

[The Complete Bogu Buying Guide](#)



Buying Bogu, at any stage in your Kendo career, can be a difficult task. Whether you are an experienced player, looking for the perfect 2nd, 3rd or 4th set, or a beginner looking to invest in your first set, choosing the right Bogu for your needs is never easy.

In the western world, the daunting task is made even harder due to the lack of professional advice available and the inability to 'try before you buy'. The fact is that the task is wrought with misnomers and conflicting information, making the thought of laying out a large sum of hard-earned cash something of a minefield.

Naturally I am writing this article on behalf of Miyako Kendogu, and the Tozando group, however, more importantly I would like to stress that the advice I am writing is based on a collection of the following:

- My personal experiences as a Kendo practitioner and instructor both in Japan and abroad.
- My personal experiences as a professional Kendo equipment retailer having had the opportunity to inspect and test an array of products, as well as work with professional and experienced craftsmen to design new products.
- The collated advice and research of the craftsmen and advisors at the Tozando group.
- Direct Feedback and buying trends from customers, from both Japanese and International markets, including players of all abilities.

With that in mind I hope this serves to help Kendoka of all levels select the right Bogu for them.

The Misnomers

Here I would like to quickly address some of the most common misinterpretations that exist in the world of Bogu buying. Some of them may be controversial, as sometimes they are long upheld beliefs, even by Japanese players, however, the purpose of this article is to make buying Bogu in the modern market as easy and as clear as possible.

- "Ask your Sensei"

Perhaps it is controversial for me to suggest that our Sensei may not hold all the answers to our Bogu buying questions. However, this is one of the first and biggest mistakes many people make. Now I am not saying that you should NOT ask your Sensei, however, what I AM saying is that his/her opinion should be taken into consideration, rather than blindly followed. The production of Kendogu has changed dramatically over the last 10 years, and extremely rapidly so in the last 5 years. The fact of the matter is that although Sensei may have practiced Kendo 'since Adam was a lad', s/he has probably only ever has bought a new Bogu a handful of times. Here in Japan it is commonplace for Hachidan Sensei to ask the advice of the professionals, in order to make the right choice.

- *“Tight stitching is better”*

Bogu is generally referred to in its broadest terms by its stitch width. This is the width between the stitches which bind the Futon. Years ago it was firmly believed that the closer (or tighter) the stitches were together, the better or more protective the Bogu was. This is because the stitching makes the Bogu harder in its first years, giving the impression of being more protective. However, in recent years extensive research was done into the subject, and it was concluded that wider stitching is somewhat more favourable. The reason being, that tighter stitching pulls the materials of the Futon closer together, making the entire thing much thinner. In its initial use it can seem ‘harder’ and somewhat ‘shell-like’, however, as the Bogu is worn and the stitches break-in the Futon becomes softer, leaving the Bogu with a Futon which is both soft AND thin, and not as protective. Wider stitched sets, on the other hand, are more flexible from the beginning and are in general more comfortable to wear. The Futon is thicker, due to the fewer stitches and absorbs impact through ‘padding’, this way you have a Futon which is both soft AND suitably thick. These days in Japan, it is rather hard to even find a Bogu for sale which has tighter stitching than 3mm or 1.2 Bu.

- *“Tighter stitching is more expensive”*

Naturally, when a Bogu has a hand-stitched Futon, then tighter stitches become more expensive in terms of production, however, in the case of machine stitched Futon the differences in production cost are reasonably small. The main factors determining the cost of the Bogu are as follows –

- Materials – Top quality materials, leather, cotton, dyes etc. naturally cost more money.
- Craftsmanship – Skilled craftsmen are extremely rare and something of a dying breed. Therefore talented craftsmen command higher costs for their services. Good craftsmen generally do not make cheap Bogu.
- Made to Order – Naturally having a Bogu set tailored to your exact measurements and specifications costs more.
- Origin – If a Bogu set is made in Japan, then the price is generally higher. This goes hand-in-hand with craftsmanship as mentioned above, as the best Bogu craftsmen are generally living and working in Japan.
- Also, although many people would not like to think about it, unfortunately there is a darker side to the production of Bogu when it comes to keeping costs down. For example, some Chinese factories are producing extremely cheap Bogu sets, using low-grade materials, produced by factory workers operating in extremely poor conditions – often for low wages and with little or no care for quality-control.

