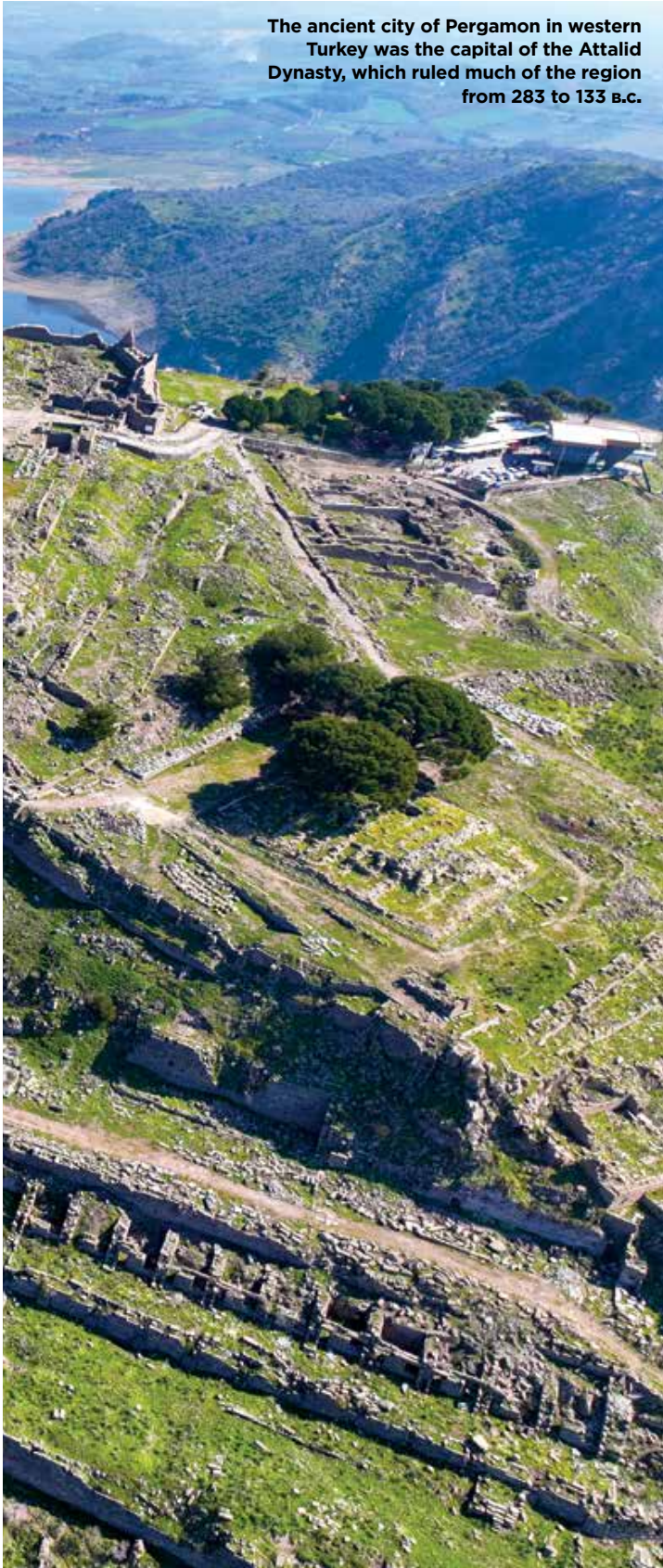


# The Power of Pergamon

From their monumental capital, the Attalid Dynasty ruled a realm where both Greek and Anatolian culture flourished

By ELIZABETH HEWITT





**The ancient city of Pergamon in western Turkey was the capital of the Attalid Dynasty, which ruled much of the region from 283 to 133 B.C.**

**T**HE GLEAMING ACROPOLIS of the ancient city of Pergamon rises high atop a promontory that looks out over Turkey's Bakırçay Plain. With Pergamon as their capital, the Greek monarchs of the Attalid Dynasty (283–133 B.C.) came to rule much of western Anatolia. The Attalids sculpted this hilltop city into an urban gem, sponsoring construction of a theater, a multistory stoa—or porticoed public building—and a gymnasium, all built on terraces lining the steep slope. According to legend, parchment was invented to be used in Pergamon's library, which rivaled the one in Alexandria in Egypt. Roman scholars studied manuscripts from the library, and Roman artists copied Pergamene statues. Around the middle of the second century B.C., Attalid sculptors carved a depiction of the Gigantomachy, a mythic battle pitting order against chaos, on a frieze more than 100 yards long that encircled the city's Great Altar of Zeus. Yet within a generation of the altar's construction, the kingdom disappeared. "The Attalids are like a flash empire," says historian Noah Kaye of Michigan State University. "It's fascinating for the moment that it represents."

**A bust depicts the Pergamene ruler Attalus I (reigned 241–197 B.C.), who gave his name to the Attalid Dynasty.**

