Favier’s account is also static; it does not focus on the ruptures in the European economy during these centuries, such as the Black Death and the rise of the Ottoman Turks. His book is a competent summary of the traditional interpretation of the origins of the European bourgeoisie, but it does not consider the problematic and controversial aspects of that phenomenon in “the rise of the West.”

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This volume is a follow-up to Fleming’s *Kings and Lords in Conquest England* (Cambridge, 1991). In that volume, Fleming was primarily interested in the policies followed by Cnut in the early eleventh century that created several large landholding families who dominated large areas of England at the expense of the Crown, compared with the policies of William I in the second half of the eleventh century that led to the virtual annihilation of the former Anglo-Saxon landholding class in favor of a new Norman aristocracy. In *Domesday Book and the Law*, Fleming is not interested in Domesday’s vast accumulation of statistical information about the size of individual holdings and the number of persons, animals, and tributes owed by each but in the legal procedures and assumptions revealed in more than 3,200 stories representing basic histories of landholding between the end of the reign of Edward the Confessor and 1086.

During this interval almost all of the significant landholdings in England had changed hands. Everyone who had fought against William at Hastings or in one of the numerous later rebellions against him had had his lands confiscated, and the old secular Anglo-Saxon aristocracy had been replaced by a new Norman aristocracy. Even the heads of the Anglo-Saxon religious corporations that held land had been replaced by Normans. To obtain information about his new kingdom, William employed commissioners who placed those who were tenants in chief of the Crown and their men on oath and questioned them about who held the land TRE (Edward) and TRW (William). The lesser landholders appeared before the shire and hundred courts attended by all the significant members of the community where they were placed on oath and asked about landholding TRE and TRW. The inquest procedure seems to have been accepted as an integral part of the legal procedure of Domesday Book.

On the basis of her analysis of the land disputes revealed in the information collected as a result of King William’s Domesday inquiry,
Fleming identifies a number of legal concepts that had emerged regarding what gave men rights to land. The best form of title emerged from inheritance; another strong claim was provided by formal notification at a hundred or a shire court by the king, his representative, or the warranty of one’s lord. Fleming sees this policy as “a hardy and flexible mix of Norman and English legal custom, and it provided just enough structure to legal expectations, and just enough support for predictable resolution, that the King and his laws, rather than private war, was looked upon as the primary means of resolving land disputes” (85).

Such are Fleming’s arguments in the first part of this work. The second, much larger part, consists of Fleming’s translations of the over 3,200 briefs involving land disputes that are her raw material. This work is not formally interdisciplinary, but it provides much of interest to social, economic, legal, political, and even religious historians.

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In this revealing monograph, Stretton sheds much light on women in the law courts of later sixteenth-century England. Despite the Court of Requests’ reputation as the “poor man’s chancery,” litigants included high-ranking figures, privileged to use the Court in their capacity as royal officeholders; the bulk of the users, however, were of the middling sort. On the one hand, the truly poor were noticeable by their absence; even with legal fees waived (in roughly 10 percent of the cases), other costs of litigation virtually excluded them. On the other, many of the litigants were women.

After setting the stage with three general chapters (including an analysis of the increasing body of commentary by contemporary dramatists about women going to law), Stretton provides a detailed tour of the Court of Requests and its none-too-accessible records. Requests operated as a court of equity alongside the better-established and more prestigious Court of Chancery. Like Chancery, but perhaps to an even greater degree, Requests focused more on the behavior and character of the litigants than on the procedural and documentary formalities that often determined the outcomes of civil suits in the central common-law courts of Common Pleas and King’s Bench. Yet, all the central courts of the day were in danger of being swamped by a rising tide of civil suits that outdistanced even the contemporary population surge.

Stretton’s aims are threefold: (1) to gauge the proportion of female litigants, (2) to determine the kinds of disputes in which those litigants were involved, and (3) to compare the presentational styles of male and
The Domesday Book is a manuscript record of the “Great Survey” of much of England and parts of Wales completed in 1086 by order of King William the Conqueror. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle states: Then, at the midwinter [1085], was the king in Gloucester with his council. After this had the king a large meeting, and very deep consultation with his council, about this land; how it was occupied, and by what sort of men. Then sent he his men over all England into each shire; commissioning them to find out The Domesday Book contains a great many things, including the most comprehensive, varied, and monumental legal material to survive from England before the rise of the common law. This book argues that it can - and should - be read as a legal text. When the statistical information present in the great survey is stripped away, there is much material still left, almost all of which stems directly from inquest, testimony given by jurors impanelled in 1086, or from the sworn statements of lords and their men. This information, read in context, can provide a picture of what the law looked like, the Domesday Book did not survey all of England. Some important places were left out. Northumberland, Durham, and Cumbria were left out as was most of north-west England which was not completely under Norman control. The book also describes how society was organized in different areas of England. For example, in the Danelaw counties (the area where the law of the Danes was observed), there were a lot of freemen while in the West Midlands, there were a lot of slaves. The book also mentions various occupations such as beekeepers, a vine dresser (someone who grows vines), and a female jester. There are actually two books: the Great Domesday Book and the Little Domesday Book. The Great Domesday book is the biggest and covers the most territory.