

# Refugee Ship May Hold Art Treasures

NY Times

MAY 24 1975

By LINDA CHARLTON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 23—A

South Vietnamese ship that arrived at Guam last week with 522 refugees also reportedly carried crates of what may be part of that country's art treasures. But officials here maintain that they do not know the contents of the crates or who owns them.

At the State Department, spokesmen acknowledged "rumors" about the ship, a coastal steamer called the Tan Han Viet, but were unable to provide any further information. A spokesman for the United States Custom Service gave "unofficial" confirmation that a ship with such a cargo was anchored at Apra, on Guam, but provided no other details:

According to sources on Guam, however, the artifacts are packed in two large wooden crates and weigh about two and a half tons. They are described as including ancient manuscripts, carved jade, Buddhist statues and silk screens, on which one official placed a value of as much as \$150-million. It was also rumored that the boxes contained treasures from the ancient Vietnamese capital of Hue and from national archives.

United States and Guam officials boarded the ship to inspect the crates yesterday, when they were informed of the cache by one of the refugees brought to Guam on the ship May 15th.

Rear Adm. G. Steve Morrison, commander of Naval forces in the Marianas, the island chain of which Guam is part, said that some "interesting items" had been found in the ship. But he said that he could not verify the reports of art treasures, and that the pictures he had seen of some of the

items were too small to allow identification of the subjects.

Admiral Morrison said that he had sent an "information report" on the matter to higher military officials. He said that the ship and its cargo were the responsibility of Guam's Government.

A spokesman for Gov. Ricky Bordallo's office said: "We

have a customs man assigned, and he will be there to give a report on the contents." He said that he had only heard "a rumor" that the contents might prove to be extremely valuable. He added: "I have heard rumors of certain records and valuable property that belonged to South Vietnam leaving that country."