- *So Bogu made in China is bad?*

No not at all, in fact, some of the factories in China are extremely good, sometimes even producing quality which rivals Japanese craftsmanship. However, it remains that there are a select few factories .which are producing cut-price, poor quality products, which has a negative effect on the reputation of all Bogu made in China.

- So how do I know if a Chinese-made Bogu is good or not?

Unfortunately there is no simple answer, the best thing to do is use a company which you believe to be open and honest about the quality and production of their products.

For example, the Tozando group has its own factory in China where the Bogu craftsmen are tutored and overseen by our leading Japanese craftsmen, using top-grade materials imported from Japan in order to ensure the best quality of products. Further, the Tozando group is dedicated to ensuring that all equipment produced there is done so by ethical means, and the best possible working conditions are provided. Further as I am personally responsible for the quality control of products on Miyako Kendogu, I personally inspect every product which is added, and I have a simple policy that, even with cheaper equipment, I do not offer anything for sale that I would not be prepared to use in Keiko myself.

So what should I actually base my decision on?

-Materials and Craftsmanship

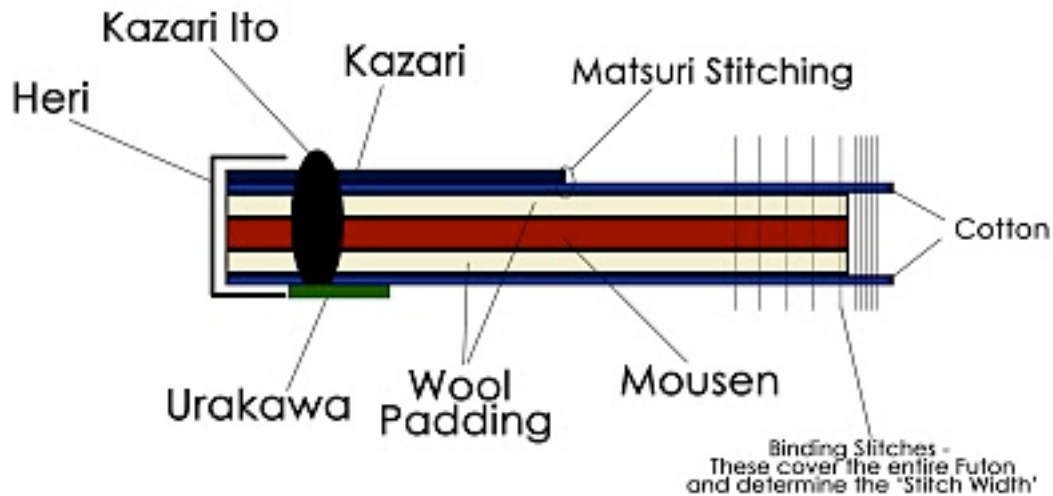
To be honest, it is best to try and break away from the common trend of categorizing Bogu into 'stitch widths'. i.e. it is best not to say 'I am looking for a 3mm Bogu set' as there are 6mm Bogu sets that are far better than some 3mm sets on the market... Instead you need to think about how well is the Bogu made, and what is it made from. Craftsmanship is hard to judge, especially over the internet, but even if most people saw products up-close it is hard to see the differences between good and poor quality, especially to the untrained eye. But quality becomes apparent with use. It is best to buy your Bogu from a supplier you think you can trust, and you feel has the credentials to produce high-quality craftsmanship. Suppliers who have in-house craftsmen naturally have an advantage, as they can also adjust what would normally be 'in-stock' Bogu to fit your exact measurements. In general, as with many things, you get what you pay for.

-Usage and experience

You need to decide how much you will use the Bogu, and what you will use it for if you want to be sure to make the right decision. If you are a Beginner and are looking for your first set, it is a waste of money for you to spend large amounts on a customised, 'top of the range' Bogu, unless your sizes require as such. Rather you would be better looking at entry level models, which display good build quality and good materials and represents good value for money. At the same time, it is important not to cut costs too far, and it is important to remember you will be putting your trust in the Bogu to protect you from injury. There is no international safety standard for Bogu at present, so bearing mind that extremely cheap Bogu may be poorly manufactured.

What to look for

Futon –



The Futon of the Bogu is the padded cloth part which makes up the majority of the protective area. It is constructed as follows –

Sashi (stitching) – There are several different variations of how the Futon is stiched. Some differences are more obvious than others.

