

Spatial Distribution Dataset of 142 Historical and Cultural Cities in China

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Abstract: National Historical and Cultural Cities refer to the cities that are particularly rich in preserved cultural relics and hold significant historical, cultural, and revolutionary value. Due to their profound historical and cultural heritage, these cities possess exceptionally high cultural, scientific, and conservation value. Based on the lists of National Historical and Cultural Cities announced by the State Council in 1982, 1986, and 1994, and subsequent additions, there are a total of 142 National Historical and Cultural Cities in the country as of 2023. The spatial points of these 142 cities were collected, edited, and verified through Google Maps, with additional information on the names and categories of the city-level administrative divisions, as well as the names and categories of the provincial-level administrative divisions. The data was then imported into a database using ArcGIS software, forming a spatial distribution dataset of China's 142 Historical and Cultural Cities. The dataset includes information on the names of the 142 National Historical and Cultural Cities in China, their respective batches, the names of the city-level administrative divisions, their categories, the names of the provincial-level administrative divisions, and their categories. The dataset is archived in .shp and .xls formats, consisting of nine data files with a total size of 178 KB (compressed into 1 file, 26.7 KB).

Keywords: historical and cultural city; spatial distribution; China

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Dataset Availability Statement:

The dataset supporting this paper was published and is accessible through the *Digital Journal of Global Change Data Repository* at: <https://doi.org/10.3974/geodb.2024.06.01.V1> or <https://cstr.escience.org.cn/CSTR:20146.11.2024.06.01.V1>.

1 Introduction

Cities, as crucial carriers of civilization, embody distinct characteristics in terms of economic, social, natural, and historical-cultural aspects, playing a key role in cultural heritage transmission. In February 1982, to protect important cities that were ancient political, economic, and cultural centers or sites of modern revolutionary movements and significant his-

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torical events, the concept of “Historical and Cultural Cities” was officially introduced in China. According to the “Cultural Relics Protection Law of the People’s Republic of China”, these cities are defined as having a particularly rich collection of cultural relics with significant historical, cultural, and revolutionary value. Historical and Cultural Cities carry the spiritual pursuits and values of the Chinese nation, witnessing the transformations from ancient to modern times, and recording the nation’s struggles and glories throughout history. They are the concentrated embodiment of China’s long history, splendid culture, and national spirit. Protecting these cities is crucial for preserving traditional Chinese culture and enhancing cultural confidence^[1].

According to the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics, a “historical and cultural city” refers to a city that is particularly rich in preserving cultural relics and has great historical and cultural value and revolutionary significance. The historical and cultural city carries the spiritual pursuit and values of the Chinese nation, witnessed the vicissitudes of the Chinese nation from ancient times to modern times, and recorded the struggle and glory of the Chinese nation in the long history, it is the concentrated embodiment of the long history, splendid culture and national spirit of the Chinese nation^[2]. Protecting the historical and cultural cities is of great significance to inheriting the excellent traditional Chinese culture and enhancing the cultural confidence.

The spatial distribution dataset of 142 historical and cultural cities in China, is a supplement to the historical and cultural town spatial distribution dataset^[3] and the traditional village spatial distribution dataset series^[4]. The dataset can be used to clearly sort out the distribution and administrative subordination of historical and cultural cities, and form a complete three-level spatial data system of Chinese historical and cultural cities, towns, villages with spatial dataset of 312 historical and cultural towns and scenic spots in China and spatial distribution dataset of 2555 traditional villages in China, in order to achieve the purpose of promoting and protecting historical and cultural cities and promoting the inheritance and development of Chinese historical and cultural.

2 Metadata of the Dataset

Dataset full name, short name, authors, year of the dataset, data files, data publisher, and data sharing policy of the spatial distribution dataset of 142 historical and cultural cities in China^[5] are shown in Table 1.

3 Methods

3.1 Data Source

The data involved in this study mainly include basic geographic information data and historical and cultural city data. The basic geographic information data is the vector data of the national cities, counties and administrative regions, which is derived from the Resources and Environment Science and Data Center of the Chinese Academy of Sciences¹; the data of historical and cultural cities comes from the comprehensive administrative management platform of the National Cultural Heritage Administration². The list of China’s historical and cultural cities was obtained from this platform, and the cities of Liaoyang, Tonghai County, Yixian, Tongcheng, Fuzhou, Jiujiang, Jianchuan County, and Putian, which were added between 2020 and 2023, were supplemented.

¹ Data Center of Resources and Environmental Sciences, Chinese Academy of Sciences. Territorial entity border dataset of Multi-year Chinese administrative [Z]. 2024-05-09. <https://www.resdc.cn/>.

² Comprehensive Administration platform of the State Administration of Culture Heritage. List of historical and culture cities in China [Z]. 2024-05-09. <http://gl.ncha.gov.cn/#/pubic-service>.

