

# SCHEDDELEAKS

Tutto ciò che avreste voluto sapere sulle schede telefoniche

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## 1 - Magnetic stripe technologies

1 - SIDA

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Everything you ever wanted to know about calling cards

## 1.1.1 - SIDA ZERO

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the first telephone card in the world was born in 1976 in Italy, from the collaboration between the Italian companies SIP and SIDA (Figure 1).

Known by collectors as SIDA 0, this card is made by the company Mantegazza Arti Grafiche of Bollate (Mi) in light plasticized cardboard. On side A is applied, parallel to the short side of the board, a 13 mm high band of material capable of retaining information in the form of magnetism.

Although constituting an experimental phase, this card officially marks the beginning of the era of telephone cards and their collecting.



Figure 1 - SIDA Zero

After 40 years from its issue, the information regarding the magnetism of this card has reached us only verbally and is often unclear and fragmentary. In fact, over the years at least two very different types of magnetism have been identified on this sheet.

The first type, certainly original according to the information we have gathered, is of the horizontal type.

The magnetic track occupies the entire length of the band, is about 3 mm high and is made up of some vertical lines with variable distance, according to the residual credit contained on the card.

Then there is a second type of magnetism in the shape of an arc of a circle, less widespread and more controversial. We are currently unable to deliver

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more information about it. However, we do not exclude that this is an experimentation for the subsequent large-scale distribution of the first Sida technology cards.

## 1.1.2 - SIDA, History

During the first months of field testing of the new technology, Yes they verified continuous breakdowns of the telephone devices, due to the paper jam in the reader, due to the type of very light material.

To address this problem, SIDA, availing always of the collaboration with the Mantegazza company, proposed to SIP a new type of support in more rigid material, called Datatrack (Figure 2).

Due to the high cost, SIP did not approve the proposed supply and turned elsewhere: the collaboration between SIP and the Pikappa company in Masate (Mi) was born in 1977 from this need.

To meet SIP's requests, Pikappa proposed 3 different prototypes very similar to each other. These cards had identical color shades to the Datatrack card proposed by Mantegazza, but had different thicknesses and were made of PVC, the cost of which was much lower.



Figure 2 - DATATRACK

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In the same period Pikappa proposed to SIP a further prototype of rigid blue / violet plastic. Such

test for the first time provided for the indication of the nominal value

on paper is

the introduction of trezzatura:

these are two historical innovations, which will be used on all the cards produced later.



Figure 3 - Try Pikappa

We report in Figure 4 the image of the paper just described.



Figure 4 - Calibration error

during  
shaping

We are also pleased to show you in Figure 3 the same card without magnetic stripe, with an evident shift of the print. This is probably a production waste due to the incorrect calibration of the machinery used to shape the board.

In both cards it is interesting to note the presence of the face value and the words "The card must be complete with a coupon at the time of purchase".

This test, made of semi-rigid material and with very different graphics and colors compared to those required by SIP, it was not approved and the choice fell on the yellow and blue typology, with the introduction of two interesting changes with respect to what was proposed by Mantegazza: the nominal value and the trezzatura.

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The first series distributed to the public in the denominations of 2,000, 5,000 and 9,000 Lire was born in 1977 from the collaboration between SIP and Pikappa, again thanks to the help of SIDA.

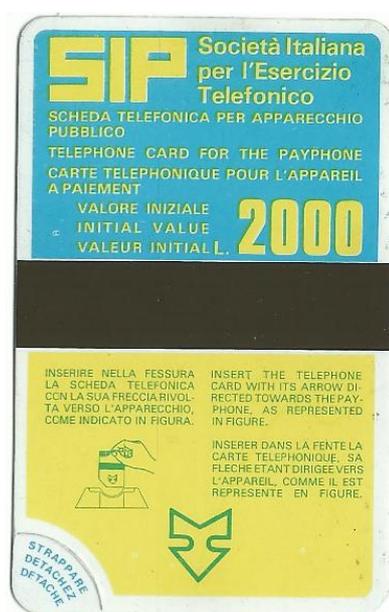


Figure 5 - Sida First Group Sida period, up to with circular pattern

The cards of the first issue have circular trimming. These are the only cards issued with this feature.

Starting from 1978 the linear trezzatura was introduced, while starting from 1979 the indication of the date of issue was introduced on the back in the form of a string of 4 numbers, in the year-month format of issue. For example 7903 corresponds to March (03) 1979 (79).

Such characteristic

it will remain in use throughout the

1988.

All the SIDA described so far are known in the world of collecting with the name of "First SIDA Group".

In the following years, several graphic and material changes were introduced. After the use of smooth gray PVC for emissions up to 1980, the following year is passed to the use of opaque white PVC.



Figure 6 - Test sheet

Figure 6 shows a used test card with colors used in the second

by Pikappa technicians for the approval of the new one

graphics in SIP. As you can see, starting from 1982 the graphics also changed significantly: the blue and yellow colors were in fact inverted and a double numbering of the card was introduced on the front and back.

SIDA group

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These are the salient features of the graphics of the so-called "Second SIDA Group".

Another fundamental change concerns the replacement of the 2,000 e and 5,000 Lire respectively with denominations of 3,000 and 6,000 Lire.



Finally, starting from February 1985 series were also produced with the inscriptions in German instead of French, dedicated to emissions for South Tyrol.