- **Tezashi (Hand-Stitched)** – this is futon which the binding stitching has been done by hand. Generally (but not exclusively) this is done on better quality Bogu sets. It is certainly a more luxurious option, and in terms of quality it is better than machine stitching. However, with modern sewing machines becoming more advanced, the differences are much less noticeable than they once were. Tezashi is usually measured in units of 'Bu', which is from the 'Shakkan-hou' traditional Japanese measurement system. One 'Bu' represents 1/100th of a 'Shaku' (the same measurement used to measure Shinai) and is equal to 3.03 mm.
- **Mishinzashi (Machine Stitched)** – this is where the binding stitches are applied by machine. This is obviously much quicker and less labour intensive, and allows for easier mass-production. This means that it can be made cheaper, and machine stitched Bogu is naturally the cheapest option. This is in no way to say that it is of poor quality, as the quality is determined by the materials and craftsmanship so there are many extremely good quality Mishinzashi Bogu sets available.
- **Nagazashi (lit. Long Stitch)** – Nagazashi (also branded as 'Pitch-zashi' by some manufacturers, such as Mitsuboshi) is quite rare these days, however, it is one of the traditional ways in which Bogu used to be stitched. Nagazashi is where the stitches themselves have a wider interval in which they actually penetrate the futon. This makes the Futon much more flexible than with standard stitching, and thus went out of fashion when people believed 'harder' Bogu was better. However, as Kendoka have realised the benefits of soft, comfortable and cushioned Bogu, Nagazashi is becoming more popular again. It is almost exclusively done by Machine these days, however, it tends only to be applied to higher-quality Bogu sets.

- **Nanamezashi (Diagonal Stich)** – This is where the rows of stitching is applied at a 45° angle, to give the Futon flexibility in a specific direction. This is usually applied to isolated areas of the Bogu, though it is sometimes seen applied to the entire set (Sou-Nanamezashi) but it is reasonably rare. The main areas where it is applied are on the Men-dare, to give flexibility and comfort for the shoulders, though it can also be used on the Tare and Kote Futon (see Tokuren®) for additional flexibility when needed.
- **Gunomezashi** – Gunomezashi is stitching which is applied at tighter intervals on specific isolated areas of the Bogu. Sometimes this is made easier to understand by retailers by describing the Bogu as 5/2.5mm (for example). It is usually applied to the Men-dare and to the Tare, to give those specific parts stiffness when flexibility is less important. However, as flexibility of the Men-dare is becoming more preferred, Men-dare with Gunomezashi are declining in popularity.

Construction – There are several features of a Futon’s construction which also should be considered when selecting a Bogu.

- **Heri (Edge)** – The edges of the Futon can be finished in two main ways, with Heri-kawa (trim leather) or Fukuro-nui (French seam). The finishing technique used depends on the section of the Bogu, and some areas can only be finished using Heri-kawa. However, the ends of the Men-dare and the Tare-dare (Tare panels) can be finished in either of the two ways. Generally, with the case of the Men-dare it is thought of as better to use Fukuro-nui as it is lighter and produces a better look. Also, if less Heri-kawa is used, the Bogu set will dry quicker after practice. It is also possible to have the Tare-dare finished with Fukuro-nui, which is becoming popular as it makes the Tare lightweight, whilst remaining strong and protective. For examples of this see – Tokuren®, Tokuren® Alpha and Tokuren® Neo.
- **Kazari (decoration)** – Although this is referred to as ‘decoration’ the Kazari serves the purpose of reinforcing the Futon in the strike-zones. There are various choices and designs available, as well as many materials. It is usually made of Deerskin, Cow leather, synthetic leather or Orizashi cotton. Deerskin is the most prestigious, expensive and turns that well-known shade of blue we all know and love as it fades and ages. It performs well too as it is flexible and dries well after getting wet. It is, however, the most expensive material to be used, and is used mainly for top-quality Bogu sets. Cow leather is much stiffer and reacts less well to getting wet, and is used on mid-low range Bogu sets. Often cow leather is used on well constructed, handmade Bogu to keep the cost affordable, however, it produces a Bogu which tends to need a little more breaking-in. Modern synthetic leathers are increasing in popularity, as many (such as the new Neo-leather) are indistinguishable in appearance from Deerskin, but out perform them in terms of weight and durability. Orizashi Cotton is also rapidly growing popular as it has an understated look, is much lighter than leather alternatives and dries extremely quickly, making it perfect for the hot and humid Japanese summer. The type of leather which is used for the Futon Kazari is generally overlooked by most people, but it is in fact one of the determining factors of how comfortable the Bogu will be. The Futon Kazari can cover up to 50% of the Bogu set’s Futon, meaning if a stiff, poor quality material is chosen, the Bogu will be less comfortable and harder to break-in.
- **Filling** – There are several types of filling that can be used in the Futon, though the most common is ‘Mousen’ (Japanese felt). Traditionally this is made from the wool of wild sheep and goats, and traditionally dyed a deep scarlet colour. In modern times synthetic Mousen is usually

