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**MIGRANT SCANDAL
500,000 FLOODED
INTO BRITAIN AND
NO ONE NOTICED**

SEE PAGE 8&9

HOTTIE PRIORS



Picture: RIJCKSMUSEUM / BNPS

Japanese
antique
had been
used as
TV stand
and drinks
cabinet



'Old TV stand' bought for £100 is sold on for £6.3m

By Mark Reynolds

AN OLD wooden chest that was bought for £100 and sat unnoticed as a TV stand for 40 years has been sold for £6.3million.

The 5ft chest, made of cedar wood and gold lacquer, was found to be a rare Japanese antique dating back to 1640.

Although its owner did not realise it, the chest was so coveted that London's Victoria and Albert Museum had been searching for it worldwide since it was last recorded in 1941.

It had sat undetected at a house in South Kensington, less than a mile from the museum, until 1986 when its owner, a French engineer, moved back to France.

He had bought the chest - one of only 10 in the world - at a private sale in 1970.

It is believed to have been sold to him by a Polish doctor who had no idea of its origins. When the Frenchman died,



One of the
Japanese
legends
picked out
in gold
lacquer
on the
intricately
decorated
chest

experts called in to value his assets as were stunned to discover what he had unwittingly kept for all these years. The chest, decorated inside and out with gold lacquer depicting a Japanese myth including the Tale of Genji, has now been snapped up at auction in France by the Rijksmuseum of Amsterdam.

The £6.3million price tag is thought to be the second highest sum paid for Japanese art. Museum curator Menno Flijsk said: "The original £100 sale price has to have been the bargain of the century."

"The French engineer, thinking the chest to be of little value, used it as a TV stand. "He also kept his drinks collection inside it. "Yes we paid a lot of money but you have to pay for quality and it is worth every penny."

For the first time since the financial melt- TURN TO PAGE 2

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