Table 1 Metadata summary of the spatial distribution dataset of 142 historical and cultural cities in China

Items	Description
Dataset full name	Spatial distribution dataset of 142 historical and cultural cities in China
Dataset short name	ChinaHistCulturalCities
Authors	Peng, J. Z., Chengdu University of Technology, 3050638918@qq.com Tang, B., Chengdu University of Technology, 3599134583@qq.com Zhang, Y., Chengdu University of Technology, zhangyang2020 @ cdut.edu.cn Guan, Q. J., Chengdu University of Technology, 2016343160@qq.com Xiong, Y. C., Chengdu University of Technology, 1102565023@qq.com Zhang, Q. M., Chengdu University of Technology, 2238531490@qq.com Chen, W., Chengdu University of Technology, 344368284@qq.com
Geographical region	China (no data in Taiwan Province)
Year	1982–2023
Data format	.xlsx, .shp
Data size	26.7 KB (after compression)
Data files	142 historical and cultural city project records
Data publisher	Global Change Research Data Publishing & Repository, http://www.geodoi.ac.cn
Address	No. 11A, Datun Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100101, China
Data sharing policy	(1) <i>Data</i> are openly available and can be free downloaded via the Internet; (2) End users are encouraged to use <i>Data</i> subject to citation; (3) Users, who are by definition also value-added service providers, are welcome to redistribute <i>Data</i> subject to written permission from the GCdataPR Editorial Office and the issuance of a <i>Data</i> redistribution license; and (4) If <i>Data</i> are used to compile new datasets, the ‘ten per cent principal’ should be followed such that <i>Data</i> records utilized should not surpass 10% of the new dataset contents, while sources should be clearly noted in suitable places in the new dataset ^[6]
Communication and searchable system	DOI, CSTR, Crossref, DCI, CSCD, CNKI, SciEngine, WDS/ISC, GEOSS

3.2 Methodology

The list of China’s historical and cultural cities, published on the comprehensive administrative management platform of the National Cultural Heritage Administration, records the identification number, name, and batch of each historical and cultural city. The spatial points of 142 cities were collected, edited, and verified using Google Maps, and additional attribute information such as the names and categories of city-level and provincial-level administrative divisions was supplemented. The data was then imported into a database and spatially visualized using ArcGIS software, forming a spatial distribution dataset of China’s 142 historical and cultural cities.

4 Data Results and Validation

4.1 Data Composition

This dataset includes the lists of historical and cultural cities announced by the State Council in 1982, 1986, and 1994, along with subsequent additions. As of 2023, a total of 142 sub-items are included. The dataset is stored as spatial point data in .xls and .shp format data files. The attribute fields are recorded as shown in Table 2.

4.2 Data Products

4.2.1 Partition Statistics

According to the statistics of the number of historical and cultural cities in seven geographical divisions (Figure 2), the number of historical and cultural cities in each region is ranked as East China> Central China> Southwest > Northwest China> North China> South China > Northeast China. East China and Central China are the most densely populated, with 68, and

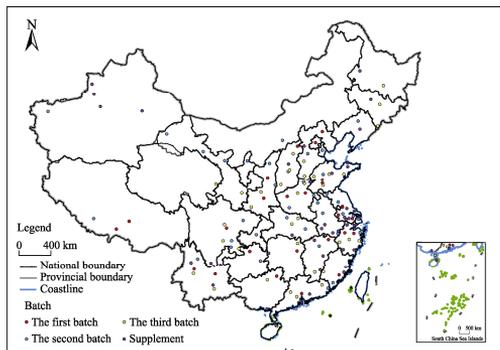


Figure 1 Map of historical and cultural cities in China

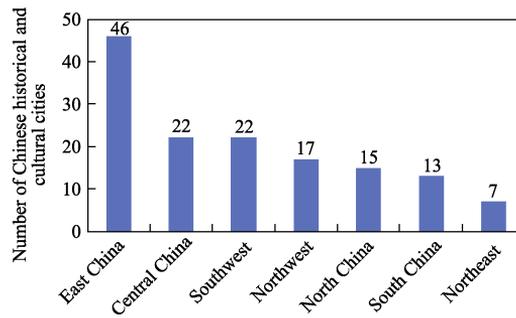


Figure 2 Statistics of historical and cultural cities in China according to the seven geographical zones

Table 2 The attribute field in the dataset

No.	Field name	Meaning of the field name	Field content examples
1	Index	order number	130
2	Name_C	Name (in Chinese)	Jianchuan County
3	Name_E	Name (in English)	Jianchuan County
4	CityName_C	Municipal administrative Region name (in Chinese)	Bai Autonomous Prefecture of Dali
5	CityName_E	City-level Administrative Region name (in English)	Dali Autonomous Prefecture
6	CityType_C	Municipal administrative Region category (in Chinese)	Autonomous Prefecture
7	CityType_E	Municipal administrative region category (in English)	Autonomous Prefecture
8	ProName_C	Provincial administrative Region name (in Chinese)	Yunnan Province
9	ProName_E	Provincial administrative Region name (in English)	Yunnan Province
10	ProType_C	Provincial administrative Region category (in Chinese)	Province
11	ProType_E	Provincial administrative region category (in English)	Province
12	Batch_C	Batch (in Chinese)	Supplement
13	Batch_E	Batch (in English)	Supplement

Northeast China is the least, with only 7. From the provincial level (Table 3), Jiangsu Province has the highest number of historical and cultural cities in China, with 13 cities. In the second tier, Shandong Province and Zhejiang Province each have 10 cities. In the third tier, Sichuan Province, Yunnan Province, Henan Province, and Guangdong Province each have 8 cities, while Anhui Province has 7 cities. Hebei Province, Shanxi Province, Jiangxi Province, and Shaanxi Province each have 6 cities. The remaining provinces and municipalities have relatively fewer historical and cultural cities.

