

The man who came late to dinner. A sundial, a raven, and a missed dinner party on a mosaic at Tarsus

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with a section on the inscriptions by William J. Slater

In 2012, construction works at the traditional olive market at Tarsus, in Eski Ömerli district, revealed large-scale architectural remains of the Roman period; the construction works were halted and a salvage excavation was initiated by Tarsus Museum. The remains that appeared at the first stage of the excavations were interpreted as those of a reservoir from the Roman Imperial period, stretching along a N-S axis. On the E side, a structure projects from the E wall of the reservoir, containing a pool that collects water flowing from drainage pipes set in the reservoir's façade. The pool was extended in two stages in late antiquity.¹ Two metres north of this pool and 3 m from the E wall of the reservoir, the excavations revealed a mosaic pavement (9.73 x 5.05 m), apparently forming part of the floor of a building running parallel to the reservoir's wall (fig. 1).

The mosaic was lifted about a year after it was uncovered and taken to the museum. The excavations have not brought to light any other architectural remains or mosaic fragments belonging to



Fig. 1. Tarsos, the mosaic under excavation beside the reservoir and pool, seen from the north (Tarsus Archaeological Museum).

1 The reservoir is part of a dam system to the Cydnus river; the excavations of the reservoir and pool will be published by the Tarsus Museum. The river ran through the city and was liable to flooding, leading to efforts in the Roman period to improve its flow and use it efficiently. Under Justinian, following a disastrous flood, the course was changed to avoid the city: Proc., Aed. 5.5.14-20; W. M. Ramsey, *The cities of St. Paul: their influence on his life and thought. The cities of Eastern Asia Minor* (London 1907) 105-7.