used for most Futon, which is chemically dyed red in order to look like traditional Mousen. Although the modern synthetic Mousen is produced to high-quality standards, traditional Mousen, or Kodaimousen, is much preferred by many, as it is significantly lighter and has better shock-absorbing capabilities.

- **Cotton** – This is made using the same type of cotton used to make Kendo Hakama. It comes in a variety of grades, which relate mainly to the weight and thickness of the threads used to make up the fabric. In Bogu it generally ranges from #6,000 to #10,000 with #6,000 being the 'lightest'. In general the higher the cotton grade, the better, however, thanks to the high number of binding stitches which reinforce the Futon, the differences between grades around #8,000 and grades around #10,000 are hardly noticeable. One point to look for is the dying method, better quality Bogu sets are dyed using better quality dye. Poor quality sets are generally just dyed navy-blue, whereas better sets use genuine Indigo dye (Sho-aizome) and top quality sets use dye from a specific area of Japan know as 'Bushu', which is in modern-day Saitama. The quality of the dye will determine the colour the Bogu turns as the years pass by and it starts to fade.
- **Urakawa (Reverse leather)** – This is the thin re-enforcement layer of leather on the under-side of the Futon. There is a huge array of materials used, and an even wider array of patterns. In terms of performance the difference is minimal, and the differences are mainly aesthetic.

Men -



Men 面



The key points and feature of the Men are extremely important factors to consider when purchasing a Bogu. The Men plays the biggest role in how you will feel when wearing your Bogu, and if it is not right it can have negative effects on your posture, technique and overall comfort.

- **Size** – Generally in-stock Men are made to stock sizes based on the measurement taken from around the chin. As long as you provide the retailer with your correct measurements, there is generally no reason why an in-stock size should not provide an adequate fit. Naturally everyone is individual, and everyone's head is a slightly different shape, however, for the most part there are stock sizes to fit most head shapes and sizes. Having said that, particularly for more experienced players, or those who practice frequently, there is nothing compared to a Men which has been built to fit you. Having a correctly fitting Men affects your performance, and also how seriously other people will judge your abilities – including your opponents, in this way I personally consider delivering the correct appearance in Kendo to be part of some, as it has a direct relation to how much of a threat your opponent will consider you.
- **Mengane** – This is a good indicator on the cost of a Bogu set. Basic Duralumin Mengane are the cheapest, where as if a Men has an All-Titan or IBB-PRO Mengane then you can expect the price to be higher. For most practitioners Duralumin Mengane will serve them fine without problem, and IBB Dura or IBB Dura-PRO will certainly fulfill their needs beyond expectation. However, if you practice very regularly or find that you have a tendency to 'clash' with your opponent's Mengane frequently, then perhaps a stronger option is worth considering. There are also other variants of standard Mengane available, which are mainly different in colour than in most other aspects. It is possible to get Mengane which are Black, Red, Gold and recently very dark chrome (TAC). Unfortunately, at this time the All Japan Kendo Federation does not allow the use of different coloured Mengane in competition. So sticking with a standard silver-colour is recommended for most customers.

- **Naname-zashi** – This generally refers to the stitching on the Mendare. Naname-zashi, or diagonal stitching, is used on the Mendare to make the Men sit better when wearing, and make it more comfortable overall. More and more Men are being offered with this as standard now, due to the recent advancements in machine-stitched Bogu.
- **Heri** – The Heri of the Men can be finished in one of two main ways – Fukuro-Nui, or Full Heri-kawa. Generally Fukuro-nui is considered better, as it is lighter and quicker drying. It is also considered to look better.
- **Uchiwa** – Often overlooked, the Uchiwa is one of the most critical aspects of a Bogu set's Men. They can be made from many different materials, such as cotton, velvet, I-Leather and modern mesh-type fabrics. However, the reason the Uchiwa is so crucial is because it is the key part of the Men's construction which decides the position of the Monomi (slightly wider section in the Mengane which should line up with the eyes). A well made Men has the Uchiwa firmly sewn to the binding of the Mengane and it can not, and should not be removed. Recently Men with removable and washable Uchiwa have become available, these are great for younger kids, as the position of the Monomi is not as important in their case, but it is not something that I would recommend for adults, as the accurate position of the Uchiwa is a necessity to perform Kendo using correct posture.
- **Uchinuri** – This refers to the lacquer used on the inner part of the Men-buchi – the joining rawhide which connects the Futon to the mengane. In most cases this is red, but recently black has become a popular choice for this too. Either colour is currently generally acceptable.

