

# TOKYO IN TASHKENT: THE AFRO-ASIAN WRITERS ASSOCIATION AND JAPANESE COLD WAR DISSENT★

## I

In October 1958, seven Japanese writers attended the first great cultural event of the Bandung era, the week-long Afro-Asian Writers Conference held in Tashkent, the capital of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. The 'literary Bandung', as it came to be known, was attended by 204 writers from thirty-seven African and Asian countries and resulted in the creation of the Afro-Asian Writers Association (AAWA), which held nine more conferences over the next thirty years; published a trilingual literary journal, *Lotus*, meant to support a literary culture unmediated by London, Paris or New York; and established the Lotus Prize, colloquially called the Third World's Nobel prize for literature. The presence of Japanese writers in Tashkent does not fit into the existing historiographies of decolonization, the Cold War or post-war Japan. The challenges this history poses are epitomized by the ascent to the podium of the novelist Noma Hiroshi, de facto leader of the Japanese delegation, on the conference's first day: here was a communist writer from a country that lost its colonies in an inter-imperial war, whose government was tightly aligned with the United States, giving a high-profile speech at a conference for African and Asian writers sponsored by the

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