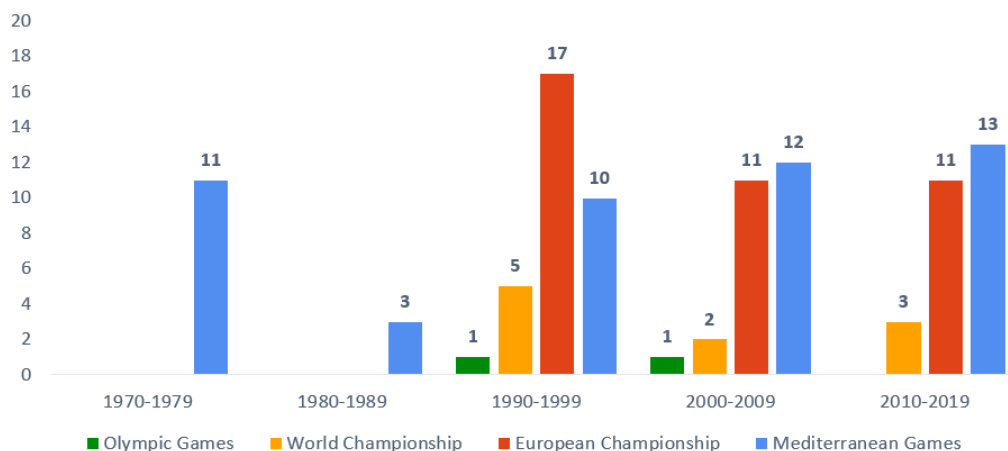
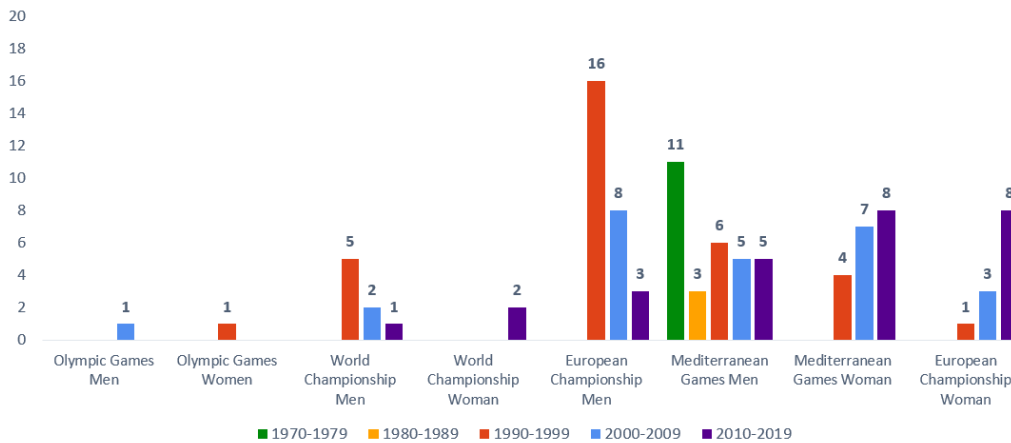


Figure 1. Medal distribution according to decades.



**Figure 2.** Medal numbers of men and women athletes according to decades and competition

## RESULTS

Turkish judo athletes has one medal in the Olympic Games for each gender in different decades (Figure 1). For all competitions, men athletes have been dominant in medal numbers when medal numbers are compared according to gender: 66% of the medals were taken by men athletes while 34% of the medals were taken by women athletes (Figure 2).

Turkish judo athletes has 2 medals at Olympic Games (one gold and one bronze – Table 1), 10 medals at World Championships (two silver and three eight bronze – Table 2), thirty-nine medals at European Championship (nine gold, four silver and twenty-six bronze – Table 3) and forty-nine medals at Mediterranean Games (seven gold, ten silver and thirty-two bronze – Table 4).