Kote –



The Kote are another extremely important factor when buying a Bogu set. If these are poor fitting or poor quality, it can have an adverse affect on the ability to control the Shinai.

- **Namako (also called Kera)** – These are section of the Kote which act as a kind of joint to aid flexibility. Generally a pair of Kote either has one or two Namako. Some say that two Namako gives more flexibility, but there is no real evidence of this, and most people accept that they are simply decorative, and has no bearing whatsoever on the quality of the Kote. In Japan, most people prefer the look of a single Namako, and the current opinion is that two Namako looks somewhat ugly. For this reason, most Kote produced by Japanese companies have one Namako as standard, even on the most expensive of Bogu sets.
- **Tenouchi (Palm leather)** – This is another important factor of the Kote, however, it is worth keeping in mind that this is part of the Kote which at some point will be (or can be) replaced. The general thought is that the best materials for Tenouchi are Deerskin or synthetic alternatives. Cow leather is amongst the worst performing materials as it responds poorly to moisture, and as a result can tear easily. Recently 'Micro-punch' type Tenouchi have become popular, though opinion on them is still heavily divided. Many say that the Micro-punched Tenouchi dry faster and better, and this results in better durability.
- **Kazari Ito** – This refers to the thick silk braiding patten used on the Kote's Atama (fist). There are generally two main styles, 'Fustu-gata' (regular) or 'Yoroi-gata'. Yoroi-gata features three vertical Kazari Ito, which run in the same direction as the fingers, this breaks up the chamber of the Atama making clenching and opening the hand slightly easier.

Do –



The Do is one of the most visibly customisable parts of the Bogu set, though the differences between them are not as big as they are with other parts.

- **Mune (chest guard)** – Little known is that the most expensive part of the Do is the Mune. This is usually made from Kurozan, though it can also be made from other materials. They are available in different designs and more importantly, different levels of quality. Poorer quality Mune tend to be a little flimsy, made using lower-quality Kurozan and lower-quality stitching. Deluxe Mune are stiffer and stitched better, they will offer better protection and will last longer.
- **Ashi-Kazari (decoration lines)** – These are the silk braids which are attached to the sides of the Mune and attach to the side of the Do. The general option is to either have 2 or 3, 3 is slightly more protective, but in general is thought mainly to be decorative.
- **Do-dai** – The hard section of the Do and, as the target area for striking, it is what protects you from the force of the Shinai. The two main things to look at are material and colour. The main materials available are Yamato, Fiber and Take (bamboo). Modern synthetic options (Yamato and Fiber) are extremely protective, and offer almost the same level of protection as genuine Take Do-dai. Take is also heavier, and requires more care, but although synthetic Do look very similar to their bamboo counterparts, it is impossible to re-create the finish of a hand-lacquered Hon-Urushi (real lacquer) Do-dai. As for the Colour, this is simply a matter of taste. Many people say that it is better to avoid coloured Do as they make you stand out, but I have personally never met a Kendoka who really discriminates against someone because of the colour of their Do. Personally I have never owned a plain black Do, and I don't recall ever experiencing bad things because of that... Actually, I often think it is good to have a way for Sensei to recognise me without my Men, so that they remember who I was and are definitely able to give me applicable advice.

