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**Notes on Altzella  
To James, Michael, Tom, and Wolfgang**

**SA 970607**

**Altzella**

Altzella, a Cistercian monastery founded in the twelfth century, lies at the edge of Nossen, a town of about 5000 people. Nossen is about one hour's drive west of Dresden.

Altzella is still surrounded by an impressive medieval wall, enclosing about forty acres. A broad Romanesque arch gives access to the monastery precinct from the west. The monastery itself (see the booklet I am providing) was an extensive complex but is now largely in ruins; under the Reformation the monastery was quarried for the palace and church of Nossen. The ruins now sit in a beautiful park with large trees and moist, shaded walks — a romantic site; indeed the site has been the subject of Romantic painters. One building does survive, the lay brothers' house ("Konversenhaus") which lies at the north of the west end of the ruined church. It is a sizable building with a vaulted lower floor, long used as a cow barn, but today exhibiting spolia of the site and fitted out as a small auditorium. With revisions of the early sixteenth century, the principal floor came to be the library of the monastery with the cells of the lay brothers above. The broad, well-lit library is spanned by large, carefully shaped beams. The rulers of Saxony (and other nobility) of the period 1100-1500 were buried at Altzella. In the late eighteenth century a mausoleum was built over the site of the sanctuary of the destroyed monastic church.

The Mausoleum was restored a few years ago and the Konversenhaus is currently in late stages of restoration. These, together with the ruins and park are under the control of the state and are accessed at a fee through a small personal gate in the east wall of the monastery site (and to a lesser extent through a fence separating the monastic complex proper from the remaining lands inside the monastery walls).

The remaining area within the walls, inside the main portal and to the west and south of the monastic complex incorporates a number of buildings of later date and built for agricultural purposes. The westernmost of these still serve as a horse farm. Between the horse farm and the monastic complex is a group of buildings that have been assigned to the **Batuz Foundation** and thus to the *Société Imaginaire*.

The buildings assigned to the Batuz Foundation include:

- a large domestic building of ca. 1900, which is the center of the Batuz Foundation, incorporating offices, a large dining room, Batuz' apartment, and several fine rooms for guests;
- a very large barn said to be about 300 years old, with a vaulted lower floor at the north end, but mainly a vast space with large but intricate timber construction; Batuz has organized, with temporary construction, a small part of the barn for exhibition purposes, but it remains to be put into use;
- a building just beyond the barn which has living quarters;
- a complex of DDR period farm buildings of mixed construction; within these, Batuz has established a papermaking workshop and a museum half of which is dedicated to the Inge Morath Photography Museum; current work will create more museum space and a cafe; near future work will provide artists' studios.