The last SIDA period, called "Third SIDA Group), begins in 1986.

The main graphic changes concern the need to change the logo and the company name which becomes "Italian Society for the Operation of Public Telecommunications", in addition to the shift of the issue date in place of the box

Figure 7 - Sida Third Group White on side A (Figure 7).

## 1.1.3 - SIDA, Magnetic Technology

For unknown reasons, linear magnetism is abandoned at the end of the SIDA Zero trials. All the other SIDAs, in fact, have arc-shaped magnetism.

For all issues, the cards not used have 4 notches, spaced according to the initially available credit.

Figure 8 shows a sketch showing the possible positions of the notches along the arc of the magnetization as the available credit varies.

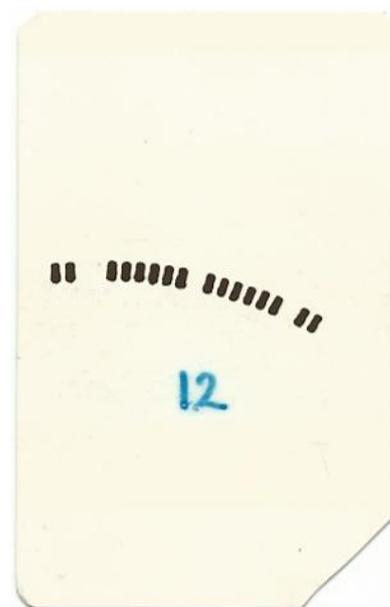


Figure 8 - Drawings arc magnetization

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Below (Figure 9) we present some vintage drawings showing the correct provisions for new SIDA cards in the values of 2,000, 3,000, 6,000 and 9,000 Lire.

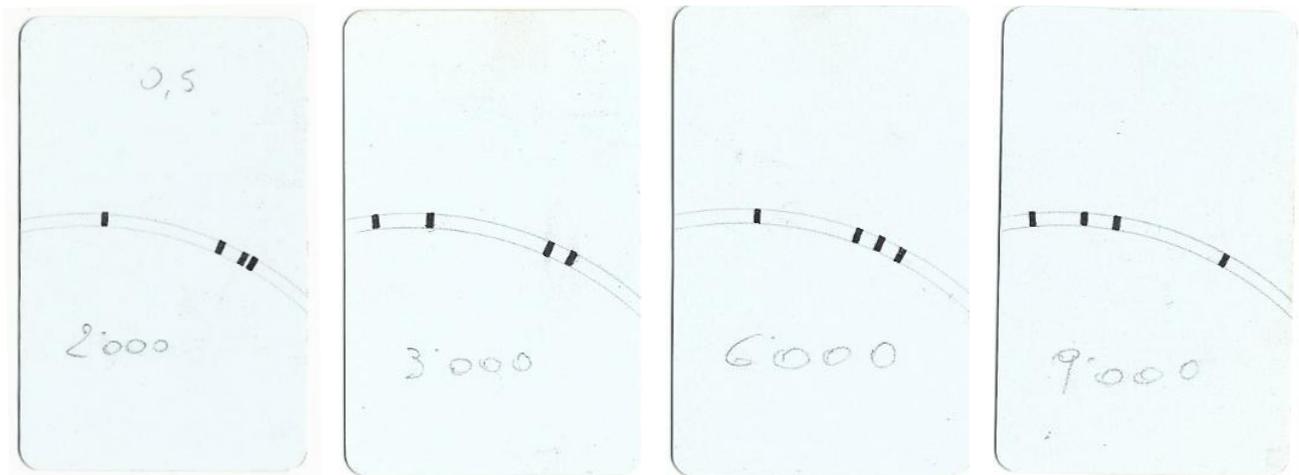


Figure 9 - SIDA cards magnetism drawings

But ... how did the SIDA magnetic stripe technology work?

The telephone booth (Figure 10) was able to erase the credit notches and write them again by updating the magnetism with the remaining credit.

Once the card was exhausted, it was retained by the cabin is the magnetism came "damaged" irreparably to avoid possible counterfeits. Once recovered by SIP personnel, the cards were then destroyed in the presence of the Guardia di Finanza.

The principle of operation of the boards with



Figure 10 - Telephone box  
SIDA

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SIDA technology required telephone sets equipped with many moving parts and for this reason easily subject to breakdowns.

This motivation, together with the growing fear of possible counterfeiting of telephone cards, prompted SIP as early as 1980 to seek other technological solutions.

Among the various solutions proposed, the contract was won by the URMET firm of Turin, which proposed a drastic graphic modification, but above all it conceived and allowed the spread of horizontal magnetic stripe technology.

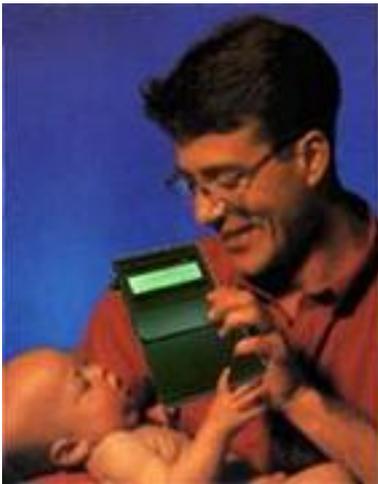
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