## DISCUSSION

The main findings of the study are as follows: The success of Turkish judo began in 1970s in the Mediterranean games and medals were achieved in the World and European championships in 1990s. The highest number of the medals was achieved during 1990s as indicated in Figure 1. First medal in the Olympic Games was also achieved in 1990s and

the second and last Olympic medal was achieved in the 2000s. Since then, no medal has been achieved in the Olympic Games. Medals in the European Championships have been maintained since 1990s but the number has decreased significantly. In the World Championship, the highest number of medals was achieved in the 1990s but it has decreased since then.

Golden age of Turkish judo was 1990s with 5 World and 17 European medals and beginning of 2000s with a gold in the Olympic Games. This was due to the adopted athletes (information was provided from an expert judoka with 20 years of judo experience) as all medals at World and European Championships were achieved by adopted athletes in the 1990s. Even in the 2000 Sydney Olympics the gold medal was achieved by an adopted judo athlete. It can be inferred that the difference between genders resulted from the above-mentioned situation as all of the adopted judokas were men. Furthermore, in women category Turkish judo has only two World medals which were achieved by again an adopted judoka. However, in young categories Turkish judo has developed a lot as cadet team of Turkey gained championships in the European Team Championship and European Team Youth Olympic Festival and third place in the World Team Championship in 2019.

**Table 1.** Olympic medals of Turkish judo athletes.

Year	Country	Athlete	Medal	Weight category
1992	Spain	Hülya Senyurt	Silver	U48
2000	Australia	Hüseyin Özkan	Gold	U66

**Table 2.** World medals of Turkish judo athletes.

Year	Country	Athlete	Medal	Weight category
1995	Japan	Bektaş Demirel	Bronze	U65
		Selim Tataroğlu	Bronze	OPEN
1999	Great Britain	Hüseyin Özkan	Silver	U66
		Selim Tataroğlu	Silver	OPEN
		Selim Tataroğlu	Bronze	0100
2001	Germany	Selim Tataroğlu	Bronze	0100
2003	Japan	Neşe Şensoy	Bronze	U48
2018	Azerbaijan	Kayra Almira Sayit	Bronze	078
		Vedat Albayrak	Bronze	U81
2019	Japan	Almira Kayra Sayit	Bronze	078

**Table 3.** European medals of Turkish judo athletes.

Year	Country	Athlete	Medal	Weight category	Year	Country	Athlete	Medal	Weight category
1993	Greece	Hülya Şenyurt	Bronze	U48	2002	Slovenia	İrakli Uznadze	Gold	U81
1994	Poland	Salim Abanoz	Bronze	U65	2003	The Netherlands	Hüseyin Özkan	Bronze	U66
		Selim Tataroğlu	Bronze	095			Özgür Yılmaz	Bronze	U90
1995	Great Britain	Bektaş Demirel	Bronze	U65	2004	Romania	Bektaş Demirel	Gold	U66
		İrakli Uznadze	Bronze	U78			Selim Tataroğlu	Gold	0100
1996	The Netherlands	Selim Tataroğlu	Bronze	095	2005	The Netherlands	Neşe Şensoy	Bronze	U48
		Selim Tataroğlu	Silver	OPEN	2006	Finland	Neşe Şensoy	Silver	U48
1997	Belgium	Hüseyin Özkan	Gold	U66	2009	Georgia	Gülşah Kocatürk	Bronze	078
		Selim Tataroğlu	Gold	0100	2011	Turkey	Hasan Vanlıoğlu	Bronze	U73
		Selim Tataroğlu	Bronze	OPEN	2012	Russia	Belkis Zehra Kaya	Bronze	078
1998	Spain	Selim Tataroğlu	Gold	0100	2013	Hungary	Ebru Şahin	Bronze	U48
		Hüseyin Özkan	Bronze	U66			Belkis Zehra Kaya	Bronze	078
		İrakli Uznadze	Bronze	U81	2015	Azerbaijan	Ebru Şahin	Silver	U48
		Selim Tataroğlu	Bronze	OPEN			Belkis Zehra Kaya	Bronze	078
1999	Slovakia	Selim Tataroğlu	Gold	OPEN	2016	Russia	Almira Kayra Sayit	Gold	078
		Hüseyin Özkan	Bronze	U66			Dilara Lokmanhekim	Bronze	U48
		Selim Tataroğlu	Bronze	0100			Belkis Zehra Kaya	Bronze	078
2000	Poland	Selim Tataroğlu	Silver	OPEN	2018	Israel	Bilal Çiloğlu	Bronze	U73
2001	France	İrakli Uznadze	Bronze	U81	2019	Belarus	Mikail Özerler	Gold	U90
		Selim Tataroğlu	Bronze	0100					