Tare –



The Tare is the only piece of the Bogu which does not contain a valid striking zone, and as such it requires a different set of qualities than other parts do. Broadly speaking, it would not be struck by the Shinai as much as the other parts are, but it is there as a 'safety net' for strikes which go astray. Also it acts as additional cushioning for the Do, and can help take the sting out of Do strikes. However, other than the Futon stitching and the materials, there are not many other points which require a great deal of consideration, but here is what to look out for:

- **Mae-obi** – This is the thick belt section which lays flat against your abdomen. This needs to be comfortable, as it affects your posture and breathing, as well as providing cushioning for the Do. Generally it is best to look for a Tare which has a soft, cushioned and flexible Mae-obi.
- **Heri (edging)** – Most Tare have leather, or synthetic leather bordering the tare-dare (panels). Leather is used quite extensively here, and this is one factor that can make Tare quite expensive. However, in some versions of the Miyako Kendogu Tokuren® Bogu range, Fukuro-nui is used, like on the edges of the Men. This makes the tare much lighter and quicker drying.
- **Kazari (decoration)** – This refers to the decorative silk braid 'lines' that are on the Tare. Once upon a time, these were considered to be an indicator of quality, but they are now generally accepted to be purely decorative. Some people prefer many, some people prefer few. They make no difference to the protection offered by the Tare or to its durability.

Glossary of Material used in Bogu Construction

In terms of materials, the main materials used in a Bogu set are as follows:

Leathers

- **Deerskin**
Use: Bogu leather parts, including futon reinforcement, Kote palms and knuckles and for the Heri (edging).
About: Deerskin is considered the most luxurious material to be used in Bogu construction. It is soft, pliable and reacts well to moisture, and for these reasons it will last well. It takes Indigo dye well too, and develops a beautiful hue with age. It is amongst the most expensive materials to be used in Bogu production.
Pros : Soft & flexible, long lasting quality, develops well with age.
Cons: Expensive, Doesn't dry as quickly as some modern alternatives or Orizashi cotton.
- **Cow skin / Leather**
Use: Bogu leather parts, including futon reinforcement, Kote palms and knuckles and for the Heri (edging).
About: Indigo-dyed cow-skin is used as a substitute for Deerskin, as it has some similar properties. However, it is in general stiffer, and doesn't react as well to moisture, though Bogu made using Cow Skin is much cheaper than bogu made using Deerskin.
Pros: Cheap, Looks similar to Deerskin.
Cons: Can be stiff, slow drying, doesn't react well to moisture.
- **Clarino**
Use: Bogu leather parts, including futon reinforcement, Kote palms and knuckles and for the Heri (edging).
About: Clarino is a modern, artificial leather which is used in Bogu to substitute Deerskin.

Originally Clarino was poorer quality, a purple-ish colour, and produced a strange odour. However, modern Clarino is much more similar to genuine Deerskin, however, it is lighter cheaper and more durable. It responds well to moisture and is thought to be a better substitute than Cow Skin.

Pros: Lightweight and quick-drying, looks similar to Deerskin.

Cons: Doesn't have the same 'feel' as genuine Deerskin, doesn't fade in the same way.

- **'Orizashi' Cotton**

Use: Bogu futon reinforcement and Kote knuckles.

About: 'Orizashi' is a term applied to Bogu which uses thick cotton to reinforce the Futon, instead of a leather substance. It has several advantages, and is becoming increasingly popular in Japan. It is lighter and much quicker drying than Bogu which uses leather reinforcement and it is much easier to clean and maintain. As it is not considered 'luxurious' like deerskin, it has become increasingly preferred as the popularity of 'understated' Bogu increases.

Pros: Very lightweight and quick drying, 'ages' nicely, dignified and simple look.

Cons: Some people prefer the look of leather/synthetic leather, not considered 'luxurious'.

- **I-Leather**

Use: Bogu leather parts, including futon reinforcement, Kote palms and knuckles and for the Heri (edging). Also it can be used in the Uchiwa (chin pad) and to line Kote.

About: I-Leather is a new, modern artificial leather which is extremely light weight and quick drying. It out performs traditional Deerskin in most ways, but is a little pricey can be a unique reddish-grey colour.

Pros: Very lightweight and very quick drying, durable, can be used where other leathers can't – such as lining the Kote or for the Uchiwa.

Cons: Expensive material, colour is a little unique.

- **Neo-Leather**

Use: Bogu leather parts, including futon reinforcement, Kote palms and knuckles and for the Heri (edging).

About: Neo-Leather is a brand new artificial leather which is based around the ideas of Clarino and I-Leather. It was developed especially by the Tozando group, and in its appearance it is almost indistinguishable from genuine deerskin. However, it is lighter, quicker drying and longer lasting making a fantastic modern material for use in Bogu production.

Pros: Extremely light, quick drying, strong and flexible, looks almost identical to Deerskin. **Cons:** Very new, modern material so sometimes not favoured by 'purists'.

