

# What a mixed-method study suggests about measuring religion in China

**Peter Nynäs**

# The YARG-project

## **Global Scope** – appr. 45 researchers involved

- Main research team & co-investigators and assistants at 13 universities worldwide
- Young Adults in Canada, China, India, Israel (2), Japan, Ghana, Peru, Poland, Russia, Finland and Sweden, USA and Turkey

## **Mixed- Method**

- Survey: the Portrait Value Questionnaire & rel. identifications, authorities, well-being etc. (n= 4900)
- The Faith Q-Set (n= 500+), in combination with
- Semi-structured thematic interviews (n= 500+)

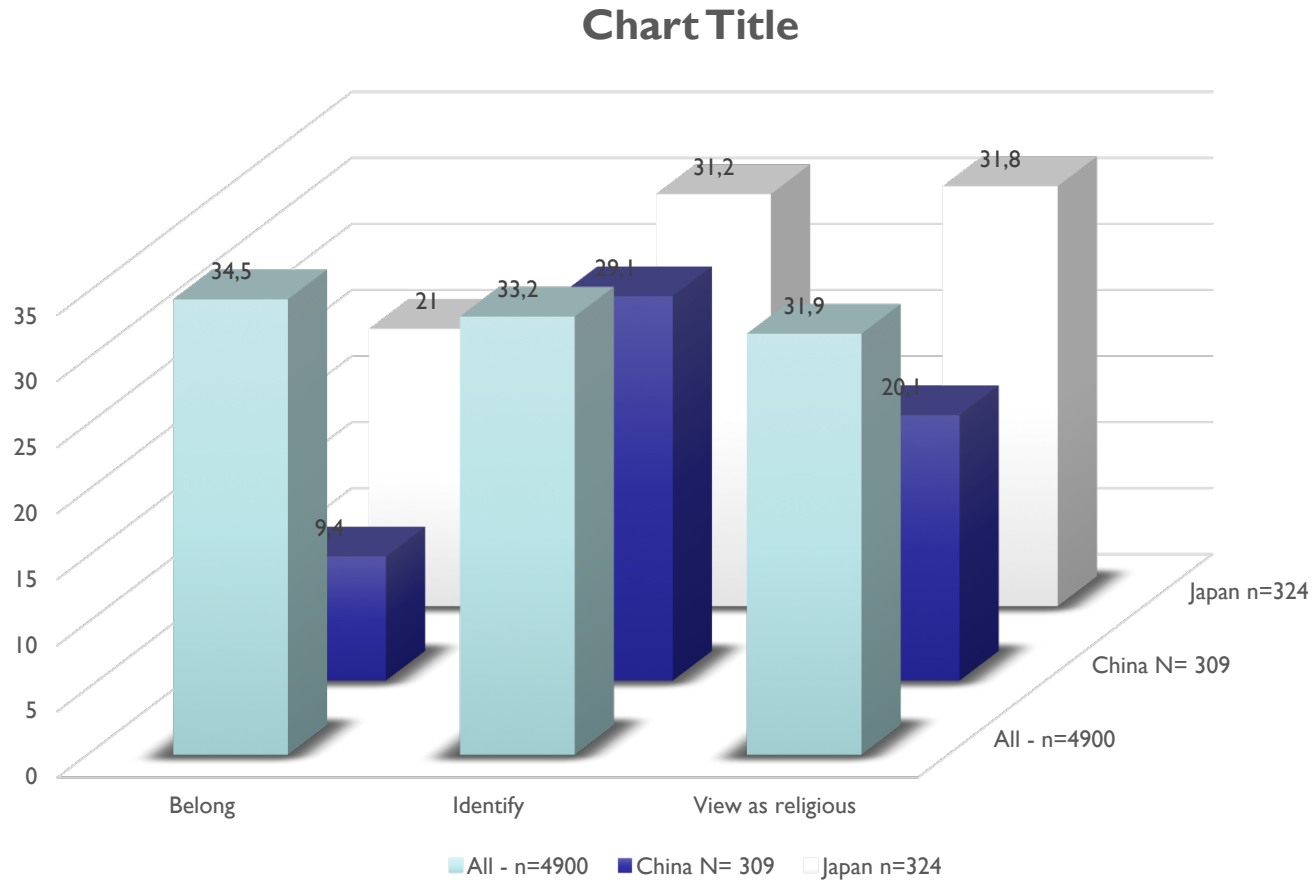
# Reminder: Methods and various identifications

