

# Mikkel Aaland



"It's All an Adventure"

## To-to-no-tta: The Power of a Word

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How do you feel after taking a bath? Relaxed. Content? Calm? Is there a single word that fully expresses how you feel? If not, the Japanese have a word that might help. It is a common word with a conventional meaning, but it is being used in a new way and some people say the word is partially responsible for an explosive interest by young Japanese in the Finnish style of sweat bathing.



The word is *to-to-no-tta*. The word literally means "organized" or "in place". It can also mean "in tune" as a piano is in tune. Traditionally the word is used to describe a very Japanese attitude that says only when things are in order, or in their proper place, can you relax and be content. The concept lives alongside the Japanese passion for cleanliness. You have to hear the word spoken to fully appreciate its ability to capture the feeling you get right after a bath. If you say it again try drawing out the *tta* at the end. It becomes *thaaaaa* as if you are letting out a long sigh. *Ahhhh.....*



Filming Daizaburo Sakamoto, a trained Shugendo priest who uses sweat and steam and smoke rituals to connect him with the sacred mountains and with nature.



Daizaburo Sakamoto, Shugendo priest.

The Japanese have a knack for coming up with words that express feelings that are elusive. Take the Japanese word *komorebi*. It captures the feeling you get when you watch the dance of light that occurs when sunlight streams through tree leaves. Or the word *kogarashi* which literally means "leaf-wilting wind" and captures the start of winter when cold winds blast the last leaves off the autumn trees.



Shinto Lion Dance Steam Purification Ritual  
Location: Suwa-jinja Shrine, Hakone-machi, Kanagawa.

Some of these words have made it into the Western vernacular. The word *wabi-sabi*, for example, was popularized here in the West by our own bath-loving friend and artist, Leonard Koren. The word refers to the imperfect, incomplete and transient nature of beauty, but uncompressed the word expresses an entire Japanese aesthetic that can be applied to all aspects of life.



Filming Yuki Yonada, Japan's Sweat Master, at his Welibe spa in Nagoya.

A relatively new Japanese word to the Western lexicon and mind is *Shinrin-yoku* which literally means "forest bath" and refers to walking in a forest and bathing in the green light filtering through the trees.



The illustrator/ cartoon artist Tanaka Katsuki, the creator of the book *Sado*, or *The Way of Sauna*. He is credited as one of the primary promoters in Japan of the concept of *to-to-no-tta*.



Mr. Kushi, CEO of Tabi Labo, a Japanese version of VICE and a cultural influencer media platform. Kushi-san is also a moving force behind popularizing the word *to-to-no-tta*.

## Will to-to-no-tta join the Western lexicon?

Will *to-to-no-tta* join the Western lexicon? Time will only tell. But for now, next time you try to express how you feel after a bath, when the world before seemed fragmented and is now in order, or whole, try it out and see what kind of reaction you get from the bathers around you. The sounds coming off your tongue may resonate with them. And might even be contagious.

## Perfect Sweat Update

Last spring we shot episodes of Perfect Sweat in Japan and Turkey followed in the summer by shooting episodes in Scandinavia and at Burning Man in the Nevada desert. We now have 7 of the 10 planned episodes in the can and our amazing editing team here in the San Francisco Bay Area is busy assembling them. In the near future we will shoot the remaining episodes in Mexico (the temescal), Canada (the Native American Sweat Lodge), and the Baltic.

We are still on track to release the 10 episodes of the first season of Perfect Sweat in the fall of 2020.

Follow the project on Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/perfect-sweat/> and like us on [Facebook](#).

Thanks! Mikkel