Idiom by Lon Yan

繁文縟節 (fan2 wen2 ru4 jie2) is “complicated rules and tiresome ceremonials.”

The idiom means red tape, those unnecessary and overly elaborate formalities that we all hate but have to endure when dealing with the government or big corporations.

The only people who welcome “繁文縟節” (fan2 wen2 ru4 jie2) are probably the bureaucrats who have created them, practice them, and even thrive on them. But to members of the public who have to fill in forms, visit multiple offices and bring an array of documents just to get something simple done, “繁文縟節” (fan2 wen2 ru4 jie2) are tedious (令人煩厭), cumbersome (累贅) and loathsome (令人討厭).

Terms containing the character “繁” (fan2) include:

繁複 (fan2 fu4) – heavy and complicated, inextricable
繁雜 (fan2 za2) – many and diverse
繁多 (fan2 duo1) – numerous, manifold
繁忙 (fan2 mang2) – busy