## Survey: Cultural Jew + Buddhism

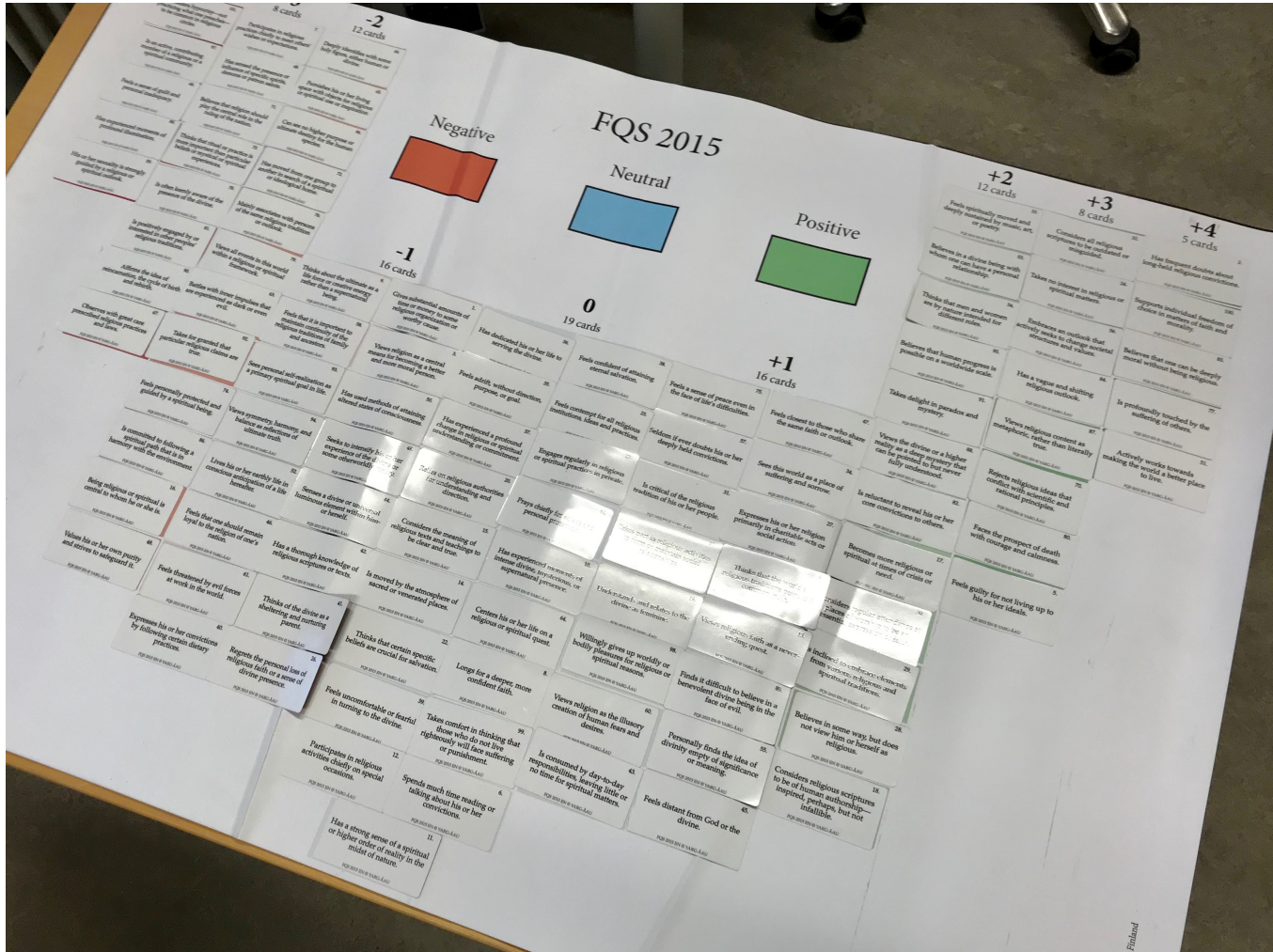
**FQS:** *embraces the idea of freedom of choice and thinks that one can be deeply moral without being religious... actively works towards making the world a better place to live and seeks to change societal structures and values. There is a commitment to following a spiritual path that is in harmony with the environment AND does not at all feel adrift, without direction, or goal and cannot embrace the idea of gender or sexual normativites. Neither can he or she feel that one should remain loyal to the religion of one's nation nor thinks the meaning of religious texts and teachings to be clear and true.*

