Cherokee Persons  
  
In 1877 John W. Powell described Native American thought as "a mass of  
nonsense" and "incoherent folly . . . which beautifully reveals the  
mental conditions of savagery".  James Mooney, writing just a decade  
or so afterwards, was unusually open for his age.  He appears to have  
had Powell’s statement in mind when he assessed Cherokee thought thus:  
“So far from being a jumble of crudities, there is a wonderful  
completeness about the whole system which is not surpassed even by the  
ceremonial religions of the East.“  
   While there are impediments to understanding Cherokee conceptions  
of persons there is enough evidence to something of that “wonderful  
completeness”:  
1.  Persons might be human, plant, animal, or mineral and exist on  
earth or in another realm.  The Western distinction of natural and  
“supernatural” does not apply.  
2.  Categories between human and other-than human persons are  
permeable.  Humans might transform into other-than-human-persons and  
vice versa.  
3.  Social relationships and obligations are similar to and even  
patterned after those of non-human persons.  
4.  Human individuals have four souls.  
5. While the human "personality soul" continues to exist beyond death,  
it has a unique social component that unites the human with ancestral  
and more "ideal" persons.