Eighteenth-century China saw the consolidation of an orthodox Confucianist state that saw the relation between different layers of the state and the people in light of the familial hierarchy. Protesters internalized such orthodoxy and developed humble protests that sought paternalistic benevolence of the state. Such repertoires of state-making and collective claim-making continued into the twentieth century and hybridized with imported political ideologies. We cannot fully understand the trajectories and forms of contemporary state powers and protest in China without considering these indigenous components of China’s body politics.