**Interview:** shows a position based on Jewish upbringing and a significant person that turns to Buddhism, a source of some googleing, whereas the life is shaped by commitment to animal rights and vegan ideology.

# Japan vs China – the survey results



# The FQS – sorting of statements



# China – Q-methodology and the Faith Q-sort

**Nr 28 – a strongly affirmed statement / idea in 5 out of 6 main prototypes that emerged from the Chinese sample**

40	Expresses his or her convictions by following certain dietary	40	-1	-3	2	-3	0	-3
37	Has experienced a profound change in religious or spiritual	37	0	2	3	-2	-1	-1
10	Has experienced moments of intense divine, mysterious, or su	10	-3	1	0	3	-2	0
7	Participates in religious practices chiefly to meet others'	7	-1	-2	-4	-3	3	-4
33	Feels spiritually moved and deeply sustained by music, art,	33	3	4	-1	4	0	4
87	Views religious content as metaphoric, rather than literally	87	2	1	-2	-2	2	3
45	Feels distant from God or the divine.	45	3	0	-3	0	1	-2
74	Feels personally protected and guided by a spiritual being.	74	-2	1	3	1	-3	2
23	Engages regularly in religious or spiritual practices in pri	23	-2	0	3	-3	-4	-3
3	Views religion as a central means for becoming a better and	3	-1	-1	4	-1	2	-4
60	Views religion as the illusory creation of human fears and d	60	2	-3	-2	-4	2	0
28	Believes in some way, but does not view him or herself as re	28	4	2	-3	3	4	2

# Chinese prototype I (excerpts)

## *Affirms*

- 28. Believes in some way, but does not view him or herself as religious. +4
- 51. Actively works towards making the world a better place to live. +4
- 56. Embraces an outlook that actively seeks to change societal structures and values. +4
- 83. Believes that one can be deeply moral without being religious. +4
- 100. Supports individual freedom of choice in matters of faith and morality. +4
- 33. Feels spiritually moved and deeply sustained by music, art, or poetry. +3
- 70. Rejects religious ideas that conflict with scientific and rational principles. +3
- ...

## *Rejects*

- ...
- 74. Feels personally protected and guided by a spiritual being. -2
- 53. Believes in a divine being with whom one can have a personal relationship. -3
- 36. Has dedicated his or her life to serving the divine. -4
- 41. Thinks of the divine as a sheltering and nurturing parent. -4
- 78. Is often keenly aware of the presence of the divine. -4
- 89. Has experienced moments of profound illumination. -4
- 97. Is an active, contributing member of a religious or a spiritual community. -4

# Chinese prototype II (excerpts)

## *Affirms*

- 6. Spends much time reading or talking about his or her convictions. +4
- 33. Feels spiritually moved and deeply sustained by music, art, or poetry. +4
- 69. Feels a sense of guilt and personal inadequacy. +4
- 83. Believes that one can be deeply moral without being religious. +4
- 100. Supports individual freedom of choice in matters of faith and morality. +4
- ...

## *Rejects*

- ...
- 73. Thinks that ritual or practice is more important than particular beliefs or mystical or spiritual experiences. -3
- 24. Takes no interest in religious or spiritual matters. -4
- 46. Feels that one should remain loyal to the religion of one's nation. -4
- 54. Thinks that men and women are by nature intended for different roles. -4
- 55. Personally finds the idea of divinity empty of significance or meaning. -4
- 71. Believes that religion should play the central role in the ruling of the nation. -4



# Chinese prototype III (excerpts)

## *Affirms*

- 3. Views religion as a central means for becoming a better and more moral person. +4
- 8. Longs for a deeper, more confident faith. +4
- 30. Considers regular attendance at places of worship to be an essential expression of faith. +4
- 53. Believes in a divine being with whom one can have a personal relationship. +4
- 100. Supports individual freedom of choice in matters of faith and morality. +4
- 23. Engages regularly in religious or spiritual practices in private. +3
- 92. Takes for granted that particular religious claims are true. +3
- 15. Considers the meaning of religious texts and teachings to be clear and true. +2
- ...

