



## CHARAX

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**CHARAX**, town in the Seleucid and Parthian province of Rhagiana, the area around modern Ray. To judge from its Greek name, which probably means palisade, Charax was a fortified town. It was founded by one of the early Seleucids and, according to Ptolemy (*Geography* 6.5.4), was situated next to Apameia (cf. Ammianus Marcellinus, 23.6.43), the Seleucid name for the city of Rhaga (modern Ray). According to Isidore of Charax, who is our main source, it was one of the five cities of Rhagiana, the chief town being Rhaga, and was located “at the foot of a mountain called Caspius [i.e., the [Alborz](#)], beyond which are the Caspian Gates” (*Parthian Stations* 8, ed. and tr. W. H. Schoff, Philadelphia, 1914, p. 6). In about 176 b.c., Phraates I of Parthia extended his domain eastwards, subjugated the Māzandarāni tribe of the Amardioi/Mardi (see [āmoli](#)), and resettled a group of them in Charax (Isidore, loc. cit.), thereby creating a stronghold for a planned conquest of Media. The site of Charax has not yet been identified with certainty. Droysen (p. 716) suggested modern Eyvānekey about 70 km southwest of Tehran, which contains extensive historic ruins, but Isidore’s description points to a place “somewhat nearer the Gates” (Rawlinson, p. 67 n. 2). Barthold (p. 122) maintained it was the medieval town of Arazi, 12 *farsaks* from Ray on the road to K̄vār, but cited no evidence for this identification. No similar-sounding name seems to be attested in the works of the Islamic geographers.

For Charax (Spasinou) in Characene (Mēšān) see [characene](#).



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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