Mangareva is the largest of the Gambier Islands, a small group situated within the Tuamotu Archipelago in the eastern Pacific. The islands were discovered by Captain Wilson of the 'Duff' on 25 May 1797, and he named them after the British naval commander Admiral Lord Gambier.

Mangareva Island is about five miles in length, and rises in two peaks in the form of wedges, the greatest height being 1315 feet. The population was 516 in 1967, according to Webster's New Geographical Dictionary. The other chief islands in the Gambier group are Akamaru, Aukena, and Taravai. They form part of the French possessions in Oceania, and are almost enclosed by a coral reef 40 miles in circumference.

The interesting matter to the linguist and anthropologist is that the language is pure Polynesian. Generally the inhabitants of the Tuamotu Archipelago speak a dialect containing some elements foreign to the Polynesian tongue, but on Mangareva the speech is nearly identical with the Maori of New Zealand, thousands of miles distant to the westward. This raises some thought-provoking theories; however, my field is logology, not anthropology.

The definitive Dictionary of Mangareva was compiled by Edward Tregear, and published by the New Zealand Government Printing Office in 1899. It contains around 7000 words, of which well over one per cent are palindromic. This is an amazingly high proportion of palindromes, but even more remarkable is the fact that eleven of them contain nine or more letters! Many Mangareva words, even short ones, have most colourful definitions. Judge for yourself: here are the 86 palindromes of Mangareva:

AA to utter an exclamation, to admire, to look at eagerly
EE a saw
UU to break wind
AEA when? (used only with the future)
AGA a fathom (six feet)
AHA the mouth
AIA see there! forward then! courage!
AKA to make or cause
AMA the outrigger of a canoe
ANA a sinking down or falling of the ground
AIAA condolence with one who grieves
APA to take possession of
ARA to miss
ATA the shadow
AVA slipped
EHE the octopus
ERER to march
ERE to be afraid
IKI a string
ININ to receive
IRIR placed in
IIVI family, group
OMA the head
OKO to tie a knot
ONO to put on
ORO to eat or drink
ORU to gather corn
UHU a blackberry
UYU a piece of land
URU to cry out
UTU an emergency

AAEA to break
APAPA the garden
ARARA quarrel
ARARA a kind
ATOA you will
ATAATA to be
AUUAUA having
AVAVA the name
EKEKEE loud
ERURURU to cut
ETETE plural
IRIRI to roll
JERURO a curse
JIRURO to catch
JURURU to catch
JTUTUTU to moan

AGAGA work
ANAANA suffocate
ATATA to be
AVAVAVA smoking
EKEKEE reduce
EREERE to go
INININ plural
IRIRIRIRIRIRI pleasant
A small group in the southwestern Pacific, the 'Duff' on the Gambier Islands rises in the South Seas and part of the Pacific is formed by a coral reef.

The Gambier Islands were discovered in 1723 by the French explorer Didier Duff. The islands are part of the Gambier Islands archipelago, which is located in the southern Pacific Ocean.

The naturalist is that part of the scientist who studies the elements of the natural world. The elements of speech are the sounds of words. The naturalist studies the sounds of words.

Edward sponge (1715-1755) was a British cartographer and printer. He is best known for his work on the Pacific Ocean, including his map of the Pacific Islands.

The fact that there are many words, and that some of these words are in a language that is still spoken today, suggests that the naturalist is interested in the study of language and the history of the Pacific Islands.

ARA to miss one's mark, as in throwing a stone
ATA the shadow of a human being
AVA slipped from the memory
AVE to lose one's way
EIE behold! see there!
ERE to march, walk, go
ETE to be afraid
IKI a strip, as of ribbon
INI to recite a prayer, lesson, etc.
ITI placed in a higher position than the observer
ITI anything which jumps
IVI family, genealogy
OH the head (of a human being)
OKO to tie a number of coconuts together
OMO to suck at the breast
ONO to put end to end
OPO to entertain, to converse with a person
ORO to eat one's words
OTO a venomous bone arming the point of a lance
UHU to gather fruit or berries without breaking them from the stalk
UMU a black-colored fish thick in proportion to its length
UNU a piece of wood on which one throws himself into the sea
URU to cry out on account of the presence of a god
UTU an emergency or crisis

AEEAA to breathe with difficulty
AHAAHA to do for the first time
AKAKA an unusually low tide
AMAMA to make a grimace by opening the mouth
APAPA the gable end of a house
ARARA quarrels, faults
ARORA a kind of licentious chant
ATATA you will be taken! you will be caught!
ATUTA the suburbs or extension of a chief town
AUUAUA having many possessions
AVAVA the name of a portion of a reef
EKASXEKEE loud, strong: said of a fine voice
ERURU to catch in the teeth (said of food)
ERURU to cry out on account of the presence of a god
EETE plural form of ETE
ERATAI to roll oneself, tumble, wallow
ORORO a curse, or a cry of welcome
URURU to catch in the teeth (said of food)
UTUTU to moan concerning a person's death

AGANGA work
ANAAANA suffocating heat
ATAATAE to be full of matter, said of a sore ripe for lancing
AVAAVA smoking tobacco
EKASEEK reduced by boiling
ERERE to go without ceasing, or to tie carefully
ININ plural form of INI
ININ pleasant
IVIIVI small hills
OKOOKO to revenge oneself
OMOOMO to suck
ONOONO the shreds of pandanus used in making a mat
OPOOPO to think about some uncompleted work
OROORO to wash or rub (plural form)
UNUUNU to mark with wood a place one does not wish crowded
URUURU the hair on the body
UTUUTU to mourn, bewail
AKAHAKA having large and distended nostrils
AKAPAKA to cook so that the surface of the food forms a crust
AKATAKA to rough-hew a piece of timber using only one hand
AKAHAHAKA to listen attentively
AMAMAMAMA chewing actions
ARERARERA the name of a fish
ARORARORA to sing joyfully to oneself (plural form)
ARUKARURA to mock anyone who is speaking
ATOTATOTA red, scarlet
AVAAVAAVA one who hinders or delays much
EKAKEKAKE waves of the sea going and coming on the beach
AKAMAKAMAKA to commence to ripen
AKAPAKAPAKA to season or ripen (said of timber placed in water)
AKATAKATAKA to fish all day or all night with the line (plural)

My favourite palindrome? The nod goes to EKAKEKAKE.