his supporters to seek wealth, gold-mining in Thrace. He spent ten years there; and having accumulated the sinews of war, and made friends with Athens' enemies in Thebes and Euboia, came back, scattered the government forces by a surprise attack between Athens and Marathon, and ruled as tyrant till his death (546–528).

But he was no tyrannical tyrant. He administered the constitution of Solon, 'merely seeing to it that reliable supporters always held the chief offices'. He even went into court once, before the Areopagus, to answer a charge of murder; but the accuser lost his nerve and did not appear. He levied a modest direct tax of 10 per cent of produce, and used it to make loans on easy terms to his crofter supporters, to provide themselves with good ploughs and oxen to draw them. Production soared, and the debts were easily repaid. A charming story describes him taking a walk in the country, as he often did, to see how things were going, and seeing a peasant working hard with his mattock, excavating a croft among 'absolute stones'. Peisistratos sent his one attendant to ask him what he was getting out of that field. 'Only aches and pains', said the peasant, who had not recognized the Boss, 'and of those, Peisistratos will be wanting his 10 per cent.' Peisistratos, delighted, replied that he could do without those, and the croft should be registered as tax-free.

His sons ruled after him till 511. The long generation of peace which the tyrants gave Athens saw the laying of deep and strong economic foundations; a great increase in the planting of olive trees, for example – always a sign of security; for the olive, which gives little return for thirty years, is a long-term investment. Under Peisistratos the fine Athenian pottery captured world markets (p. 101); sculpture increased in delicacy and skill; temples and water-conduits increased the beauty and amenities of the city. About 535 came the artistic invention of red-figure vase-painting; instead of painting black figures, with incised details, the artist blacked-in the whole surface, reserving the figures in the natural red. Details of features or clothing could then be painted in, giving scope for much more variety and realism.

About the same time, too, society began to take notice of certain peasant rituals, with choral song and mimic dancing, celebrating the sufferings of Dionysos, god of the vine, whose blood is shed for the service of men. This art-form begins to receive notice, naturally, just when the peasants were achieving political status and growing more civilised. Goats were sacrificed in the worship of Dionysos, wherefore the ritual was called *trag-ōdia*, Goat-Song. In a generation, transformed out of all recognition, it was to become Attic tragedy. At present, it was still a purely religious celebration. A participant called the Answerer or Responder (see p. 205) narrated the Birth of the Divine Child and the machinations of his enemies, who wished to destroy him, and the passion and triumph of the Dying God; and between these 'lessons', the chorus sang and danced traditional or newly composed *chorales*, or carols.