1. What two establishments is Bestor studying in this essay? What are they? Briefly describe.

The two establishments Bestor is studying are: Kaitzen-Zushi and Konbini.

Kaiten-Zushi translates to conveyer belt sushi or rotatory sushi restaurants. Konbini are a chain of convenience stores. Both are uniquely Japanese forms of food consumption and distribution that are deeply embedded in a complex domestic and global dynamics of Japanese cuisine and culture.

1. What have been the economic effects of post 1980 Japanese economic slump since about 1990?

The 1990s saw a long period of prolonged economic recession in which Japanese retail adjusted with increased consolidation of retail chains, increase in technology in production and distribution, dependence on foreign imports, and waning consumer spending.

1. What complex rewiring do these two commercial establishments reflect?

Kaiten-Zushi and Konbini reflect a complex rewiring of “the circuitry of food distribution, both domestically and globally.”

1. Brieflly summarize the origin of *zushi* and fast-food culture in Japan. If fast food is not new in Japan, and *zushi* is not really “traditional,” what have *kaitzen-zushi* and *konbini* brought to Japan that is new?

Sushi originated as a pre-industrial street food in the nineteenth century. Many foods we see as “traditional” Japanese cuisines were created in this way in the nineteenth century, such as onigiri, oden, bento, and yakitori.

What Kaiten-Zushi and Konbini bring to Japan that is even newer is they have provided even faster ways to enjoy fast food.

1. What are “Model-T” “Fordism” and “Model J” “second-stage Fordism”? Briefly contrast and compare and specify what is different about “Model J” Fordism.

Model T Fordism refers to the development of mass production and mass consumption, the substitution of industrial for craft production, the development of process engineering and standardization of production and products, patterns of vertical integration among economic sectors to control information flow and financial risk, and the invention of the de-skilled assembly line.

Model J refers to the version of Fordism perfected in Japan between the 60s and 80s which made refinements to the basic principles of Fordism. It includes creating flexible systems of industrial production like “just-in-time production” and “Just-in-time” distribution through a system of sub-contractors, philosophies of total quality management based on collection and analysis of production information, rapid product cycles, and the micro-segmentation of market miches and product differentiation.

Model J “enabled the industrial transformation of not only production, but also the retail and service sectors”

1. What key development in the 1970s and 1980s affected Japanese seafood markets?

In the 70s and 80s there was a decline in the Japanese fishing, both in local off shore companies and the withdrawal of major Japanese fisheries from distant water fisheries. As a result, most seafood consumed in Japan was imported, frozen, and pre-sliced. (120)

1. How did the shift away from the Tsukiji market affect the production of zushi?

Producers of zushi were now able to buy from large trading companies active in the food import-export business in portions and styles that exactly match their needs for their cheaper conveyor belt style sushi delivery.

1. What two technological developments affected the production of zushi?

Equipment that can skin, de-bone, and slice hundreds of fish then flash freezing the meat transformed the industrial side of zushi production.

In restaurants, “sushi robots” were invented that cooked the rice, squeezed it into blocks, and placed the fish on top were used to increase production speeds and lower cost of labor.

1. How did the United States affect the popularity of zushi in Japan?

Americans gained an interest in Japanese culture and kaiten-zushi became a popular facet of that. Kaiten-zushi restaurants in foreign cities gained a following by Japanese tourists and the idea of Kaiten-zushi as an aspect of cosmopolitan culture was imported back to Japan.

1. How was zushi “demystified” as it became popular?

In traditional sushi restaurants, the chefs were highly trained and skilled in the preparation of sushi, working in restaurants which were frequented by wealthy men and serving food in a way that rendered the consumer a passive agent who may not know the price until the bill arrives.

Kaiten-zushi restaurants serve cheaper priced foods and provide the price immediately. The conveyor belt showed exactly what was being offered and pictures would be posted in the window so consumers know what to expect.

1. When did *konbini* originate and how and when did they grow?

Konbini are chains of convenience stores who focus in ready-to-eat meals, boxed lunched, or highly processed snacks such as 7-Eleven. The first originated in 1969 and grew rapidly between 1975 and 1995, growing 1600 percent.

1. Briefly describe *konbini*.

“Konbini are medium-sized, brightly lighted, streamlined shops, usually open twenty four hours a day and generally located in high-traffic areas.” They serve ready-to-eat meals and boxed lunches, highly processed snacks and beverages, magazines, toiletries, and simple household goods. These stores serve a large number of young adults and commuters, acting as “lifestyle centers” for the population. They provide a multitude of services including selling computer software, copying and faxing, selling stamps, selling tokens for the expressways, and acting as rail and airline reservation agents.

1. What legal restrictions led to the growth of *konbini* after the economic slump?

Large trading firms developed konbini to work around restrictions on the size and scale of retail stores that prevented the development of supermarkets and department stores.

1. What is “just in time” production and distribution used by *konbini*?

Just-in-time distribution, pioneered by 7-eleven, refers to a system reliant on daily deliveries and incorporates real-time point-of-sale data collection for inventory control and ordering, consumer analysis, and market forecasting.

1. How have *konbini* affected traditional family-owned urban retail stores and the urban landscape in Japan?

The small scale sector has faced labor shortages due to both the aging of current workers and the reluctance of younger generations to continue working their family businesses. Konbini allow family businesses an opportunity to capitalize on their real estate assets and retain ownership of their business with the management being largely done through chain policies. The stores now can run on low-cost, low-skilled labor, often from part-time workers.

1. Briefly contrast and compare *konbini* with traditional family-owned stores.

Both stores would provide the public with highly processed foods and beverages as well as services for their customers. Family owned stores would be passed down between generations with small scale management and would not participate in the just-in-time distribution practices that konbini use. Konbini that are affiliated with large companies would be able to provide their workers with technology and systems of tracking product flow.

1. Briefly summarize what *kaitzen sushi* and *konbini* have in common.

Both konbini and kaiten-zushi have benefitted from the increased reliance on global flows of capital, managerial know-how, technological innovation, and supply networks of foodstuffs. Large corporations has invested heavily in these types of stores following structural realignments of the Japanese food industry. They also make use of new models of franchising. All of these things have also contributed to them becoming wildly popular in the modern age.

1. Briefly summarize the common criticisms of *konbini* and *kaitzen zushi*.

Critics believe that Konbini and Kaiten-zushi are purveyors of a highly impersonal popular culture based on consumption that specifically targets teens and young adults. There are also criticisms that there is a disappearance of local foodstuffs and traditional food culture causing the youth to miss out on opportunities to experience Japanese cuisine. Fast-food outlets are also credited with destroying local retailers and production. Additionally, there is a lack of nutritional options or ingredients to cook. Concerns of crime, mood disorders, and even the changing of face shapes are all attributed to konbini as well.

1. What does Bestor argue that moral panics and criticisms of *konbini* and *kaitzen zushi* are about?

Bestor believes that there is a weariness too the globalization of Japan, as many feel there are external forces changing their country, rather than internal ones.