In 1585, a year after Sambucus’s death, the philologist Fridericus Sylburgius wondered about Andreas Dudith’s manuscripts. In his answer, Dudith listed the works that might be interesting for Sylburgius, then continued:

I would give you more if I had those types of things that are useful for you. My Sambucus had a lot. I never wanted to imitate his determination and efforts in obtaining book collections, nor could I do so, since I was involved in important public offices, which he never had, nor did he ever give advice or cure the emperor, which you incorrectly claim in your epitaph. The title of councillor is more common than it should be, it is empty of meaning, and most of the time is given to obscure men who have good and generous patrons at court. Sambucus certainly merited this honourable title; and if he had cared more about public affairs than about sciences he could have enjoyed higher regard in front of us.

This was a curious statement by Dudith, who, unlike Sambucus, rarely extolled the common utility of his services at court. He was, however, apparently bothered by Sambucus’s unmerited titles, and might have also envied his great manuscript collection. His point was not to create the impression of a civic humanist dedicated to the res publica, but rather to explain in what ways he differed from his Pannonian friend. As we will see, court service was often depicted in his letters as an obstacle to scholarly development. However Dudith was also generally reluctant to refer to himself as a scholar without also mentioning his high position and influence at court. In these few sentences we may detect the clashes between his multiple identities, which we will examine in this chapter.

While Sambucus the philologist, doctor and court historian embodied...
a rather usual mixture of attributes of the humanist’s persona, Dudith needed to embrace considerably more divergent intellectual and public roles; he was not only a member of the Republic of Letters and a prestigious servant of the Habsburg court, but also an (excommunicated) Catholic bishop, a landowner and member of the Moravian estate, a religious thinker, and a scientist. Sambucus was thus to be envied rather than despised for his liberty and choice of not giving advice (and of course not worrying if his advice was heeded), not propping up the case of emperors, and not caring much about public affairs.

From humanist to bishop: the first shift in Dudith’s public personae

The speed of Dudith’s career progress has been already emphasised; in his student years he not only won fame as a talented young Latinist, but through his relation to Pole also as a good Catholic. His gifts in the studia humanitatis became the subject of a legend that claimed he copied Cicero’s oeuvre three times in his own hand. By the end of his academic tour he already had considerable reputation as a talented young scholar, though still without publications. The project of publishing a series of philological works came relatively late (at end of the 1550s) but was unrealised, since Dudith’s sudden debut in Vienna as a bishop and politician demanded most of his time and perhaps his motivations as well. Some of his biographers, in fact, seem to have been uncomfortable seeing the discrepancy between his image as a humanist and the meagre volume of his output of philological works; therefore they listed also the works he had merely promised to publish. In general his reputation and scholarly credibility were less grounded in publications than in personal connections and prestigious offices. From the beginning, he enjoyed the backing of his powerful uncle Augustinus Sbardellatus, and thanks to his Italian relatives he obtained patrons with remarkable ease in Italy. He was from all accounts acutely gifted in socialising:

2 De Thou, Historiae sui temporis, 5:314. The information goes back to Henry Savile (see Costil, André Dudith, 77, n. 1).

3 The only philological publication to Dudith’s credit, the already mentioned translation of Dionysius Halicarnassus’s Thucydidides commentary (Dionysii Halicarnassii de Thucydidis historia iudicium) was quite successful, so much so that he later considered republishing it. See Costil’s list of its editions in André Dudith, 387–388, which also gives some idea how much contemporaries appreciated this work. For the preface of the work, in which Dudith outlines his philological plans see Dudithius, Epistulae, 1:83. Also see Dudith to Manuzio of 24 October 1562, in Dudithius, Epistulae, 1:124–125.

4 See for example Papadupoli, Historia Gymnasii Patavini, 2:88.