

- New Zealand Ethnologist
- pioneer of economic anthropology
- Research Assistant to James Frazer

* Raymond Firth :

Theory : Social Organisation

← structure
Function
organisation

* Raymond Firth :

Fieldwork : Tikiopia 1929 / 1949 (Solomon Islands)
(after 20 years)

Books : ① We the Tikiopia (1936)

② Elements of Social Organisation (1947/1954)

* Tikiopia 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.

* Soc. org. if kinship org, social org, political org, religious org, economic org.

→ 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 choices & alternatives, so that continuity of the structure can be maintained.

→ The use of choices & alternatives is temporary & not permanent (स्थिति permanent होना तो Soc. structure change होना).

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.

(b) These relations must be regarded as build up one upon another, ~~they~~ there are series of varying order of complexities.

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

First
→ However, ~~RB~~ critically analyzed others' views on structure. He criticised RB who had said that soc. 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. In the clan ~~of~~ a persistence of social relations are found.

- However, Firth says it is too narrow. He says that it includes both person to person relationships & relationships between groups. Further, 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 those social relations which seem to be of critical importance, if those relations were not in operation then society may not exist in that form".
- He gave the example of African Tribes where MB-LB relationship is very important. Sometimes there may not be a true MB then ~~at~~ standing there is a person who becomes stand-in, i.e. the representative of MB.

II. → On function - Firth says that every social

action has more than one function

→ "He defined soc. function as the relationship between social action & the system of which the action is a part" (need fulfill itself)

→ There is a means & end scheme which is called function.

→ He favored Malinowski's concept of function.

III. Social Organisation :

→ Besides this, Durkheim gave the new concept of soc. org.

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

→ If these relationships are not maintained then the structure would change but there cannot be a guarantee that the ideal social actions would be there everytime.

→ Therefore, people use choices in
alternatives. He gave the example
of African Tribes where MB is
important & when there is
no MB, a choice i.e. MBS
performs the duty of MB.

→ He gave 2 elements of soc. org. -
① element of Responsibility
② element of Representation

① → element of Responsibility :

- The person implementing the choice
has to be responsible enough so
that he is not changing the
course 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 a soc. change
in his concept of soc. org.
However, it is not a total
soc. change i.e. not a

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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 organisation
is in line with the
continuity of social structure.

②

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