**Table 4.** Mediterranean Games medals of Turkish judo athletes.

Year	Country	Athlete	Medal	Weight category	Year	Country	Athlete	Medal	Weight category		
1971	Turkey	Suheyli Yeşilnur	Silver	U70	2005	Spain	Belkis Zehra Kaya	Gold	078		
		Kamil Korucu	Silver	U93			Selim Tataroğlu	Gold	0100		
		Ali Demir	Bronze	U63			Sezer Huysuz	Silver	U73		
		Namık Ekin	Bronze	U80			Aynur Samat	Silver	U52		
		Mehmet Ali Berber	Bronze	093			Neşe Şensoy	Bronze	U48		
1975	Algeria	Ali Demir	Silver	U70			Seda Ünal Karadağ	Bronze	U78		
		Adnan Özmen	Bronze	U63			Burhan Koçan	Bronze	U90		
		Suheyli Yeşilnur	Bronze	U80			Derya Cıbir	Bronze	U48		
1979	Yugoslavia	Ahmet Özdemir	Bronze	U71			2009	Italy	Gülşah Kocatürk	Bronze	078
		Suheyli Yeşilnur	Bronze	U78			Sezer Huysuz		Bronze	U73	
		Kamil Korucu	Bronze	095	Ebru Şahin	Gold	U48				
1983	Morocco	Veli Yılmaz	Bronze	095	2013	Turkey	Hasan Vanlıoğlu	Gold	U73		
1987	Syria	Haldun Efemgil	Silver	U60			Ahmet Şahin Kaba	Silver	U60		
		Alpaslan Ayan	Bronze	U71			Ayşe Saadet Arca	Bronze	U52		
1991	Greece	Haldun Efemgil	Bronze	U60			Bahar Bükler	Bronze	U63		
		Hakan Kapan	Bronze	U65			Belkis Zehra Kaya	Bronze	078		
		Alpaslan Ayan	Bronze	U71			Feyyaz Yazıcı	Bronze	0100		
1993	France	Salih Tufan Durmuş	Bronze	095			2018	Spain	Almira Kayra Sayit	Gold	078
1997	Italy	Hüseyin Özkan	Gold	U66	Bilal Çiloğlu	Silver			U73		
		Selim Tataroğlu	Silver	095	İrem Korkmaz	Bronze			U52		
		Neşe Yazıcı	Bronze	U61	Büşra Katipoğlu	Bronze			U63		
		Gamze Sakızlıgil	Bronze	U66	Nurcan Yılmaz	Bronze			U70		
		Zarife Yıldırım	Bronze	072	Bekir Özlü	Bronze			U60		
		Gülnigar Kumbasar	Bronze	U48							
2001	Tunisia	Neşe Şensoy	Gold	U48							
		Deniz Şilli	Silver	U73							

## CONCLUSIONS

Compared to well developed countries in judo such as Japan, Russia and France Turkish judo has a long way to have a place on the podium in senior category in the Olympics and this can be succeeded with the young generation. Turkish judo should develop appropriate formulas and effective methods for the future of Turkish judo as indicated for small countries like Slovenia and Kosovo [14]. The successes of young judo athletes stem from private coaches who find talented athletes via talent identifications.

Turkish judo started to gain a place on the podium at international level in the 1990s and continued its success so far though during the first two decades all medals were achieved in the Mediterranean Games. With the economic and scientific developments in judo and its popularity in Turkey, its future seems to be better with local athletes.

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