

**Dmitrii Doronin**

**The 'Soft Iconoclasm' in Vernacular Orthodoxy of Volga Finns**

The article discusses the phenomena of 'soft violence' and 'soft iconoclasm' in the religious practices of the Mari people (the ethno-local group of the Volga-Finnish people). 'Soft iconoclasm' among the Mari developed on their local pre-Christian practices, but it typologically converges with the Christianization of the Mari and could be found in similar practices in other Christian peoples. In the case of Mari people, who have well preserved their pre-Christian beliefs, these practices are more determined by communication with the sacred image as with the living impersonator. Some current practices of venerating icons are based on the pre-Christian prayer formulas, ritual poses and ideas of communication with gods. Two principal versions of 'soft iconoclasm' are considered in the article: 1. violence upon the icon: moving or stealing the icon against its will; 2. abandoning icons and leaving them for self-destruction or to 'die'.