

Living With the Dead in Madagascar

By Alex Bellos

In Madagascar, there is a ceremony, the *famadihana*, in which the remains of ancestors are removed from a family crypt, introduced to living family members, and rewrapped in sheets. It is helpful for the living participants that Malagasy, the main native language of Madagascar, has distinct words for great-great-grandchild, great-great-great-grandchild, and great-great-great-great-grandchild. Otherwise things could get very confusing!

The word for grandchild is *zafy*, and the words for great-great, great-great-great, and great-great-great-great grandchild are (in alphabetical order) *zafim-paladia*, *zafin-dohalika*, and *zafin-kitrokely*.

Which is which?

To solve this puzzle, here are some other Malagasy words. They are listed in alphabetical order. There are also translations, which are not matched, in alphabetical order as well.

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| <i>hafaladia</i> | ankle |
| <i>kitrokely</i> | knee |
| <i>lohalika</i> | one who can carry something on his neck |
| <i>mahambozona</i> | one who can get on his knees |
| <i>mahandohalika</i> | up to the sole |