CLAIMS

1. A vinyl alcohol polymer, wherein:

a ratio (Mw/Mn) of a weight average molecular weight (Mw) to a number average molecular weight (Mn) of the vinyl alcohol polymer is in a range of 3 to 8;

the vinyl alcohol polymer comprises a branched structure formed by binding, the binding being cleavable under an alkaline condition; and

when the vinyl alcohol polymer is treated at 40 °C for 1 hour in a sodium hydroxide solution to cleave the binding, a resulting vinyl alcohol polymer has a ratio (Mw/Mn) of 2 or greater and less than 3.

2. The vinyl alcohol polymer according to claim 1, obtained by:

polymerizing a vinyl ester monomer in the presence of at least one monomer selected from the group consisting of a carboxylic acid having an unsaturated double bond, an alkyl ester thereof, an acid anhydride thereof, and a salt thereof, and a silyl compound having an unsaturated double bond; and

thereafter saponifying and carrying out a heat treatment of the polymerization product at a temperature of 70 °C to 150 °C.

3. A thickening agent comprising the vinyl alcohol polymer according to claim 1.

4. A stabilizer comprising the vinyl alcohol polymer according to claim 1, wherein the stabilizer is suitable for emulsion polymerization.

5. The stabilizer according to claim 4, further comprising water.

6. A stabilizer comprising the vinyl alcohol polymer according to claim 1, wherein the stabilizer is suitable for suspension polymerization.

7. The stabilizer according to claim 6, further comprising water.

8. A coating agent comprising the vinyl alcohol polymer according to claim 1.

9. The coating agent according to claim 8, further comprising a crosslinking agent.

10. A coated article produced by applying the coating agent according to claim 8 on a surface of a base material.

11. The coated article according to claim 10, which is a thermal recording paper.

12. The coated article according to claim 10, which is a base paper for release paper.

13. The coated article according to claim 10, which is an oil resistant paper.

14. A sizing agent comprising the vinyl alcohol polymer according to claim 1.

15. The sizing agent according to claim 14, further comprising a wax.

16. A sized yarn comprising a raw yarn, and a binder with which the raw yarn is impregnated, wherein the binder comprises the sizing agent according to claim 14.

17. A method of producing a textile, comprising weaving the sized yarn according to claim 16.

18. The vinyl alcohol polymer according to claim 1, comprising a unit derived from at least one monomer selected from the group consisting of a carboxylic acid having an unsaturated double bond, an alkyl ester of the carboxylic acid, an acid anhydride of the carboxylic acid, a salt of the carboxylic acid, and a silyl compound having an unsaturated double bond, wherein the unit is present in an amount of 0.02 to 5 mol% based on a total number of moles of all monomer units constituting the vinyl alcohol polymer.