## *Rejects*

- 18. Considers religious scriptures to be of human authorship—inspired, perhaps, but not infallible. -3
- 28. Believes in some way, but does not view him or herself as religious. -3
- 84. Has a vague and shifting religious outlook. -3
- 7. Participates in religious practices chiefly to meet others' wishes or expectations. -4
- 32. Considers all religious scriptures to be outdated or misguided. -4
- 39. Feels uncomfortable or fearful in turning to the divine. -4
- 82. Is reluctant to reveal his or her core convictions to others. -4
- 99. Takes comfort in thinking that those who do not live righteously will face suffering or punishment. -4

# Chinese prototype IV (excerpts)

## *Affirms*

- 11. Has a strong sense of a spiritual or higher order of reality in the midst of nature. +4
- 14. Is moved by the atmosphere of sacred or venerated places. +4
- 33. Feels spiritually moved and deeply sustained by music, art, or poetry. +4
- 51. Actively works towards making the world a better place to live. +4
- 83. Believes that one can be deeply moral without being religious. +4
- 10. Has experienced moments of intense divine, mysterious, or supernatural presence. +3
- ...

## *Rejects*

- ...
- 65. Furnishes his or her living space with objects for religious or spiritual use or inspiration -3
- 25. Feels contempt for all religious institutions, ideas and practices. -4
- 36. Has dedicated his or her life to serving the divine. -4
- 50. Has used methods of attaining altered states of consciousness. -4
- 60. Views religion as the illusory creation of human fears and desires. -4
- 99. Takes comfort in thinking that those who do not live righteously will face suffering or punishment. -4

# Chinese prototype V (excerpts)

## *Affirms*

- 26. Regrets the personal loss of religious faith or a sense of divine presence. +4
- 28. Believes in some way, but does not view him or herself as religious. +4
- 83. Believes that one can be deeply moral without being religious. +4
- 84. Has a vague and shifting religious outlook. +4
- 91. Takes delight in paradox and mystery. +4
- ...

## *Rejects*

- ...
- 23. Engages regularly in religious or spiritual practices in private. -4
- 25. Feels contempt for all religious institutions, ideas and practices. -4
- 36. Has dedicated his or her life to serving the divine. -4
- 78. Is often keenly aware of the presence of the divine. -4
- 97. Is an active, contributing member of a religious or a spiritual community. -4

# Chinese prototype VI (excerpts)

## *Affirms*

- 11. Has a strong sense of a spiritual or higher order of reality in the midst of nature. 4
- 33. Feels spiritually moved and deeply sustained by music, art, or poetry. 4
- 51. Actively works towards making the world a better place to live. 4
- 93. Sees personal self-realization as a primary spiritual goal in life. 4
- 94. Views symmetry, harmony, and balance as reflections of ultimate truth. 4
- ...

## *Rejects*

- ...
- 3. Views religion as a central means for becoming a better and more moral person. -4
- 7. Participates in religious practices chiefly to meet others' wishes or expectations. -4
- 20. Relies on religious authorities for understanding and direction. -4
- 36. Has dedicated his or her life to serving the divine. -4
- 42. Has a thorough knowledge of religious scriptures or texts. -4
- 46. Feels that one should remain loyal to the religion of one's nation. -4

# An emerging field? – pattern?

In *most of the prototypes* we can see that people...

- believes in some way, but do not rely on religious authorities or engagement,
- they view the spiritual as a relevant human field of experience with nature, arts etc. as resources, and
- place morality & societal ethics at the center along with the values of individual freedom and personal self-realization

... in *contrast to the one prototype* that stands out as clearly religious in terms of faith, texts and practices.

# Conclusion? There is a need to...

- find a focus behind given and empty categories
- that rooted in alternative and liquid identifications of relevance for *agencies*,
- potentially supported by social *movements* and cultural trends or *traditions*, and that
- tend to negate the dichotomy of the religious and the secular