

## ERITREA

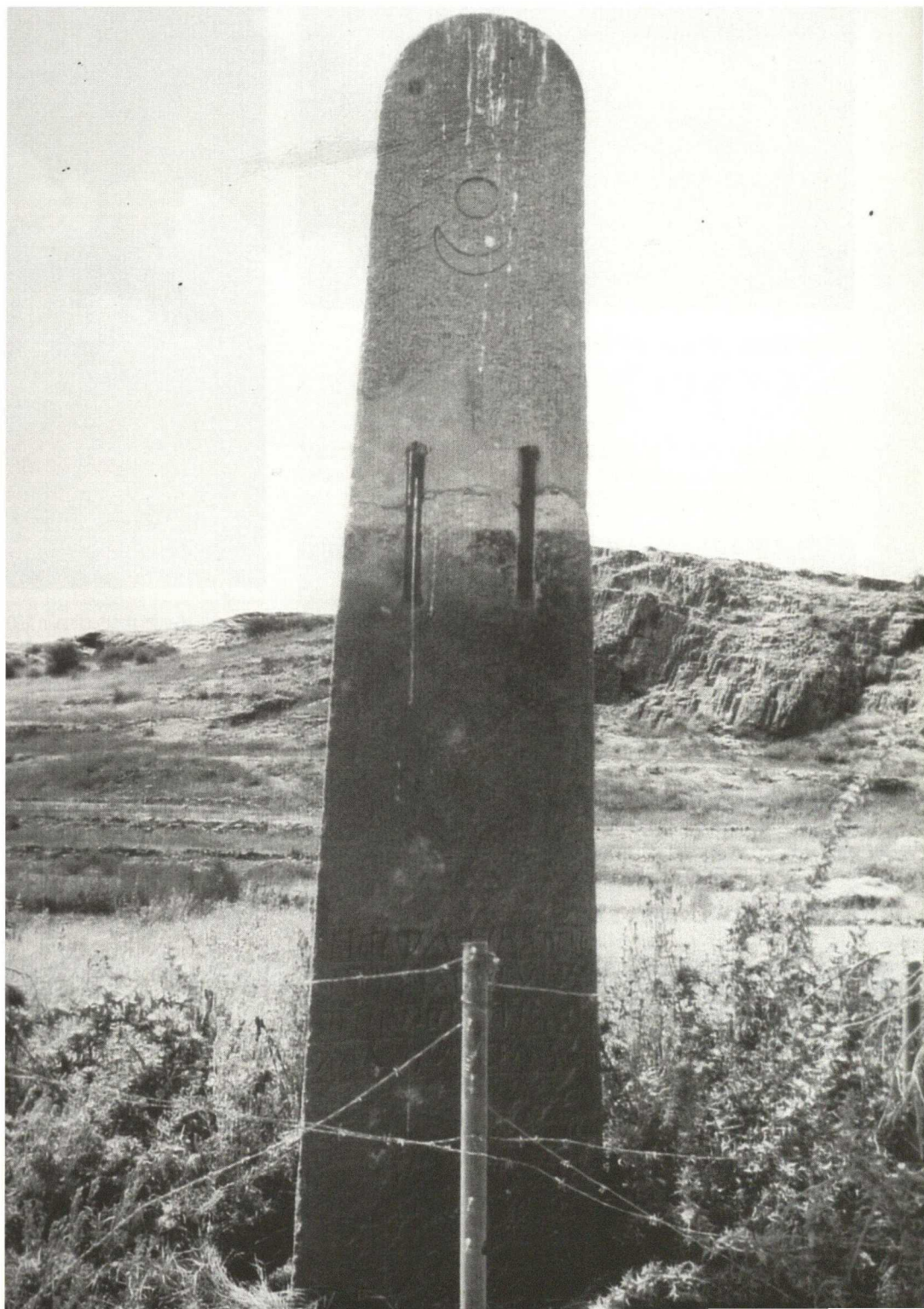
### Matara

To complete our report in *Heritage at Risk* 2001/2002, p. 92 we have added here a photographic documentation of the stele of Matara (Metera) and some extra information about endangered monuments in Eritrea, both kindly provided by Prof. Steffen Wenig, Berlin.

After the occupation of the town of Senafe in 2000 the stele, dating from the 4th century AD, was blown up by Ethiopian troops. This barbaric act heavily damaged the foot of the stele (the pedestal is still in the ground), whereas the inscription and the

upper part with its depiction of the sun and the moon remain intact. Around 1900 the stele lay in two parts at the foot of the Amba Saim (compare the photo), and in the 1920s it was put together again by using iron cramps and then re-erected near a field path. Unfortunately, some time between 1996 and 1997 it was "enhanced" with red and green paint. The fragments, which presumably are still scattered on the ground, need to be saved and restored.

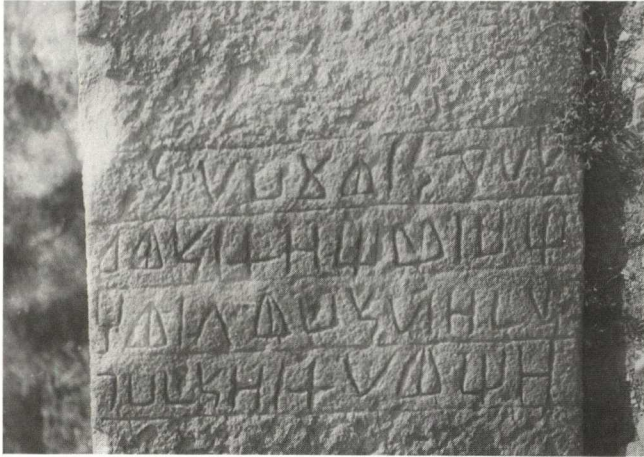
Another critical case are the ruins of Matara, excavated



The stele with paint, around 1997



between 1959 and 1974 by Francis Anfray and consisting of several state buildings, a Christian basilica and a residential quarter, all dating from the Aksumitic age. The walls, erected with fieldstones and ashlar, are rapidly falling apart. In addition to this example there are many places in Eritrea where an increasing decay of antique sites is noticeable. For instance, there is evidence that on Qohaito antique ruins are being used for the construction of new houses.



Stele of Matara, middle part with inscription



The stele after its destruction in 2000



The damaged stele of Matara, around 1906