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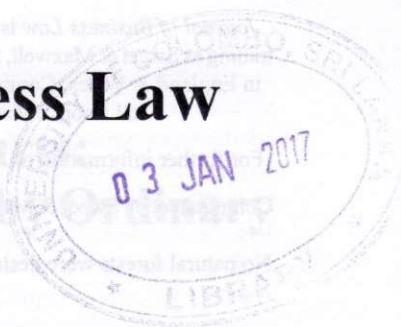
**France's Commercial Courts: Administration of Justice by Ordinary Citizens**

**Nicole Stolowy and Matthieu Brochier** French commercial courts are composed of lay judges since they were first established in the 16th century. Back in the *Ancien Régime*, the royal power systematically consulted the tradespeople and commercial court judges. Commercial courts even survived the disruption of the French Revolution because they met the revolutionary spirit's democratic ideal. Today, the *Tribunaux de commerce* (1st degree commercial courts) are still entirely composed of lay judges, who are elected by their peers and exercise their functions on a voluntary and unpaid basis in addition to their own work or business. French commercial justice, which is free of charge, has shown rare efficiency and stability since 400 years ago.

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