

The instructional videos in the series are substantial, and these are valuable and useful resources for learners. Each lesson has a number of videos corresponding to grammatical points with detailed explanations in English. Each video lasts about four to ten minutes, and through the video, learners are able to familiarize themselves with contents before going to class or to deepen their understanding afterwards. The video materials support a “flipped classroom” model, which leads to enhanced student-centered activities and practices in the classroom, instead of students passively receiving information through lectures.

In summary, the *Tobira* series contains a variety of information, different types of activities, and a wide range of learning resources for both teachers and learners. The series is especially beneficial for instructors who want to implement a “flipped classroom” model as well as for self-learners who wish to have a comprehensive learning experience. Videos covering all grammatical points are already developed for all of the lessons and are available on the website, and these materials will immensely support busy instructors. Moreover, the cultural information and contents are up to date, which stimulates students’ inner curiosity and enhances their motivation for learning. By utilizing this series effectively, teachers can create an active learning environment in a classroom to promote students’ Japanese language and cultural learning.

Meshiagare: A Culinary Journey through Advanced Japanese

By **Kazumi Hatasa** and **Nami Fukutome**. Tokyo: Kurosio Publishers, 2021. 143 pp. ¥2,200.

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Meshiagare: A Culinary Journey through Advanced Japanese (hereafter *Meshiagare*) is a Japanese content-based textbook for advanced-level learners, which focuses on Japanese foods, food culture, and history. The book is a complete bilingual edition: its first half (pages 10–80) is dedicated to original Japanese text, and its second half (pages 81–137) has the English translation of all fifteen chapters. Because of its topic and

English translation, the book is greatly beneficial and is an excellent resource for not only learners of Japanese, but also those who are interested in Japanese cuisine and food culture, regardless of their knowledge of Japanese grammar and vocabulary.

Meshiagare consists of fifteen chapters, each of which deals with one type of Japanese food or food culture. Each chapter in Japanese consists of the main text about the theme of the chapter with photos and illustrations as an aid, followed by a couple of questions to check comprehension of the text, and another couple of advanced questions to engage learners with projects such as research, discussion, and presentation. After the text and questions comes a short column (half a page) called “Bite-sized Memos” which offers additional interesting information related to the theme of the chapter and a recipe of popular, “easy-to-make” Japanese cuisine along with a beautiful photo. The second half of the book contains a “[f]ull English translation of the main text and recipes.” However, the questions about the main text and the column are not translated into English.

The first three chapters introduce the foundational information and basic terms of Japanese food culture so that the readers will gain a better understanding of the following chapters. Chapter 1, “Japanese food culture,” presents a general explanation of the characteristics of Japanese food culture in comparison with other cultures by introducing four fundamental principles from a historical perspective: (1) accentuating the “innate flavor of each ingredient”; (2) appreciation of the change of seasons through food; (3) adaptability of food culture in Japan by accepting foreign food and culture; and (4) “the importance of rice.”

Chapter 2, “Kanto and Kansai Regional Cuisine—A Comparison,” presents the differences between the “Kanto and Kansai—the regions around Tokyo and Osaka, respectively” (85) in foods, recipes, seasonings, and culinary terms. The chapter particularly focuses on two items important in Japanese cooking, *dashi* soup stock and soy sauce, and describes their intriguing regional differences with their historical backgrounds. Chapter 3, “Dashi and Umami,” provides a more profound explanation of *dashi* as “the lifeblood of *washoku*” and *umami* as the fifth flavor “that can be sensed chemically by the human tongue” along with acidity, sweetness, saltiness, and bitterness. The chapter presents the historical background of *dashi* and elaborates on two major ingredients for *dashi*: *konbu* and dried bonito.

The following chapters, chapters 4 through 15, deal with Japanese dishes, food-related practices, and historical and religious perspectives. For example, chapter 4 introduces sushi with a detailed explanation of its historical development and regional variation. Chapter 7 describes the history of how chopsticks that originated in China spread to Japan, with a comparative analysis of the use of chopsticks in China, Korea, and Japan. The chapter also introduces some etiquette in using chopsticks that is associated with Buddhist customs, such as a taboo of *chigaibashi* (chopsticks that are mismatched in size or material). These fifteen chapters in Japanese are followed by their English translations.

The target audience of *Meshiagare* is advanced Japanese learners (JLPT N1, N2), but it is also appropriate for intermediate Japanese learners (JLPT N2, N3). Since it is a content-based textbook, it does not provide grammar explanations, and some terms for cooking and Japanese food culture may be challenging. However, thanks to the fact that it is a complete bilingual textbook, readers can learn new vocabulary and grammar by studying the Japanese and English texts at the same time. The potential of *Meshiagare* is not limited to this. *Meshiagare* is not only helpful for learners of Japanese, but also offers great benefits for learners of English, either in classroom settings or for self-study. Additionally, this book will help not only teachers of Japanese who are planning to incorporate Japanese food culture into their curricula, but also cooking experts who want to teach how to cook Japanese foods in English.

One of the most attractive features of *Meshiagare* is its rich visual aids including plenty of color pictures of Japanese cuisines. The foods featured in each chapter are introduced with their photos, stirring the readers' curiosity and stimulating their appetite. The recipes are accompanied by photos of the target foods, which provide a clear image of the outcome of the recipe and boost the reader's motivation to cook the food.

Additionally, *Meshiagare* has a website, *Meshiagare Web*, to assist learners with a better understanding of the content and vocabulary. It also provides teachers with various tips and tools for instruction. The website contains each chapter's vocabulary list of the main text and the answer keys to the content questions. It also contains the YouTube videos of the fifteen recipes introduced in the textbook. Even if readers may not fully understand the recipe from the Japanese or English text, they can play the video to see how the dish is prepared. Regardless of the level of comprehension, the cooking videos are fun to watch, and they help learners to enhance their listening skills or increase their interest in

Japanese culture. *Meshiagare Web* provides more learning sources: food-related idioms, a vocabulary flashcard app, and plenty of useful links related to the theme of each chapter.

In conclusion, *Meshiagare* is a great textbook for those who love the Japanese language, culture, and food. It is a content-based textbook for advanced learners, including some unfamiliar vocabulary and cooking terms. However, the textbook together with the supplemental materials in *Meshiagare Web* contains a wealth of additional learning materials including vocabulary lists, photos and videos, recipes, and full English translation. Readers can make full use of these materials according to their needs and preferences. The authors recommend various learning methods depending on the learner's level. For example, they suggest studying the vocabulary list first or reading the English text first for pre-advanced learners. Also, hands-on cooking practice (using Japanese) will provide the readers with a first-hand opportunity to experience Japanese food and a robust acquisition of Japanese food- and cooking-related expressions that may not be found in a regular language textbook.