The Philippines has always been known for its rich and abundant culture, engraved to the very fiber of its history. Even before the first Spanish colonist stepped foot on the shores of our beloved motherland, our ancestors have formed their own way of living, music, art, and dances. Each of which has religious or cultural significance. After the Spanish took control of the country for over three hundred years, part of their culture was incorporated with the country’s identity which also reflected to our folk songs, dances, and art.

Unfortunately, many of our cultural songs, arts, and dances have been buried deep into the pages of books and writings. In today’s curriculum, some of the most famous of culturally significant forms of Philippine identity are taught. But many disregard it and treat it as a passing subject which they just skim over. The majority of the younger generation cannot identify their cultural dances. They fail to know the significance of these dances to their cultural identity as Filipino.

There are hundreds of Philippine folk dances, which is not surprising given that the archipelago is comprised of seven thousand six hundred forty islands. The geography of the country helped in forming such a culturally diverse nation.

The Polkabal is a Filipino folk dance with a notable European which originated from the town of Atimonan in the province of Quezon. It is believed to be a mixture of two Spanish dances, the polka and the balse also known as the waltz. There are nine different steps that incorporate fluttering and mimicking of the moves in a bull fight. Polkabal is danced by a pair of female and male dancers wearing traditional Filipino
attire. Throughout the years many versions of the dance immerge in different provinces. In Negros Occidental it is called Polka Italiana, while in Mindoro it is called Polka sa sala; in Batangas it’s called Polka sa nayon; and in Visayas it is known as the Polka antigo.

While Polkabal was greatly influenced by Spanish inquisitors, Sayaw sa kasingkil or best known as simply Singkil is one of the truly Filipino dances there is. The Maranaw dance which came from the people of Lanao in Mindanao is an epic inspired dance. The dance depicts the ordeal of a Muslim princess named Prinsesa Gandingan who was trapped in the forest during an Earthquake that was cause by deities. The dance steps were reminiscence of jumping over fallen branches and trees as the dancers skip over criss-crossing bamboos. In the story the Princess was accompanied by her servants while they ride out the quake, the Princess was said to have maintained her grace and composure during the situation, thus reflecting on the dancers’ immaculate facial expression during the whole routine. Eventually Prinsesa Gandingan was saved by the Price and they married, thus associating the dance to seduction and flirting.

Both of the dances stated are flamboyant and soft, both are flirty and seducing, the Maglalatik or Magbabao is the total opposite. This dance originated from the province of Laguna in the Island of Luzon. Maglalatik is a war dance which depicts the fight between Christians and Muslims for the coconuts; a prized food source back in them. The Maglalatik is danced by an all male ensemble. The dance steps us the bao or coconut shells as props, the steps and routines are brute and laud, made to intimidate the opponent.

Filipino folk dances are amazing and interesting. Each dance can be traced to a specific province or region with an accompaniment of fictious and/or legends. Some are inspired by true events with added flare and decoration. By learning the dances and the stories behind each one, it is easier to understand the culture behind it. Dance is a way to immerse to different culture and ethnicity. As Filipinos it is our duty to preserve these cultural treasures, to ensure that these masterpieces will live one and will not die-out.
References:

http://www.philippines.abouttravelingtheworld.com/philippines-culture/philippine-dance/polkabal-dance
https://dance.lovetoknow.com/List_of_Philippine_Folk_Dance#:~:text=The%20Tinikling%20is%20considered%20by,grass
http://simplyknowledge.com/popular/gk_detail/maglalatik