4.2.2 Distribution Pattern

The spatial distribution pattern of historical and cultural cities generally shows a characteristic of wide-range dispersion and small-range clustering. The six regions with relatively dense distributions are the Bohai Rim region, the Yangtze River Delta region, the middle reaches of the Yangtze River region, the southwest region, the southeast coastal region, and the middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River region. The density of distribution decreases from southeast to northwest.

Table 3 The number of Chinese historical and cultural cities is counted by province

Ranking	Province	Quantity	Ranking	Province	Quantity	Ranking	Province	Quantity
1	Jiangsu Province	13	5	Shaanxi Province	6	9	Heilongjiang Province	2
2	Shandong Province	10	6	Fujian Province	5	9	Liaoning Province	2
2	Zhejiang Province	10	6	Hubei province	5	10	Beijing City	1
3	Guangdong Province	8	6	Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region	5	10	Neimenggu Autonomous Region	1
3	Henan Province	8	7	Gansu Province	4	10	Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region	1
3	Sichuan Province	8	8	Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	3	10	Qinghai Province	1
3	Yunnan Province	8	8	Hunan Province	3	10	Shanghai City	1
4	Anhui Province	7	8	Jilin Province	3	10	Tianjin City	1
5	Hebei Province	6	8	Xizang Autonomous Region	3	10	Chongqing City	1
5	Jiangxi Province	6	9	Guizhou Province	2		Total	142
5	Shanxi Province	6	9	Hainan Province	2			

4.2.3 The Influencing Factors of the Distribution of Historical and Cultural Cities

Relevant studies show that the formation and spatial distribution of historical and cultural cities are affected by natural geographical conditions and socioeconomic conditions^[7-9]. The middle and lower reaches of the Yellow River region are the birthplace of Chinese culture, and historically^[10, 11], this area has long been the political, cultural, and economic center of China. With its rich history and deep cultural heritage, this region has produced millennia-old capitals such as Xi'an, Luoyang, and Kaifeng. The Yangtze River Delta region, with its favorable natural conditions, has gradually become the economic center of the country since the Tang and Song dynasties. As cultural and educational prosperity has grown, historical and cultural cities are spatially distributed in a contiguous manner in this region. During the Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties, Beijing served as the capital for more than 700 years, and the Bohai Rim region^[12] became the center of Gyeonggi, giving birth to many historical and cultural cities. The middle reaches of the Yangtze River have the geographical advantage of connecting all places, and famous revolutionary movements such as the Xinhai Revolution and the Nanchang Uprising have broken out in modern times, resulting in cities of great historical and cultural value and revolutionary significance represented by Wuhan, Changsha and Nanchang. The Sichuan Basin in the southwest region is fertile and has the reputation of "the land of abundance", and the population and economic activities have always been dense, and many cities have a unique position in history. There are many ethnic minorities in Yunnan and Guizhou, strong ethnic customs and culture, coupled with unique geographical conditions, forming a unique historical and cultural city represented by Dali and Kunming. The southeast coastal area, since the Song Dynasty, the maritime trade has been active, the economic status has been improved, is one of the most important areas of China's opening up and exchanges, and has produced historical and cultural cities represented by Quanzhou and Guangzhou.

In the border regions, where the land is vast and the population is sparse, the spatial distribution of historical and cultural cities is relatively sparse due to the limitations imposed by natural environmental conditions and economic development levels. As provincial or capital cities have long been established as regional political, economic, and cultural centers, they often become relatively independent historical and cultural cities.

5 Discussion and Conclusion

Comprehensive understanding of the spatial distribution of historical and cultural cities in China is of great significance for policies related to the protection and utilization of these

cities. This dataset, which includes the lists of historical and cultural cities announced by the State Council from 1982 to 2023, along with subsequent additions, has been compiled with a total of 142 entries. Detailed attribute information has been supplemented for each historical and cultural city, including identification number, name, batch, city-level administrative division name, city-level administrative division category, provincial-level administrative division name, and provincial-level administrative division category. Further analysis of the spatial distribution of China's historical and cultural cities reveals that they are concentrated in densely populated, economically developed, culturally rich, and naturally livable regions such as East China, Central China, and Southeast China. This dataset can be combined with other cultural protection datasets, such as those for historical and cultural towns, traditional villages, and intangible cultural heritage, to provide a data foundation for research in the field of cultural protection.

Author Contributions

Zhang, Y. made the overall design of the data set development; Tang, B. and Chen, W. collected and processed the data; Peng, J. Z. wrote the data paper; Xiong, Y. C., Guan, Q. J. and Zhang, Q. M. participated in the verification of the data results.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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