



# ASCENSIÓN

*Chirivella*

## María de la Ascensión Chirivella Marín

*First woman lawyer in Spain*

**Valencia, 1893 – Mexico City, 1980**

Ascensión Chirivella was the daughter of an attorney of the courts, Manuel Chirivella Merseguer, and of Ascensión García. She pursued her baccalaureate at the Instituto de Valencia between 1906 and 1910 and later studied Philosophy and Humanities at the Universidad de Valencia, where she graduated in 1914. She was the first woman to earn this Bachelor's degree at that university. She simultaneously pursued studies at the Escuela Normal de Maestras teachers' college in Valencia.

Between 1918 and 1921, she earned a Bachelor's in Law from the Universidad de Murcia (1918-1920) and the Universidad de Valencia (1920-1921). She had taken the three subjects in the Preparatory Studies for the Bachelor's in Law at the Universidad de Valencia in academic year 1910-1911.

Ascensión Chirivella earned her Bachelor's in Law from the Universidad de Valencia in September 1921. She was the second Spanish woman to earn this degree (the first was Carmen López Bonilla, who earned hers in May 1921 at the Universidad de Madrid).

On 21 December 1921, Chirivella applied for admission into the Bar Association of Valencia and was admitted on 12 January 1922. Chirivella thus became the first woman lawyer in Spain.

During the Second Republic, she worked intensely with the Radical Republican Party alongside her husband Álvaro Pascual Leone Forner, a lawyer and MP. Chirivella was a fervent supporter of the republican constitutional system, and at the end of the Civil War she had to go into exile and moved to Mexico, where she could no longer work as a lawyer.

Chirivella was on the vanguard of the Spanish feminist movement in the immediate post-war years and also stood out for her defence of the rights of disadvantaged persons.

On 15 December 1935, Chirivella delivered a speech at the Paraninfo auditorium at the Universidad de Valencia which condensed her political and legal views, primarily aimed at protecting the rights of women and defending equality before the law.

She advocated the difference between the male and female perspective in the practice of law: 'women are not inferior to men: they are absolutely different (...) lawyerdom is an activity with broad prospects for women; their mission is not the same as that of male lawyers'. In their legal work, women should 'defend the humble, encourage the fallen, protect children'. She also advocated paternity investigations and social legislation that would adequately protect the working class, and she praised the principles enshrined in the Republican Constitution, 'which have courage to love, protect and defend all Spaniards equally, regardless of their age, sex, status or state'.

*Manuel Cachón Cadenas*  
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## References:

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