- **Kurozan**

Use: Do-Mune (Chest Guard), Do furnishings, Chikara-gawa/Mimi Kawa.

About: Kurozan is a traditional Japanese type of hardened leather, which is specially tanned and then laquered using special Urushi dye, before finally being polished to achieve a beautiful lustre. It is hard wearing, and stiff making it ideal for use on the Do Mune. A good quality Mune is actually the most expensive part of the Do, and a good quality Kurozan Mune will last a lifetime.

Mengane

- **Duralumin Mengane**

Use: Mengane (face grille).

About: Duralumin is a special Aluminium-alloy which is used in modern society for metal products which need to be both light-weight and strong. When used for the Mengane, it is extremely lightweight and durable, and is the cheapest material available.

Pros : Extremely light, cheap.

Cons : Technically not as strong as other models.

- ***IBB Dura Mengane***

Use: Mengane (face grille).

About: IBB stands for 'Ideal Best Balance' and refers to how the weight of the Mengane is distributed. Generally speaking it is weighted 7mm further towards the frame, and 17mm further towards the top of the Mengane, making the bars feel lighter. The upper-most 2 bars are also replaced with Titanium to add strength. Also all IBB Mengane feature a Monomi (wider section for viewing out of) which is 1mm wider than on a standard Mengane.

Pros: IBB construction, top 2 bars are replaced with Titanium.

Cons : Although stronger than a standard Duralumin, it is still not as strong as other models.

- ***IBB Dura-Pro Mengane***

Use: Mengane (face grille).

About: Features the same IBB construction as mentioned before, however, in this model the top 3 bars are replaced with Titanium in order to strengthen the impact zones. Also, a new overlapping joint is added in the top-section, further increasing stability.

Pros: IBB balancing, Top 3 bars replaced with Titanium, new joint to increase rigidity.

Cons : Technically not as strong as the models which are fully Titanium.

- ***All-Titanium (Titan/Chitan)***

Use: Mengane (face grille).

About: The All-Titan Mengane is a Mengane that is made using a classic design, but using super-strong Titanium for its entire construction. This is somewhat stronger than Duralumin based models, but many practitioners argue that the added strength is not necessary. The All-Titan Mengane is a good deal heavier though, and is thought to be good for those who want a Men for practice which is heavier, with a view for using a lighter Men for tournaments.

Pros : Extremely strong.

Cons : Heavy, Expensive.

- ***IBB Titan***

Use: Mengane (face grille).

About: This is a Titanium Mengane which is made using the IBB construction method. This is slightly heavier than a standard All-Titan version.

Pros : Extremely strong, IBB construction.

Cons : Technically heavier than All-Titan, Expensive.

- ***IBB-Pro***

Use: Mengane (face grille).

About: The IBB-Pro mengane is another Titanium option which features an improved polish which has been developed to stop the Men-gane moving when struck..

Pros : Extremely strong, higher quality polish, IBB construction system.

Cons : Technically Heavier than All-Titan, Expensive.

Do-Dai

- ***Yamato Do-dai***

Use: Do-dai (Body section of the Do, where it is struck).

About: Yamato Do-dai are perhaps the most common type of synthetic Do available. They are made from a special resin, and are available in basic and bamboo imitation patterns. Are are said to look more like Bamboo Do than other synthetic Do, and it is said the make a 'nicer' sound when they are struck with a Shinai.

- ***Fiber Do-dai***

Use: Do-dai (Body section of the Do, where it is struck).

About: Fiber Do-dai are made from the fibers of crushed and condensed paper, though are proven to be more shock absorbent than resin-based synthetic Do. Because of this, it is said that powerful strikes hurt less when using a Fiber Do-dai.

- ***Take (Bamboo) Do-dai***

Use: Do-dai (Body section of the Do, where it is struck).

About: Bamboo Do-dai are considered to the most prestigious. They are available in a huge array of colours, and are often lacquered and polished by hand to produce a brilliant finish. They are heavier than synthetic Do-dai, and require a little more care, and due to this have declined in popularity amongst Japanese customers, particularly as modern synthetic Do are extremely good imitations.

Although this is something of a lengthy read, I hope at least it will serve as some use for those looking to purchase Bogu. In anycase, if you are thinking of purchasing a new Bogu set, and still need more information you can always contact Miyako Kendogu directly, where either myself, or another of our Kendo practicing professional staff will advise you accordingly!

Thanks for reading,

Andy Fisher

www.kendo-bogu.com/