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Including 11 essays published over the last 15 years, this volume by Dennis O. Flynn and Arturo Giráldez concerns the origins and early development of globalization. It opens with their 1995 "Silver Spoon" essay and a theoretical essay published in 2002. Subsequent sections deal with Pacific Ocean exchanges, interconnections between the Spanish, Ottoman, Japanese and Chinese empires, and the necessity of multidisciplinary approaches to global history.

The volume follows the evolution of the authors' thinking concerning the central role of China in the global silver trade, as well as interrelations among silver and non-silver markets. Research before 2002 paved the way for development of a coherent 'Birth of Globalization' narrative that portrays economic factors in the context of powerful epidemiological, ecological, demographic, and cultural forces. In the final essay Flynn and Giráldez argue for incorporating the work of all academic disciplines when attempting to understand the history of globalization, advocating an inclusive historical data base which recognizes contextual realities and an inductive process of reasoning.