New Zealand ethnologist, pioneer of economic anthropology, research assistant to James Frazer.

Raymond Firth:

Theory: Social Organisation

structure

Function

organisation

Fieldwork: Tikopia 1929/1949 (St. George Islands) (after 20 years)

Books:
1. We the Tikopia (1936) 1947
2. Elements of Social Organisation (1954)

* Tikopia is a tribal society where social structure has been relatively constant.

The elements of structure are functional in nature. However, Firth found out that there is some idea beyond structure & function.

He worked on it & gave the innovative concept of social organisation.
He said social organisation is not a separate concept but it is a part of social structure.

Social structure has certain important relations which are called critical relations. It means if these relations will be changed, then structure may change. Therefore, if we do not want to change the structure then we should use some changes & alternatives so that continuity of the structure can be maintained.

The use of change & alternatives is temporary & not permanent. (9112)

I. First distinguished between structure, function & organisation.

He said social structure has 3 conditions:

(a) Structure is concerned with ordered relation of parts to a whole, with the arrangements in which the elements of the social life are linked together.
These relations must be regarded as build up one upon another, there are series of varying order of complexities.

They must be more than purely momentary significance, i.e., some factor of constancy & continuity must be involved in them.

Fifth

However, critically analyzed others views on structure. He criticized RB who had said that social structure is a complex network of social relationship. He said it is beyond that because continuity is important & it will be impossible to distinguish between structure of a society & that of totality of the society.

The second view is that of Evans Pritchard who analyzed structure through relations between major groups of the society, i.e., clans & persistence of social relations are found.
However, Firth says it is too narrow. He says that it includes both person to person relationships and relationships between groups. Hence, it is something beyond that.

Finally, Firth says that the concept of structure is an analytical tool: “It helps in understanding how men (people) behave in their social life.”

The essence of this concept is these social relations which seem to be of critical importance, if these relations were not in operation then society may not exist in that form.

He gave the example of African tribes where MB-ES relationship is very important. Sometimes there may not be a true MB then a standing there is a person who becomes standing, i.e., the representative of MB.

II. On function — Firth says that every social
Review has more than one function

He defined social function as the relationship between social action and the system of which the action is a part (need qualification).

There is a means, a end scheme which is called function.

He favored Malinowski’s concept of function.

Social Organization:

Besides this, this gave the new concept of socio-logy.

It is a part of socio-structure. As said earlier, it consists of the critical relationship of the socio-structure.

If these relationships are not maintained then the structure would change but these cannot be guaranteed that the ideal social customs would be there everywhere.
Therefore, people use choices to sustain the changes. He gave the example of African tribes where MB is important. When there is no MB, a choice i.e. MB performs the duty of MB.

He gave the elements of soci-organizational structure:

1. Element of Responsibility:
   - The person implementing the choice has to be responsible enough so that he is not changing the structure by using the choice.

2. Element of Representation:
   - The person who is using the choice has to have the support of the community or the society. It means he is representing the society in using the choice.

In this manner, Firth explained some kind of social change in his concept of soci-organizational change. However, it is not a total social change; i.e., not a
structural change (it is not change of structure)

- it is only change - in - structure or continuity & change

critique 1

Firth did not analyze change & conflict on a large scale. His conception of change in social organization is in line with the continuity of social structure.

2) His concept of "choice & alternatives" is not so concrete as its applicability across societies is questionable.